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A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE

1700 1950

By GLENN HUGHES

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A History of
THE AMERICAN THEATRE
1700 1950

by

GLENN HUGHES

Director of the School of Drama,
University of Washington

Author of *The Story of the Theatre*

SAMUEL FRENCH

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For

CLETA and VIVI

leading lady and ingenue
in my life

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Preface

It will surely be apparent to even a casual observer that a book such as this must depend for most of its information on secondary sources. The use of primary sources, such as newspapers and theatre programs, is the appropriate method for historians of limited periods or regions. Fortunately we have had in this country a number of such patient annalists, and to them the present writer expresses his profound gratitude, as well as his apologies for any possible misinterpretation of their findings.

Unfortunately, the number of reference books to which the present volume is indebted is too great for detailed acknowledgment, though the titles are included in the selected bibliography appended to the volume. I must, however, pay tribute here to the monumental work of the late Professor George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, which is the most stupendous theatrical record ever compiled by an individual, and which reflects so remarkably its author's combination of scholarly industry and affection for the theatre. I wish also to mention the work of Professor Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama*, which provides the contemporary student with a masterly compilation and interpretation of our dramatic literature; the late Burns Mantle's indispensable record of this century's productions in New York, included in his *Best Plays* series; and Coad and Mims's *The American Stage*, a panoramic survey rich in fact and image.

Considerable temerity is required in the offering of such a book as this. The compression of two and one-half centuries of theatrical activity into a single volume calls for an arbitrary selection of events and personalities which inevitably troubles the conscience of the writer. Yet the project seems justifiable, and one can only hope that its execution is attended by a minimum of sins, whether those of commission or omission.

It is time for the American people to take stock of their thea-

tre. If this book helps them do so, its mission will have been fulfilled.

—G.H.

University of Washington, Seattle
6 January 1951

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A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE

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Chapter I

Beginnings: 1700–1750

WITH the theatre, as with all things, there are beginnings and beginnings. Some are elusive shadows, others are sharply defined figures or events, but even the latter are often insecure in their role, for history has a way of confounding its students by turning up unexpected items to disturb accepted orderliness. Thus what had been thought the first of its kind frequently loses this distinction. Unless, however, a person is on the pedantic side, he does not worry too much over chronological precision. The general character of events, together with their motivation, may sufficiently provide for the satisfaction of his curiosity and for his understanding of a complex phenomenon.

One requirement, certainly, for a discussion of beginnings is a definition of the subject whose beginnings are under investigation. That is, when we say "the beginnings of the American theatre" we need at once to decide what we mean by the American theatre. We might, for instance, take a geographical point of view and think either in terms of the entire Western hemisphere, or of the North American continent. In either case we would be concerned with Aztec rituals, transplanted Spanish mysteries, Eskimo festivals, and various other exotic manifestations of the dramatic instinct.

Even if we limit ourselves geographically to the area now known as the United States of America we are faced with the problem of primitive drama, for the anthropologists have assured us that the native red men were not lacking in theatrical rites. But however entrancing one may find the antelope dance, as practiced by the Navajos, or the potlatch, as conducted by the Siwash, one chooses, for obvious reasons, to define the American theatre as that which began with the settlements of Europeans on our shores, thus adding time and race limitations to the geographical.

PURITAN AND CAVALIER

Although the first permanent English settlement in America occurred (at Jamestown, Virginia) as early as 1607, and was followed by many others, notably the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in New England in 1620, the entire seventeenth century passed without the introduction of professional theatricals, and with only slight evidence of amateur activities. This slowness to develop a theatre was due partly, of course, to the sparseness of the population, and to the rigors of pioneer life, but another important factor was the attitude of a large proportion of the settlers, who brought with them a strong religious intolerance of all kinds of "show." This attitude was especially prevalent in New England, less so in Virginia, where the spirit tended to be cavalier rather than puritan.

In 1665 three young men of Accomac County, Virginia, were accused of having acted a play, and were haled into court, but were acquitted on being found "not guilty of fault," a decision which has been taken to imply a tolerance toward such matters.

In Boston, for contrast, the ministers were complaining in 1685 of such frivolities as mixed dancing, and in 1687 Increase Mather warned the public that there was talk of "play-acting" in New England. There may indeed have been "talk," but history gives us no evidence of more than that until a good many years later.

THE FIRST ACTORS

In seeking record of the first professional actor to perform in America, one discovers the mysterious figure of one Richard Hunter, who, sometime between 1699 and 1702, petitioned the acting governor of the Province of New York for a license to present plays in New York City. Mr. Hunter states in his petition that he has been to "great charge and expense in providing persons and necessary's" for the acting of plays, and implies that this is a good reason for the granting of his petition. At any rate, it was granted, but there is no record of the performances. What we are left with, therefore, is a whetted and probably-never-to-be-satisfied curiosity as to: the origin of Richard Hunter, the sources from which he derived the members of his company, the plays he presented, the later history and eventual fate of the company.

The second hero of our story is somewhat less shadowy, though he has led scholars a chase through dark corridors of time. He is Anthony Aston, who, according to his own description was "Gentleman, Lawyer, Poet, Actor, Soldier, Sailor, Exciseman, Publican" on both sides of the Atlantic. In the course of his adventures he arrived in Charles-Town (Charleston), South Carolina, in January, 1703, "full of Lice, Shame, Poverty, Nakedness and Hunger. . . ." Here, according to his later account, he turned player and poet, and wrote a play "on the Subject of the Country." This play, which has never been discovered, would undoubtedly be the first composed in America.

Before many months (probably in the following autumn), Aston journeyed to New York, where he met up with an old friend, Jack Charlton, a fencing-master, formerly of London, and spent the winter "acting, writing, courting, fighting." What he acted, what he wrote, is as much a subject for our conjecture as whom he courted, with whom he fought. But the next summer he returned to England, where in due course he wrote and, with his company, performed in Oxford a piece entitled "The Fool's Opera; or, the Taste of the Age." Although this was published under the name of Mat Medley, the preface makes it clear that Medley is Aston, and it is from this prefatory biographical sketch that we have derived our information concerning the American escapade of the colorful stroller.

FEAR AND FORBIDDANCE

Blank years follow the Aston episode. And there is slight consolation in the action of the Governor's Council in New York on May 6, 1709, which forbade play-acting and prize-fighting. Odell points out that "such smoke of legislation must have indicated some fire . . . ," but we are left entirely free to imagine this a dim spark or a broad blaze.

Boston, nearly always to be counted upon in matters of prohibition, provided the next historical item, a letter written in March, 1714 by Judge Samuel Sewall to the governor and council, against the plan, which had come to him as a rumor, to present a play in the Council Chamber. We do not know who proposed to act this play, or what sort of play it may have been, but there must have been some basis for Sewall's indignant fear, which impelled him to remark that the Town-House had been built for serious busi-

ness, and that it should not be abused with anything so frivolous as dances or "scenical divertisements." And we may assume that it was not thus abused.

THE FIRST THEATRE

Down in Virginia, however, only a couple of years later, it is chronicled that one William Levingston, a merchant of Williamsburg, entered into a contract with Charles and Mary Stagg, actors, to build a theatre for them in that city. The contract was dated July 11, 1716. And in November of that year it is further recorded that Levingston purchased three half-acre lots, on which he laid out a bowling green and erected, among other buildings, a theatre.

How much of a company was assembled for the production of plays in this theatre is not known. Nor do we know what plays were performed, how frequently, and over how long a period. The only relevant item available, and its relevance is suppositious, is the famous incident of Governor Spottiswood's party. In a letter which Spottiswood wrote in June, 1718, he describes with feeling the snubbing he received from eight members of the House of Burgesses, whom he had invited to an entertainment in his own house on the occasion of the King's birthday. These eight men, who seemed to him lacking in common decency, ignored his invitation, and, he complained, "would neither come to my house nor go to the play which was acted on the occasion." Instead, they organized a party of their own in the House of Burgesses and invited "the mob," which they supplied with liquor, and drank the King's health without the company of the Governor. The pathos of this episode is appealing, but its chief interest for us must lie in the statement that a play was acted. By whom? It is assumed, by Mr. and Mrs. Stagg and their colleagues, from the playhouse near the bowling green.

There is a gap of eighteen years between this item and the next in Williamsburg's theatrical history. On September 10, 1736, the *Virginia Gazette* announced that on that evening the students of William and Mary College would perform the tragedy of *Cato*, and that on the following Monday, Wednesday and Friday three comedies would be performed by "the gentlemen and ladies of this Country." The comedies were *The Busybody*, *The Recruiting Officer*, and *The Beaux' Stratagem*. And from a contemporary

letter written by a Colonel Jones is derived a comment to the effect that *Cato* was performed by the "young gentlemen of the college," and *The Busybody* by "the company." The latter phrase is taken to imply that there was an established company of actors in the community. If so, it no longer was headed by William Stagg, for he had died in 1735. It seems, however, to have included an attractive actress who went under the name of Dorinda, but who, according to Colonel Jones, was said to be "Miss Anderson that came to town with Mrs. Carter." And who was Mrs. Carter? Another actress? We may suppose so. And whence had she come? We may suppose anything we like.

SOUTHERN CRADLE OF THE ARTS

Current with this flurry of Virginian activity was a similar development in another Southern cradle of arts, the picturesque walled city of Charles-Town, South Carolina. (It was not until 1783 that an act of the legislature changed the spelling of the name to Charleston.)

Charles-Town had been founded in 1670 by a group of eight English noblemen operating under a charter granted them by Charles II, and the aristocratic attitudes established by its founders were reflected in the town during the early eighteenth century. Some of them undoubtedly are reflected even in the twentieth century. A modern chronicler, Eola Willis, points out, for example, that although Charles-Town has long since ceased to be a walled city, the influence of the wall is nevertheless still felt, for "to this day Charleston loves a strong enclosure; and, after these encircling walls had gone, she built strong walls of her own and wrought-iron fences and gateways to shut in her privacy."

It was a busy little seaport, usually with several sloops and schooners lying at anchor in the harbor, and with picturesquely garbed negroes at work along the wharf. The town had two churches, a schoolhouse, the Court-Room, several taverns (one of them "The Pig and Whistle"), and a number of little shops which, Mrs. Willis tells us, "were gay with bright blankets and beads and cloths and gleaming hatchets and knives alluringly displayed to catch the eye of the Indian brave who had deer skins and other peltry to barter." Into the town ran Cherokee trails "Through lanes of verdure crossing blossom-decked streams . . .

and the hedges on every side a feast of beauty in the springtime with waxen petals and golden-hearted roses. . . ."

Charles-Town was a lively place, which fostered balls and musical concerts. Its citizens were fond of hunting, card-playing, and other pastimes brought from England. It was, therefore, fertile soil for drama. And it must have been an occasion for pleasureable excitement among these citizens when the South Carolina *Gazette* announced on January 18, 1735, that on Friday, the 24th in the Court-Room there would be "attempted a tragedy called *The Orphan, or the Unhappy Marriage.*" This was, of course, the play by Otway, which recently had been a success in London.

We know next to nothing concerning the personnel of the acting company, but if it was not professional it should have been, considering the fact that the price of admission was 40 shillings! And we must assume that the performance was creditable, for it was repeated on the 28th, and for a third and fourth time on February 4th and 7th. To the third performance was added a "Pantomimic Entertainment in Grotesque Characters, called The Adventures of Harlequin and Scaramouch," which is the earliest recorded production in America of the popular English pantomime, with its Italian clown characters.

As a footnote of some historical value, it may be mentioned here that a special prologue was written for the first performance, and that, flushed with literary pride, the same versifier composed a completely different one for the fourth performance, and an epilogue as well. Both prologues were published in the *Gazette* on February 8th, the epilogue later. These effusions, in keeping with the fashions of the period, were more polite than brilliant, but they indicate an enthusiasm and a sense of artistic decorum which reflect well on the spirit of Charles-Town.

Shortly after the success of *The Orphan,* there was a production (presumably by the same company) of an opera entitled *Flora, or Hob in the Well,* and this would seem to be the first presentation of a musical piece on the American stage. The date was February 18th.

On March 25th and 27th there were performances of Dryden's play, *The Spanish Fryar,* and with these the season closed. The final performance was offered as a benefit for the leading lady, who appears to have popularized herself under the name of Monimia, the character she portrayed in *The Orphan.*

THE DOCK STREET THEATRE

The strongest evidence that this brief season of plays was a success is found in the fact that shortly after its close the playgoers of Charles-Town inaugurated a subscription campaign not only for a second season of productions, but also for the construction of a playhouse. The list of subscribers has not survived, but it was a Mr. Shepheard, a tavern-keeper, who received the subscriptions. And that they were ample is unquestioned, for on February 12th, 1736 the "New Theatre in Dock Street" was opened with a performance of Farquhar's popular comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*. And the assumption is that the acting company was the same as that of the previous year. At any rate "Monimia" was included in it, still hiding her identity under the cloak of Otway's heroine.

Later in the same month there was a revival of *The Orphan*, and during March there were additional performances of this play and *The Recruiting Officer*, as well as productions of Lillo's *The London Merchant* and a ballad-opera entitled *The Devil to Pay*. After March there is no record of activity in the new theatre until November, when there were two performances of *Cato*. In December there were three productions: *The Recruiting Officer*, *Flora, or Hob in the Well*, and *Cato*. In January, 1737, and again in May, there were revivals of *The Recruiting Officer*. Considering the smallness of the population, and the frequency with which that play was presented, the citizens of Charles-Town must have come to know it by heart.

The final performance of the season occurred under special and impressive circumstances. This was on May 26th, when the theatre was taken over completely by the Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons, who, according to the *Gazette* of May 28th, "came to the Play-house about 7 o'clock in the usual Manner, and made a very decent and solemn Appearance." There were special songs from the stage, in which the Masons in the pit joined, and after the play "the Masons returned to the Lodge at Mr. Shepheard's in the same order observed in coming to the Play-house." There is not, however, any assurance given that after a sojourn in the convivial atmosphere of Mr. Shepheard's tavern, these revelers returned to their homes in as good order.

This colorful note brings to an end our record of not only the 1736–37 season in the Dock Street Theatre, but also of that theatre's life as an actual playhouse. The acting company seems to have departed, no one today knowing why or whither. The theatre continued for a time to be used for concerts and balls, but it apparently was destroyed in the great fire of 1740, which swept through virtually the entire town. And, although it strikes us as strange that such a theatre-minded community should reconcile itself to the lack of a playhouse for such a long period, it was not until 1754 that Charles-Town opened her second theatre—an event which will be discussed later in some detail.

PERHAPS ON BROADWAY

Meanwhile let us glance to the North. Here we discover an isolated performance of the ubiquitous *Recruiting Officer* given in New York on December 6th, 1732, in "the New Theatre in the building of the Hon. Rip Van Dam, Esq.," the role of Worthy having been acted by Mr. Thos. Heady, a barber. There has been much speculation among researchers as to the location of this theatre, but Odell considers it rather likely that it was "on the East side of Broadway, just above Beaver Street." There is some sentimental satisfaction, at least, in believing that New York's first playhouse was on Broadway.

Whatever its location, its further offerings went unrecorded for more than eight years. Odell feels sure that plays were performed during that period, but his most painstaking search yields no evidence until February, 1741, when *Zenger's Journal* advertised a performance of *The Beaux' Stratagem* to be given "at the new Theatre in the Broadway . . . the part of Aimwell to be perform'd by a Person who never appear'd on any Stage before." The natural inference from this notice is that the other members of the company were regular, and probably professional, actors. It is natural, also, to infer that these actors had appeared previously in New York.

A HORSE, A CAMEL, A BEAR

But if the decade of the 1730's yields us scant news of plays, it does at least offer us a picture of New York life in which semi-theatrical activities were prevalent. The town in 1731 is said to have had a population of 8,622, this total including 1,577

colored people, mostly slaves. The inhabitants were social-minded, and indulged extensively in club life, in card-playing, horse-racing, concerts, tea-parties, and lotteries. In the spring of 1734 they were permitted to witness (for a reasonable admission price) the skill of Joseph Broome, "the famous German Artist, who is to perform the Wonders of the World by Dexterity of Hand." And in June, 1739 they were promised an exhibition of German Hans, a horse "who understands several Languages," and who was advertised as being capable of solving problems in arithmetic, of distinguishing between good and bad wine—by drinking it—and of various other surprising feats typical of "talking" horses, which periodically excite the credulity of mankind. One is reminded inevitably of another German horse bearing the name of Hans, who was the sensation of Berlin in 1904, and of Black Bear and Lady, American horses who thrilled us in the supposedly sophisticated 1920s.

Exotic animal life also was exhibited. In the autumn of 1739 New Yorkers were invited (at the rate of one shilling for men, sixpence for children) to view "a very Wonderful and Surprizing creature . . . brought with great Difficulty from the Deserts of Arabia, and which . . . in Scripture . . . is called a CAMMEL." The advertisement stated further that this animal was a curiosity "which never was in this Country, and very likely never will be again."

After this event, New York had no need to feel inferior to Boston, which in 1733 had been treated to an exhibition of "a ferocious Greenland bear."

It was in this same year of the camel, 1739, that there occurred the historically famous performance in Mr. Holt's Long Room in New York, of the Pantomime entitled *The Adventures of Harlequin and Scaramouch*, the same "Entertainment in Grotesque Characters" which had been presented in Charleston four years earlier. And there is evidence that Mr. Henry Holt, who had "danc'd a considerable Time" at Drury Lane Theatre in London, and who now was enlivening the New World, was responsible for both the Charleston and New York productions. What other pleasures he invented for presentation in his Long Room we do not know.

If New York theatrical life in the 1730s was made up chiefly of such novelties as sleight-of-hand and animal exhibitions, it was

not much improved in the 1740s, although the novelties of that decade possessed a picturesqueness of their own.

In 1743, for example, there was exhibited "At Mr. Pacheco's Ware-House . . . A CURIOUS MUSICAL MACHINE, arriv'd from England . . ." with doors that flew open of their own accord, revealing "six Ringers in white shirts, all busy pulling the Bell-Ropes." It also revealed a barber-shop, and a barber's boy who knocks at his master's door, whereupon the barber appears, ready to shave the Ringers. The doors close, then open again, and the Ringers appear shaved and wearing clean caps.

And the same year there was shown a microscope, by means of which the public could marvel at "the Circulation of the Blood in a Frog's Foot, a Flea, a Fish's Tail, and in many small Insects."

MR. PUNCH ARRIVES

In 1747 there was given "at the House of Mr. Hamilton Hewetson, at the Sign of the Spread-Eagle," a puppet show entitled *Punch's* OPERA, *Bateman, or the Unhappy Marriage, with a fine Dialogue between Punch and his Wife Joan,* "Acted by a Set of Lively Figures late from Philadelphia." This performance, the first recorded puppet show in America, was followed the same evening by a contortionist act, the performer being a boy "late from Dublin."

In 1748 the scientific-minded, whose curiosity had been catered to a few years previously by the microscope, were treated to a display of electricity, "particularly the New Way of Electrifying several Persons at the same Time, so that Fire shall dart from all Parts of their Bodies." This excitement was offered from eight in the morning till nine at night, provided the weather proved sufficiently dry.

The attractions of 1749 were equally quaint, and more numerous. They included a "Diagonal Mirrour," which showed a great variety of scenes from London, Venice, Naples, Rome, and France; a wax-works exhibition from England, which included figures of the royal family and other European notables; "a curious Philosophical, Optical Machine"; and, climactically, a series of puppet performances by "Punch's Company of Comedians," which included "the whole Play of Princess Elizabeth, Or the Rise of Judge Punch; Shewing the Cruelty of Queen Mary, and the Intrigues of Bishop Gardner," as well as "the whole play of *Whit-*

tington and his *Catt*," and "the Tragedy of Fair Rosamond." The play "Shewing the Cruelty of Queen Mary" undoubtedly had agreeable religious implications for the Protestants of the period, and may well have been a barbed thrust at the Catholics who had been migrating to New York from Central Europe.

Insofar as the theatrical history of New York is concerned, therefore, the first half of the century closed on a note of picturesque novelty. Standard plays, however, were not far away. They were, in fact, in Philadelphia.

THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Philadelphia had been founded in 1672 by the Quakers as a city of brotherly love, and by 1700 it was composed of at least seven hundred houses and nearly five thousand persons. How strongly it flourished during the early decades of the eighteenth century is illustrated by the fact that in 1744 the population had risen to thirteen thousand. This included, besides the Quakers, a large number of Germans and Scotch-Irish. All three of these groups, each for its own reasons, opposed the development of theatricals, and from time to time enacted prohibitory laws against them. Their efforts, however, proved vain, for each of these acts was promptly repealed in England. Besides, there was in Philadelphia itself a considerable number of persons adhering to the Church of England, and professing a marked liberalism toward the arts. These two pressures, one from within, the other from without, were sufficient to create a climate healthy enough to nourish such early stage entertainments as were offered to the city by migratory performers. A climate so healthy, in fact, that by the end of the century Philadelphia was becoming the theatrical capital of America.

Between 1700 and 1711 the Assembly of Pennsylvania had passed three laws prohibiting plays. Each was in turn repealed by the British government—the third one in 1713. Discouraged, but not utterly defeated, the Quakers for a time renounced legal measures, but (in 1716) it advised all Friends against attending or participating in "plays, games, lotteries, music, and dancing."

Yet we do not have any record of actual theatrical temptations held out to Philadelphians until 1723, when a band of strolling comedians set up a stage just outside the city limits and advertised their performances with printed bills. The Mayor of the city, James Logan, expressed himself as being unhappy over this af-

front to the sober citizenry, but his natural inclination toward suppression was tempered by the realization that the attitude of the Governor, Sir William Keith, was one of tolerance, and he considered it unwise to "embroil" himself with the Governor over the matter.

And the next year a newspaper advertisement announced a performance of acrobats and comedians at "the New Booth on Society Hill," which is the earliest mention of a theatre in Philadelphia. And a theatre it surely was, for prices were listed for seats on the stage, in the pit, and in the gallery. Historians consider it entirely likely that "the New Booth" was identical with the "stage" erected by the strolling players of 1723, and they also think it probable that the company of 1723 was the company of 1724. What is lacking is proof. One thing is certain: the 1724 show included a female child of seven who "danced and capered upon a strait roap," as well as a comedian who appeared in the traditional European clown role of Pickle Herring.

The next eighteen years contribute nothing to our chronicle except the exhibition of an eight-legged cat, a leopard, and moose (spelled "mouse"). Then, in 1742, we find a puppet show—the first in Philadelphia. This was announced as "A merry Dialogue between Punch and Joan his wife . . . by changeable Figures two Feet high," and was presented at the Sign of the Coach and Horses in Chestnut Street. The following year, as Pollock points out, the city had its first "picture show," a magic-lantern entertainment at Joseph Barber's "at the Temple Bar in Second-Street."

CATO AMONG THE QUAKERS

August, 1749 is a famous date in theatre annals, for in that month occurred the earliest recorded performance of a standard play in the Quaker City. We owe this information to the diary of John Smith, the son-in-law of James Logan, one-time Mayor of the city. His entry of August 22–23 tells us that he and Jos. Morris "happened in at Peacock Bigger's and drank tea there, and his daughter being one of the company going to hear the tragedy of *Cato* acted, it occasioned some conversation, in which I expressed my sorrow that anything of the kind was encouraged."

It is known also that this performance was given in a warehouse owned by William Plumstead, and that the company was a professional one, undoubtedly headed by Walter Murray and

Thomas Kean. Their origin is not known, but the assumption is that they came to Philadelphia from the West Indies. How many performances they gave in the warehouse is pure speculation; but they were still in the city in January. In February they moved on to New York, taking with them a young actress recruited in Philadelphia. By her boldness in venturing on such a career the girl, named Nancy George, was said to have alienated many of her friends.

On this note of human interest let us conclude our account of the first half-century of American theatricals, a period decorated with quaint shadows and fitful lights, a period of tentative gestures and fugitive events. A period of beginnings.

Chapter II

The Professional Appears: 1750–1775

IN FEBRUARY, 1750, the Murray and Kean company arrived in New York from Philadelphia, and immediately applied to the Governor for permission to perform. For this purpose they took "a convenient room . . . in one of the buildings lately belonging to the Hon. Rip Van Dam, Esq., deceased, in Nassau Street."

This may or may not have been the same room in which *The Recruiting Officer* had been performed in 1732. The name of the former owner at least suggests the possibility. It was a small auditorium, for it is recorded that on one occasion (a benefit night for Mr. Kean) the house was overcrowded, and yet there were a few less than three hundred tickets issued. And undoubtedly it was poorly equipped. But it housed the first recorded season of standard plays presented on a more or less regular schedule in New York City.

The opening performance took place on March 5, and the play was Shakespeare's *Richard III*, as altered by Colley Cibber. The play was repeated on the 12th, and was followed by performances on the 17th and 20th of Dryden's *The Spanish Fryar*. The season continued until July 23d, performances having been given once or twice a week, with a total repertoire of six plays and three farces. The inadequacy of the improvised playhouse is illustrated by a notice which was published on July 16th to the effect that, "The Heat having prevented the Play last Thursday Night, it is designed to be presented this Evening, as it has the Appearance of being moderate Weather."

On September 13th the company opened its second season, and this continued to July 8th of the following year (1751). During the ten-month period at least sixteen standard plays were presented, most of them popular London comedies and dramas, each of them having from one to five performances. In addition to

these, the company offered a dozen or more farces, ballad operas and pantomimes. All these added up to a remarkable feast of entertainment for a city of ten thousand inhabitants.

Historians have speculated on the status and quality of the Murray and Kean troupe. How many of the actors had received professional training is a matter of pure conjecture. But it is quite likely that some of them, such as Nancy George, the Philadelphia recruit, were definitely amateurs when they joined the company. Even Thomas Kean, the co-manager and leading man, appears to have classified himself as a writer, for in April, 1751, on the occasion of his benefit performance, he issued a press statement to the effect that, "by the Advice of several Gentlemen in Town, who are his Friends, . . ." he had resolved to quit the stage and "follow his Employment of Writing," wherein he hoped for encouragement. We may note, however, that he did not follow the advice, but remained on the stage for a good many years.

Whatever their training and previous experience may have been, this company followed a professional schedule, and considering the difficult nature of the plays in which they appeared, together with the considerable success with which they met, they must have possessed a reasonable competence in the arts of the theatre.

WILLIAMSBURG BUILDS A THEATRE

Shortly after the close of their second and final New York season the company journeyed to Williamsburg, Virginia, where, during the late summer and early autumn they enlisted the efforts of drama lovers in that cultivated village toward the construction of a theatre. On August 29, 1751, the *Virginia Gazette* carried the following announcement:

"By permission of his Honour the President [i.e., President of the Council, who was Acting Governor]. Whereas the Company of Comedians that are in New York intend performing in this City, but there being no Room suitable for a Play-house, 'tis propos'd that a Theatre shall be built by way of Subscription, each Subscriber advancing a Pistole [a Spanish coin then in circulation with a value of approximately four dollars] to be entitled to a Box Ticket for the first Night's Diversion."

The plan succeeded and the theatre was opened late in October with a performance of *Richard III*. A few other performances

followed, but the season was a short one, and presently the company moved on to nearby towns, including Petersburg, Norfolk, and Fredericksburg. The following June found them in Annapolis, Maryland, where they were heralded as the "Company of Comedians from Virginia." It was a common practice of this and other early theatrical troupes in the Colonies to alter their names as they moved from place to place, thus acquiring a certain prestige from previous engagements.

It should be mentioned also that beginning with the Williamsburg engagement the company operated under a triple rather than a double managership. Instead of Murray and Kean, the managerial title was Woodham, Murray and Kean. And the logical assumption is that Mr. Woodham, who was a prominent actor in the company, had contributed capital toward the Williamsburg venture.

Although this organization never revisited New York, a rather remarkable fact, it appears to have flourished, or at least functioned, for at least twenty years, and to have provided in the southern colonies a not inconsiderable competition for the second, and stronger, professional company to tour this country—namely, the Hallams.

ENTER THE HALLAMS

The brothers William and Lewis Hallam were members of a London theatrical family. William, according to some historical accounts, was manager of Goodman's Fields Theatre, and in that capacity suffered bankruptcy in 1750. In an attempt to recoup his fortunes he conceived the idea of sending a company to the American colonies, and entrusted the execution of the scheme to his brother Lewis. The company was duly organized, and included twelve adults (of which Lewis Hallam was one) in addition to the latter's three children, two boys and a girl. The eldest of these, Lewis Hallam, junior, was twelve years of age. Mrs. Hallam was one of the actresses.

The business arrangement was based on a shareholding plan, there being eighteen shares in all, each actor holding one, Lewis Hallam an additional one as manager, his three children, one, and the remaining four assigned to the 'property,' that is, to the partnership itself (William and Lewis Hallam being the owning part-

ners in the enterprise). The property shares therefore represented potential net profits.

This troupe, which was to play such an important role in the development of the American theatre, set sail from England early in May, 1752, aboard the "Charming Sally." After a six-weeks' voyage, during which there are said to have been daily rehearsals on deck, the company arrived at Yorktown, Virginia, and made their way promptly to Williamsburg, where the papers had heralded their coming, and where the playhouse erected shortly before by Woodham, Murray and Kean, awaited them. According to one advance press notice, the company was bringing with them "Scenes, Cloaths and Decorations . . . all entirely new, extremely rich and finished in the highest Taste."

Permission of the Governor was obtained for the proposed performances, and the playhouse, which undoubtedly had been thrown up in haste and with great economy by the previous company, was altered during the summer into "a regular Theatre, fit for the Reception of Ladies and Gentlemen." The building is said to have been "a homely, wooden structure resembling a tobacco barn." And, according to Dunlap, our earliest theatre historian, who interviewed Lewis Hallam, junior, in the actor's old age, the house stood at the edge of the woods—so near in fact that the manager could stand in the door and shoot wild pigeons for his dinner.

The opening performance was given on September 15th, the chief play of the evening being *The Merchant of Venice*, and the afterpiece, *The Anatomist*. Mrs. Hallam appeared as Portia, and Hallam as Launcelot. A now-famous incident of the performance was the first appearance on any stage of Lewis Hallam, junior, who, as Portia's servant, had only one line to speak, but who was seized with stage-fright, burst into tears and left the stage.

SURPRISE FOR THE CHEROKEES

The company seems to have stayed in Williamsburg eleven months. How many performances they gave is not known. But there is a newspaper account of the performance on November 9th, when *Othello* was presented before an audience which included the colorful figures of "The Emperor of the Cherokee nation with his Empress and their son, the young Prince, attended

by several of his warriors and Great Men and their Ladies." Besides Shakespearean tragedy, the noble redmen were given a Pantomime, which is said to have surprised them. They also were surprised by "the fighting with naked Swords on the Stage, which occasioned the Empress to order some about her to go and prevent them killing one another."

It would be natural to suppose that Hallam led his troupe to other Virginia towns, and early historians reported such a tour as fact. Later research, however, has made it clear that the company's only stand in that province was the long one at Williamsburg. And the reason given is that Murray and Kean were too effective in their opposition. Although an inferior company, they were active and aggressive. Not only did they succeed in preempting theatrical business in the principal towns; they also succeeded in luring away from Hallam two of his actors!

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Paul Leicester Ford, in his monograph, *Washington and the Theatre*, has speculated interestingly on the possibility that George Washington may have attended the Hallams' opening night (as well as subsequent nights) at the Williamsburg theatre. As a military adjutant of the colony he "had occasion to be in Williamsburg from time to time" during 1752, and he is known to have developed by then (he was twenty years old) an interest in plays. The year before, when he had accompanied his brother Lawrence on a sea voyage to Barbadoes Island in the West Indies (Lawrence seeking a cure for his consumption), he had been taken to a performance of Lillo's *Tragedy of George Barnwell* given by an unknown company; and on the 2nd of June, 1752, when he and his brother were staying with their mother at her home near Fredericksburg, the two young men attended the playhouse in that town, where they undoubtedly saw the Murray and Kean players. The Hallams were on that date on the high seas.

Whether or not the Hallams had the unappreciated honor of entertaining the potential Father of Our Country later in the season, they had no complaint to make of their audiences. In their own words, they "performed with universal Applause and met with the greatest encouragement." Obviously, however, they could not continue indefinitely with a limited repertoire in an

even more limited center of population. And they were "persuaded to come to New York by several Gentlemen."

And what had been happening theatrically in New York since the departure of Murray and Kean in July, 1751? Not very much. Chiefly a rather abortive attempt on the part of one Robert Upton to fill the vacancy created in the Nassau Street theatre. Upton holds a not very admirable position in dramatic history, partly because his New York venture was feeble, and partly because he appears to have been a kind of traitor. Sent out from England by William Hallam at the end of the year 1750, to prepare the way for the Hallam company, "to obtain permission to perform, erect a building and settle everything against our arrival," and having accepted "a considerable sum" in payment for his service, he failed to carry out his mission. Instead, finding Murray and Kean installed in Nassau Street, he joined their forces, and, on their departure for Virginia, organized a company of his own. How he found the necessary actors is something of a mystery, but we have a right to assume that their quality (rather, their lack of it) could well have been an important factor in the failure of the enterprise.

SHAKESPEARE AND GARRICK

Mr. Upton's New Company of Comedians opened during the last week of December, 1751, with a performance of *Othello,* and on the same bill, Garrick's *Lethe.* On January 6th came *The Provok'd Husband* and a repetition of *Lethe.* It was customary at this time and for more than a century afterwards, to present following the main play of the evening a short afterpiece, nearly always a farce or a light comedy. *Lethe,* now almost forgotten, had great popularity in this capacity.

Written by the famous English actor-manager, David Garrick, and originally performed at Drury Lane Theatre, London, *Lethe* is a witty satire in one act, written in lively prose, with three songs interspersed. It draws on Greek mythology for its setting—"a grove, with a view of the River Lethe"—and includes among the *dramatis personae* the legendary characters of Charon, Aesop, and Mercury. The latter has guided certain mortals to this spot, in order that they may drink the waters of forgetfulness. Charon grumblingly rows the visitors across the Styx (he feels that he has enough to do ferrying dead souls) and Aesop interviews them

one at a time, discovering what it is they wish to forget, and why. The poet hopes to forget the damning criticisms which wrecked his last play—Aesop suggests he have the audience instead of himself drink of Lethe's waters, and thus forget the play; a rich lord wishes to forget the gout that has ruined his legs; a very old and miserly man wishes to forget that he must die—Aesop suggests he forget his money and then he will not mind dying; a tailor who thinks himself a cuckold would rid himself of his suspicions; a frivolous young wife would forget that she is married; a fop would shed his modesty and become a bold fellow with the women; and a drunk doesn't want to forget anything—he has come merely out of curiosity, though while he is here he would like to pick up an attractive woman—Proserpine, for example. Each of the dialogues furnishes an opportunity for the author's genuine and sophisticated wit and for his satirical analysis of human weaknesses. At the end of the piece Aesop points out that the supplicants are all suffering from their own vices, and he leads them off to Lethe with the admonition that it is not their troubles they must drink to forget, but rather their vices, which are the cause. And he concludes with a typical eighteenth-century moralistic couplet:

> " *'Tis vice alone disturbs the human breast;*
> *Care dies with guilt; be virtuous and be blest.*"

On the 13th, while advertising *The Fair Penitent*, the unhappy manager published his unhappiness by stating that he, "to his great disappointment," had not met with sufficient encouragement to support the company for the season, and had therefore decided to shorten it, "performing 5 or 6 Plays only, for Benefits." Whereupon he added that the first benefit, to be given on the 20th, would be for himself.

The company hung on until early in March, when it was announced that the performance on the 4th—again *The Fair Penitent*—would "certainly be the last Night of attempting to perform here (the vessel in which Mr. Upton goes, sailing the latter part of the week)." One trembles at the thought of what might well have taken place when Upton, back in London, encountered William Hallam.

NOVELTIES IN NEW YORK

More than a year passed before New Yorkers were offered further productions of standard plays. From March, 1752 to September, 1753 their theatrical life was limited to such novelties as sleight-of-hand artists, tumblers, dancers, and electrical experiments. The climax in this series unquestionably was the appearance of the Dugees. Anthony Joseph Dugee, billed as an Indian, and "Late an Apprentice to the Grand Turk *Mahomet Caratha*," with the assistance of a young Negro boy, performed such astonishing feats as balancing on a slack wire and at the same time playing with four balls, balancing seven pipes on his nose, a pyramid of glasses full of wine on his chin. He also stood on his head on the wire "at full swing."

This excitement enlivened the evening of August 20th, 1753. And it was no more than a beginning, for his schedule called for a total of twelve performances, three each week, with each performance differing from the others. On one occasion he promised to eat his supper while standing on his head on the 'Nob' of a chair.

But whatever excitement Dugee succeeded in generating, it was probably eclipsed by an exhibition offered by his wife on September 17th. Mrs. Dugee, according to her billing, had "given so much satisfaction to her Royal Highness the Princess Dowager of Wales, and the Royal Family of Great-Britain, that they were pleased to call her THE FEMALE SAMPSON."

And how richly she deserved such a title may be realized upon considering that she was able to lie with her body extended between two chairs, to bear an anvil of 300 pounds on her breast, and to allow two men to strike on it with sledge-hammers. Furthermore, she could "suffer a Stone of 700 lb. to lye on her Breast, and throw it off six Feet from her."

But she was not without competition. On the very night of her performance a new theatre in Nassau Street was being opened by the Hallams.

On his arrival in New York from Williamsburg early that summer, Lewis Hallam had met with considerable disappointment, which he aired fully in a published notice on July 2. First, the authorities were reluctant to grant permission for his company to perform; second, the old theatre in Nassau Street was

inadequate for his needs; third, he did not find a manifestation of any great public enthusiasm for his proposed season.

"They told us we should not fail of a genteel and favourable Reception"; he wrote rather petulantly, "that the Inhabitants were generous and polite, naturally fond of Diversions rational, and particularly those of the Theatre: Nay, they even told us there was a very fine Play-house Building, and that we were really expected."

He also pointed out that he and his company had put themselves to enormous expense in crossing the Atlantic and journeying by land from Virginia—not to mention the financial loss incurred through the perfidy of Robert Upton. "As we are People of no Estates, it cannot be supposed that we have a Fund sufficient to bear up against such unexpected Repulses."

Finally, he assured the public that he and his company were of a different quality from those who had preceded them, and he prayed only for "an opportunity to convince them, we were not cast in the same Mould with our Theatrical Predecessors; or that in private Life or publick Occupation, we have the least Affinity to them."

HALLAM IN NASSAU STREET

Permission to perform was finally granted; the Nassau Street theatre was rebuilt—being now "fine, large and commodious"—and the company began its season on Monday, September 17th with a performance of Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, a play which Odell thinks may have been chosen for its highly moral tone, in an effort to placate "hostile sentiment."

Wednesday evening of the same week the play was repeated, and in a letter written two days later by Philip Schuyler, who was in the audience, we learn that the play began at six o'clock (a typical curtain time for that period), and that "a large green curtain hung before the players until they were ready to begin, when, on the blast of a whistle, it was raised, and some of them appeared and commenced acting." Unfortunately this aristocratic young man had very little to say about the actors, contenting himself with a mention of the Hallams, and of "a sprightly young man named Hulett," who "played the violin and danced merrily."

It is pleasant to note among the cast the name of Master L. Hallam, now thirteen years of age, and, we have every reason to

suppose, a more confident performer than he had been a year before, the night he fled the stage in Williamsburg.

The season which was thus launched, extended for a period of six months, during which time it is assumed that performances were offered each week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. At least that is the schedule originally announced. If there were deviations from it we cannot trace them because of the infrequency of newspaper publication. New York papers at that time were published only on Monday.

A considerable variety of plays was presented, and the more popular ones were repeated. Mostly they were Restoration and early eighteenth-century pieces, such as Congreve's *Love for Love*, Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*, Cibber's *The Careless Husband*, and Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. Shakespeare, however, was represented by *Richard III*, *King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, the latter seen for the first time in New York, and all three plays shown in the adapted versions popular in England—versions which marred the originals and misled the public until well into the nineteenth century.

Benefit nights for members of the company began on January 28th, and this was an indication of the approaching close of the season. The tradition of benefits had come into vogue in England at the end of the seventeenth century, and gradually became standard practice. It was a way of augmenting the actor's income, which usually was small, and of making up to him for arrears—managers of the time being frequently unable (or unwilling) to make complete and regular payments of money due. Even though an actor might be disgruntled over his income, he was less apt to revolt and quit the company if a benefit night were kept dangling before him. The subject of the benefit was permitted to choose the play, and thus show himself to the best possible advantage in a role which suited his talents and in which he, presumably, had achieved popularity. A strong human appeal was thereby injected into the publicity, and although the sentimental appeals made to the public to support a benefit night seem to us today pathetic or comical, and certainly undignified, they were natural phenomena of a period in which the actor was not only a servant of the public, but literally a beggar.

How well the members of Hallam's company fared at their benefit nights during the spring of 1754 we do not know, but we

have at least some evidence that the management did not do badly on the season, for in connection with the printed notice of the final performance on March 25th, it was stated that, "Lewis Hallam, Comedian, intending for Philadelphia," begs those who may have demands upon him, "to bring in their accounts, and receive their money." This is an extremely cheerful note, reflecting both solvency and integrity.

HALLAM IN PHILADELPHIA

Meanwhile Hallam had been encouraged to bring his company to Philadelphia, and had sent Malone, his tragedian, to that city to make the necessary preparations, including, of course, the obtaining of official permission to perform. Malone, however, was unequal to the task, for the Quakers were adamant in their opposition to the proposal. As a result, Hallam had to go to the rescue. And very shortly, with the aid of the tolerant faction of citizens, he secured from Governor Hamilton "permission to open a theatre and cause twenty-four plays with their attendant afterpieces to be performed, on condition that they offered nothing indecent or immoral, and performed one night for the benefit of the city." The company also, according to Dunlap, whose source of information was Lewis Hallam, junior, was required to furnish adequate security for debts.

Because a theatre was ready for his occupancy, Hallam was able to launch his season almost immediately, and opened on April 15th with *The Fair Penitent* and *Miss in Her Teens.* The New Theatre in Water Street, which housed the productions, was of course William Plumstead's warehouse, which had been converted to theatrical use for Murray and Kean five years before. It was a lofty building of brick construction, and, according to Pollock, "was fitted out with a gallery, pit, and stage, and was probably a much better theatre than the term 'warehouse' would suggest." The fact that it is reported to have been still standing in 1849, a full hundred years after its first theatrical use, suggests at least a stability uncharacteristic of most early American playhouses.

In Philadelphia the company followed the same schedule they had established in New York, with performances three nights a week. And, the Governor having granted them an additional six performances, they were able to offer a total of thirty nights,

closing on June 24th with *The Provoked Husband.* As an item of special interest we note that the performance of June 19th was a benefit for the Charity School, which eventually grew to become the University of Pennsylvania. Although there is said to have been some reluctance on the part of certain trustees to accept money from such an impure source, it was accepted, and the School benefited to the extent of more than a hundred pounds.

Another five years were to pass before the Quakers were to be aroused by another season of professional plays. But in January, 1757, they were given reason for minor irritation by the performance of what is thought to be the first college dramatic production in America, when the students of the College of Philadelphia presented several performances of *The Masque of Alfred the Great,* which had been adapted for their use by Provost William Smith. These presentations, which drew applause from "crowded and discerning audiences," are thought by Pollock to have been inspired by the Hallam company's visit. It seems a natural conclusion.

HALLAM IN CHARLESTON

From Philadelphia the Hallams went to Charleston, where presumably they spent the summer promoting the construction of a new theatre, the old one having been destroyed, it is believed, in the great fire of 1740. At any rate, the South Carolina *Gazette* announced on October 3d that on the following Monday, the 7th, *The Fair Penitent* would be performed at the New Theatre by a company of comedians from London. And a few days later the same paper reported that "Last Monday evening the New Theatre in this Town was opened . . . much to the satisfaction of the Audience."

Succeeding performances were given once weekly through October, November and December, the repertoire consisting of such favorites as *Cato, The Recruiting Officer, A Bold Stroke for a Wife,* and *George Barnwell.* The last performance of the season, on December 27th, was made an unusually gala occasion by the presence of the Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons, who that morning at nine o'clock had formed the Grand Lodge of Masons of South Carolina, and after a full day of meetings, attendance at Divine Service, dinner and toasts drunk at Mr. Gordon's Tavern (where "genteel en-

tertainment was provided") had repaired *en masse* to the theatre, where *The Distressed Mother* was performed, with Masons' songs between acts. It will be recalled that members of this same order had honored the first Charleston theatre with a similar visit in 1737.

Just when Hallam and his company left Charleston is not a matter of record, but the departure evidently occurred either at the end of December or early in January. Their destination was Jamaica, in the West Indies, and it was a farewell voyage for most members of the company. For Lewis Hallam himself it was a farewell in a double sense, for soon after reaching Jamaica he died. The company then disbanded.

There was at that time in Jamaica another company, which had been organized in London by John Moody, and which had ventured to the West Indies in 1751 under the managership of David Douglass. Moody himself had pioneered theatricals in those islands during the period 1745–49. Then, returning to London, he recruited a new company. But on being offered an attractive engagement with David Garrick, he remained in London, and the company sailed forth on its own. They were, however, in good hands, for Douglass proved himself an able and reliable manager, if not a great actor.

JAMAICA, EXOTIC OUTPOST

At this point the reader may understandably wonder how it happened that such an outpost of civilization as Jamaica should be, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a center of theatrical activity. The explanation is that this island was one of the richest among England's colonial possessions. Discovered by Columbus in 1494, it was for long exploited by the Spanish, but was wrested from them by the English in 1658. Lying eighty miles south of Cuba, and no great distance from Florida, the island is only one hundred and forty-four miles in length, and only fifty miles in breadth at the widest point, yet its natural products of sugar, bananas, tobacco, coffee, and ginger—with its by-products of molasses and rum—made it a prize of empire warfare.

By 1750 Jamaica had a population of approximately ten thousand whites and one hundred and twenty thousand blacks. Most of the whites were English, but some were Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Irish, and Jews. A good many of them were labor-

ers and servants, but a considerable number were either wealthy planters or the overseers of plantations owned by absentee landlords. Some of the black natives were freemen, but a huge number were slaves. In this lush and semi-tropical outpost, the well-to-do Englishmen led luxurious and rather debauched lives. According to Dr. Pitman, author of *The Development of the British West Indies*, "the planters imitated, as nearly as the climate would permit, the rural gentry of England. Much was written about their pastures of cattle, sheep, and goats; their rabbit warrens, and the huntsmen employed in hunting wild hogs, parrots, and pigeons; their coaches and fine saddle horses; and their sumptuous hospitality. Their diversions were horse-racing, shooting, fishing with angles, nets, and pots, billiards, balls, assemblies, and concerts. Wines, rum, and brandy were in constant use."

That their diversions also included theatricals is well established. This was true as early as 1740, for in his *History of Jamaica*, (published that year) Charles Leslie described life in Spanish Town, which was the inland capital of the island, as follows:

"They [the Gentlemen of Estates] live after a gay Manner; 'tis surprising to see the number of Coaches and Chariots which are perpetually plying, besides those which belong to private Persons; they have frequent Balls, and lately have got a Playhouse, where they retain a Set of extraordinary good Actors."

The same writer notes that because of the hot climate both men and women usually wore the lightest possible clothing—the natives often none at all—but that on occasion the whites dressed lavishly. On Sunday and for important events the gentlemen appeared "very gay in Silk Coats, and Vests trimmed with Silver." As for the ladies, they "are as gay as any in Europe, dress as richly, and appear with as good a Grace. Their Morning Habit is a loose Night-gown, carelessly wrapped about them; before Dinner they get out of their Dishabille, and show themselves in all the advantage of a becoming rich neat Dress."

It was in this exotic setting that Douglass and his fellow-players performed.

DOUGLASS AND HALLAM

It appears that before Hallam's death there had been a joining of forces on the part of his company and Douglass's. Certain it is, however, that in 1758 Mrs. Hallam and Douglass were married.

And in the summer or early autumn of that year they came to the United States with their company, Mrs. Hallam as its star, and young Lewis Hallam as its leading man. The latter was now eighteen years of age, and a talented, versatile actor.

Arriving in New York, Douglass found that the old theatre in Nassau Street had been converted to other uses, and with an impetuousness which perhaps bespoke his lack of experience in this country, he constructed a new playhouse on Cruger's Wharf before he had obtained permission for his performances. When he did apply, permission was refused. This was, as he said in a printed announcement on November 6th, "to his great Mortification."

In the same notice he informed the public of the gross injustice imposed upon him by the officials, and emphasized the fact that he had begged simply for an opportunity to raise enough money to get to another city. Then, with more than a trace of slyness, he announced that he had abandoned all thoughts of acting plays, and would presently open an Histrionic Academy.

This proposal was immediately set down by his opponents as subterfuge, and Douglass was driven to defend himself in print. A paper published on the 11th carried a long and rhetorical communication from the harassed manager, denying any intention of circumventing the authorities, and insisting that his Histrionic Academy was concerned in no way with plays, but solely with "Dissertations on Subjects, *Moral Instructive* and *Entertaining*." He himself was to deliver these dissertations, but he also proposed to instruct others in the art of speaking "in Publick with Propriety."

Whether his wounded feelings brought about a change of heart in the authorities, or whether other influences were brought to bear upon them, Douglass was given permission for thirteen nights of play performances, and the series was opened the last week in December with the tragedy, *Jane Shore*. At this performance Mrs. Douglass spoke the famous epilogue composed by Adam Thomson, a Scotsman of Philadelphia, which voiced the hopes of the actors that opposition to the art of the theatre would cease. The opening lines were:

Much has been said at this unlucky time
To prove the treading of the stage a crime.

Mistaken zeal, in terms oft not so civil,
Consigns both play and players to the devil.
Yet wise men own, a play well chose may teach
Such useful morals as the parsons preach;
May teach the heart another's grief to know,
And melt the soul in tears of generous woe.

Continuing in this vein, and citing tragic heroes of well-known plays, the homily concluded:

Then bravely dare to assert the taste you've shown,
Nor be ashamed so just a cause to own;
And tell our foes what Shakespere said of old—
Our former motto spoke it, I am told—
That here the world in miniature you see,
And all mankind are players as well as we.

But in spite of this eloquent plea for tolerance, and in spite of whatever merit the productions may have had—the public response appears to have been mild. At least the authorities were not moved to extend the limits of the original concession, and the season came to a close on February 7th.

DOUGLASS AND THE QUAKERS

Douglass then, disappointed but not disheartened, moved to Philadelphia, where he obtained from the tolerant Governor Denny, in spite of the customary Quaker opposition, permission to build a theatre and act in it. The chief reservation was that the playhouse must be constructed outside the city limits. Had it not been for this reservation the company undoubtedly would have returned to Plumstead's warehouse, which was still available.

Douglass received his permit on April 5th, and opened the Theatre on Society Hill, in Southwark, on June 25th with a performance of *Tamerlane*. Evidently the building was of wooden construction, but few details concerning it are known, other than the facts that it comprised the usual pit, gallery and boxes, and that it cost upwards of 300 pounds.

During the period of theatre construction the anti-dramatic religious forces of the city presented a series of petitions to the Assembly demanding prohibitory action. In this move the Quakers were aided by the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, and the Bap-

tists. Under this heavy pressure the Assembly duly passed the called-for act, and submitted it to the Governor for approval. Denny, however, responded with an adroitly conceived compromise which did indeed prohibit the presentation of plays, but the measure was not to take effect until January 1st, 1760, and as it was passed on June 20th, the actors had a full half-year in which to perform freely. And the next year, when the law came into force, it was repealed by the King.

Douglass and his company took full advantage of the situation, and offered a six-month season, beginning, as we have noted, on June 25th, and extending to December 28th. This was by all odds the most extensive and the most brilliant season of plays thus far presented in an American city. According to Pollock, the repertoire included approximately eighty plays (only twenty-eight of which are known to us by title) and five of these were by Shakespeare. Following the by-then well established custom, performances were given on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week. That the public response was favorable is obvious from the length of the season.

Immediately after their closing in Philadelphia, the company moved into Maryland, where they played in several small towns, and then settled for a time in Annapolis. Here they built a theatre for their purpose, and opened it on March 3d (1760) with Otway's *The Orphan*, in the presence of his Excellency the Governor and "a polite and numerous audience, who all expressed their satisfaction." The final performance in Annapolis was given on May 12th, and following that the company went into Virginia, settling in Williamsburg for the winter season of 1760–61.

NEW ENGLAND INVADED

In the early summer of 1761 Douglass invaded new territory—the colony of Rhode Island, the first New England colony to receive a visit from a professional theatrical troupe. There was a good reason why this area had been avoided; most of the New Englanders came of Puritan stock, and held a deep-rooted prejudice against all theatricals—a prejudice which had grown strong during the Restoration period in England, when licentiousness had dominated the stage.

Conscious of the obstacle he faced, Douglass came into the seaport town of Newport with strategic caution, armed with a

commendatory letter from the Governor of Virginia. His first move was to engage the Public Room of the King's Arms Tavern, where he presented "A Series of Moral Dialogues." These 'dialogues' were arranged in five parts, and together added up to a performance of *Othello*. Lest the audience not draw its own properly moral conclusions from the play, its members were furnished a guide to the interpretation of each character. For example:

"Mr. Douglass will represent a noble and magnanimous Moor named Othello, who loves a young lady named Desdemona, and after he has married her, harbors (as in too many cases) the dreadful passion of jealousy.

> "*Of jealousy, our being's bane,*
> *Mark the small cause and the most dreadful pain.*"

The gratuitous couplet relating to Iago read:

> "*The man that wrongs his master and his friend,*
> *What can he come to but a shameful end?*"

As for Desdemona, who "gets smothered (in an adjoining room)":

> "*Reader, attend; and ere thou goest hence*
> *Let fall a tear to hapless innocence.*"

The reception accorded this camouflaged production was encouraging, and Douglass proceeded to build a theatre in the northern part of the town, although he appears to have done so against the will of the authorities. Hornblow notes that it "must have been of the flimsiest construction, for the following year it is said to have blown down in a gale." It was opened on September 7th with *The Provoked Husband*, this performance—obviously in the interest of goodwill—being "for the benefit of the poor."

The season concluded at the end of October with another benefit night "for the poor," and a friendly farewell notice appeared in a paper of November 3d. The correspondent expressed the view that the behavior of the company had been irreproachable, that their skill as players had given "universal satisfaction," and that the "character they brought from the Governor and gentlemen of Virginia has been fully verified." The notice was indeed so eulogistic that it has been suspected of being the work of Douglass himself.

DOUGLASS VS. NEW YORK

Even while he was engaged in breaking the ice of New England hostility, the energetic manager was preparing his second siege of New York. Evidently finding his former theatre on Cruger's Wharf inadequate or unavailable, he obtained permission to build a new house at the corner of Nassau and Chapel (now Beekman) Streets, and, after the usual brief construction period, opened it on November 18th, 1761. If the reader is startled at the rapidity with which these early playhouses rose to completion, he must bear in mind that most of them were simple frame structures, built with slight regard for comfort, ventilation, or safety from fire, and entirely free from the complications of plumbing, wiring, and other modern improvements. Such a building, hastened into existence by long working-days, could be thrown together in a few weeks.

The house opened with a performance of the perennial *Fair Penitent* and the equally hardy afterpiece, *Lethe*. On the 26th the company offered the first performance of *Hamlet* to be given in New York, with young Hallam, now twenty-one years of age, in the title role.

The license which Douglass had obtained permitted him a total of sixteen performances, and these were tentatively scheduled on a basis of two a week for a period of two months. But because of illness which plagued various members of the company, and perhaps for other reasons, the season was drawn out until the end of April—most of the performances after the 1st of February being actors' benefits.

Throughout the season the newspapers carried a running controversy over the merits and demerits (moral and otherwise) of stage plays. Douglass, of course, was by now inured to criticism, and seldom entered the controversy. On one occasion, however, he seems to have risen to a defense of his management from the point of view of economics. Whether he prepared the document himself, or merely provided the data on which it was based, cannot be determined; but in the *Mercury* of December 28th appeared an indignant and detailed reply to a previously printed complaint that the company would be taking some £6000 out of the city.

In the reply we find some interesting figures, which we assume

to be reasonably accurate. The management points out that the most it could expect to gross at any performance was £180; that average gross receipts amounted to £120; that the receipts for the season would therefore total not more than £1920 (16 performances); that the house cost them £650 to build; that scenery and costumes cost £400; that operating expenses would amount to £250; and that the remaining £620 was little enough remainder to cover the living costs of the actors for the whole season. As Odell feelingly exclaims: "Poor actors! What slender profits for all the calumny and abuse they had suffered!"

Another interesting box-office report concerns the charity performance of *Othello* given on January 25th for the benefit of the poor. This statement, which we may assume to be typical, indicates the capacity of the house and also the nature and extent of the operating expenses. For this performance there were 116 box seats sold at eight shillings each; 146 pit seats at 5 shillings; 90 gallery seats at 3 shillings; and in addition, a bit more than £36 was taken in cash at the door—presumably for admissions. The total income was £136. Against this stood expenses of something more than £18, paid out for music, candles, doormen, billposters, dressers, properties, and printing. A net profit of £114, ten shillings was turned over to the poor.

That audiences were not always decorous is proved by the newspaper advertisement of May 3d which offered a reward for the discovery of "the Person who was so very rude to throw Eggs from the Gallery, upon the Stage last Monday, by which the Cloaths of some Ladies and Gentlemen in the Boxes were spoiled, and the Performance in some measure interrupted."

The season ended on April 26th, and five years were to pass before New York was to be offered another series of standard plays. Two years later, in April, 1764, this Beekman Street playhouse was offered for rent, and was advertised as being "convenient for a Store, being upwards of 90 Feet in Length, nigh 40 Feet Wide."

Evidently, however, this hint was not taken, for several years later (in 1765 and again 1766) the house was used for occasional, probably amateur, performances. The last of these, occurring on May 5th, 1766, had unfortunate consequences. A company referred to as "strollers," whether professional or amateur we do not know (there is the possibility that they were in part or wholly

members of Douglass's troupe) had obtained official permission to give a performance of *The Twin Rivals*, but were looked upon with hostility by an organization known as the Sons of Liberty. There was in the colonies at this time a rising tide of feeling against England, which, of course was soon to break into revolution, and as the actors were presumably English, they were a target for attack.

A newspaper account of the evening's disturbance referred to it as a "grand Rout." Trouble started about the middle of the first scene—both in the theatre and outside. It was a kind of free-for-all—the audience taking sides—in which one skull was cracked, a number of persons lost their clothing, and a male actor dressed for a female role was "turned topsey-turvey and whipped for a considerable Distance." The building itself was severely damaged, though there are different stories relating to this point. According to one, the theatre was torn apart and the pieces used for a bonfire. At any rate, this was the end of its use as a theatre.

SUBTERFUGE IN PROVIDENCE

But to return to David Douglass. Although his movements are not too clearly defined during the years 1762–66, it is known that in the summer of 1762 (following his New York season) he spent some time in Providence, Rhode Island, encouraged, no doubt, by his previous success in Newport. The opposition in Providence, however, was so strong that in order to effect the construction of a playhouse he had to resort to the subterfuge of calling it a "school house." It is difficult to understand how the citizens and officials could have been deceived by this naive and implausible device, but Douglass appears to have succeeded with it, for the building was completed, and performances were given in it for several weeks. Perhaps as a result of this defiance of public sentiment, the Rhode Island Assembly in August (when Douglass presumably was performing) passed an act forbidding the further building of theatres or any more acting. And, according to Hornblow, "the act was ordered to be proclaimed throughout the streets of Providence by beat of drum." Drum or no drum, the act was effective until after the Revolution.

Several historians have reported the disappearance of Douglass with his company from the colonies in 1762, and have assumed an absence of four years spent in the West Indies. They have him

returning to the mainland in the autumn of 1766 to build and open the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia. But Eola Willis, the chronicler of the Charleston stage, has produced convincing evidence that during a considerable portion of these four years, and perhaps during the entire period, Douglass was busily performing in Virginia and South Carolina.

In the South Carolina *Gazette* of November 5th, 1763, it was noted that The American Company of comedians, headed by David Douglass and his wife, the former Mrs. Hallam, had arrived in Charleston from Virginia, and that they had already contracted for the building of a playhouse measuring 75 by 35 feet, in Queen Street, near the site of the former theatre. Construction was to be completed by December 5th.

That this schedule was kept, or nearly so, is proved by the record of a performance on December 14th of *The Suspicious Husband*, and (yes, again) *Lethe*. Performances of other plays are noted on the 16th, the 19th, and the 22nd. On through the winter and spring the repertory of standard plays was presented, presumably thrice weekly. And all question as to the personnel of the company is dissipated by the publication in the *Gazette* of the program for a benefit performance of *The Orphan of China* on March 10th, where we find the cast made up of Douglass, both of the young Hallams, and other familiar members of the famous troupe.

As Miss Willis takes pleasure in pointing out, the *Gazette* announcement of November 5th corrects the erroneous belief, held by older historians, that Douglass adopted the name, *The American Company*, in 1766, when he reappeared in Philadelphia. Her sources indicate clearly that it was used in 1763, first in Virginia and then in Charleston. The reason for its adoption is obvious. Anti-British sentiment in the colonies was growing.

ENTER MISS CHEER

Still another correction worth mentioning (with credit to Miss Willis) is concerned with the American debut of Miss Cheer, an actress who was later to achieve great popularity in Philadelphia and New York, and who is properly referred to as the second leading lady of our stage. It used to be thought that her debut occurred in Philadelphia in 1766. Now, however, we have

the record of her debut at Charleston on April 24th, 1764, in the comedy, *A Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret.* Whence she was recruited by Douglass we do not know. Direct from England perhaps; more probably from the West Indies.

The season came to a close on May 10th, and for the next year and a half there are only vague and scattered references to indicate that the company was still in the vicinity. Beginning in January, 1766, however, we encounter a clearly-defined season, which extended into April, and which included, besides such old favorites as *Cato, Douglas, The Gamester,* and *The Provoked Husband,* several new pieces, "first time acted in America." Among the latter were *Love in a Village, The Way to Keep Him,* and *The School for Lovers.* The cast lists for these productions show a considerable number of changes in personnel—indicating a reorganization of the company during the previous year, when Douglass may well have spent some time recruiting in the West Indies.

THE LECTURE ON HEADS

After the close of the season Douglass offered on several evenings his famous Lecture on Heads, a lecture which crops up so frequently in theatrical annals of the eighteenth century that we dare not ignore it. This curious entertainment was the creation of George Alexander Stevens, a minor English author of songs, sketches, and plays, and was first delivered at the Haymarket Theatre, London, in 1764. Who brought it to our shores is not known, but Douglass was probably the first to use it here. It served him well for many years, as it served other actors. Odell notes that in January, 1773, a Mr. Hoar was employing it to regale the citizens of New York, and that this gentleman followed the presentation of the original version with several new lectures on the same subject, just received from London. In 1782 it was being exploited by the colorful John Henry; in 1784 Lewis Hallam was making it an entering wedge for theatricals in Philadelphia; and in 1788 an unfortunate actor named McPherson was trying to raise money with it to extricate himself from debtor's prison.

American audiences have always shown an enthusiasm for lectures, and even in the late nineteenth century we find the

lecturer paving the way for the playwright. Witness, in a later chapter, the rise of Lyceum and Chautauqua.

The Lecture on Heads must have been an extraordinary medley of dramatic characterization, history, and moral philosophy, interspersed with humor, and illustrated by properties and costumes. As offered by Douglass, it consisted of three parts, and its synopsis, as recorded by Odell, is as follows:

PART I

Introduction—Alexander—Cherokee—Quack-Doctor—Arms—Cuckold—Cornucopia—Lawyer—Oration in Praise of Law—Case, Daniel vs. Dishclout—Journey Man's Jemmy—Sir Sanguish (Languish) Lipsey—Frizzl'd Bob—Jockey—Nobody—Arms of Nobody, Somebody, any Body and every Body—Fate of Esteem, Generosity, Friendship, Gratitude, Common Sense, and Public Spirit—Genealogy of Genius—Sciences—Honesty—Flattery.

PART II

Physical Wig—Dissertation on Sneezing and Snuff Taking—Blood—Woman of the Town—Tea Table Critic—Stock Jobber—Alderman Double Chin the Politician and Turtle-Eater—Gambler—his Funeral—his Monument—Anecdote of a Landlord and a Soldier—Yorick—Methodist.

PART III

Riding Hood—Ranelagh Hood—Billingsgate—Laughing and Crying Philosophy—Origin of Ladies Bonnets, Pompoons, Egrette's and Curtain Lectures—Night Rail—Check Wrappers—Face painting exploded—Young Wife and Old Maid contrasted—Old Bachelor—Quaker Man and Woman—Nevernois Hat—Englishman and Frenchman—Virtuoso—Learn'd Critic.

Matter enough, indeed, for a full evening's entertainment!

On May 6th Douglass made a public announcement of his imminent departure from Charleston, and requested, as was his habit, that all his debtors and creditors come to him at once for

settlement of accounts. Shortly afterwards he left for Philadelphia, where he began construction of the first permanent playhouse to be erected on American soil—the Southwark Theatre. The Quakers rose again in protest, but to no avail, and the house, which was placed outside the city limits, was opened in November of that year (1766). Its first story was of brick, its superstructure of wood, the framework being painted red. It was in use for more than fifty years, and is said to have been as ugly as it was substantial.

The season extended to July 6th of the following year, and comprised approximately a hundred performances, with the customary schedule of three playing nights each week. The repertoire included forty full-length plays and of course a number of short afterpieces. Interpolated among standard Shakespearean tragedies and Restoration comedies appeared on April 20th (1767), Thomas Godfrey's tragedy, *The Prince of Parthia*, the first play by an American author to be played professionally. Godfrey, a native of Philadelphia, had been dead for four years when his poetic work was brought to the stage, but the performance gave considerable satisfaction to his many friends, who had persuaded Douglass to produce the piece. As there is no record of a second performance, we may assume that it fell short of success.

It was in this year, also, that young Mr. Greville, a student at Princeton, deserted college for the stage. Joining Douglass's company, he appeared with them both in Philadelphia and New York, and thereby earned the distinction of being the first native American (on record) to become a professional actor.

Another highlight of the season was a contribution to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* by a "gentleman," which Pollock designates as "the first newspaper theatrical criticism in Philadelphia." The writer appears to have had a genuine interest in the theatre, as well as a background of cultivation. He took Mr. Hallam to task for his diction and expressed a wish that the young leading man would "take Copy from the inimitable Garrick, and speak plain English. . . . There is no necessity of destroying the least articulate Beauty of Language, thro' Fury, Eagerness, or Passion. . . ." On the other hand, he pointed out that "Miss Cheer never loses the sweetest Accent, or faulters in the Clearness of Expression . . . though I believe she is equally delicate, and

capable of feeling the Force of Passion. I am not alone, when I pronounce her one of the best Players in the Empire."

THE JOHN STREET THEATRE

With this long and relatively successful Philadelphia season behind him, Douglass and his American Company turned their eyes to New York, and the indefatigable manager was soon supervising the construction of a permanent theatre in John Street. During this process he returned to Philadelphia for a short season of twelve plays at the Southwark Theatre, presented between October 6th and November 23d, but his New York house was ready for occupancy early in December, and was opened on the 7th of that month with *The Beaux' Stratagem* and *Lethe,* plays scarcely unfamilar to the theatregoing public.

The John Street Theatre, as famous as any theatre in our annals, is said to have been "principally of wood; an unsightly object, painted red." Set back about sixty feet from the street, it had "a covered way of rough wooden material from the pavement to the doors." The stage is reported as having been of adequate dimensions, and the house, when full, was capable (according to Dunlap) of an eight-hundred-dollar gross.

A shocking accident marred the company's opening week. As quoted by Odell from the *Mercury* of December 14th: "We hear, that last Week, one of the Stage-Waggons, crossing the Ferry at Kill Vankull, in a Scow, some of the Passengers seated themselves in the Waggon; but in approaching the Shore the Waggon was by some Means overturn'd into the River, by which Accident two Women (Mrs. Morris, belonging to the Play-House and her Maid) were drowned." Odell notes that Mr. Morris, the unfortunate actress's husband, and also a member of the company, did not appear in the cast of the opening performance, suggesting the possibility that the accident occurred that very day.

Space does not permit a detailed account of the personnel of The American Company, but mention should be made of the fact that during this period Miss Cheer grew steadily in popularity, and gradually took over from Mrs. Douglass the leading feminine roles. Hallam, of course, held his place firmly as leading man. In order to do so, however, he found it necessary to hold back a talented new member of the troupe, a handsome

young Irishman named John Henry, who had been recruited by Douglass in Jamaica, and who had made his American debut in Philadelphia.

THE COLORFUL JOHN HENRY

John Henry was perhaps the first "matinee idol" of the American stage, and his popularity was so valuable to the company that in order to retain his services he was taken into the management by Douglass and Hallam. Like many actors of his type, before and since, he led a colorful private life; so colorful indeed that he provided the enemies of the theatre with a great deal of ammunition for their attacks. No history of our stage would be quite complete without a mention of Henry and his four Miss Storers.

It was in Jamaica that the romantic and eccentric Irishman met and became attached to the Storer family—Mrs. Storer, a former singer at Covent Garden Theatre in London, and her four daughters. John Henry married the eldest daughter, who is supposed to have lost her life "in a fire at sea between Jamaica and this country." The other three reached our shores. The second, Ann, became Henry's mistress and bore him a child. Later, as Mrs. Hogg, she achieved some popularity as an actress. The third daughter, Fanny, seems to have stayed clear of Henry's affections. But Maria, the fourth and youngest, eventually married him (after she had grown up) and became a fairly successful singer and actress.

But domestic scandal was not the only characteristic which contributed to John Henry's notoriety. He was the only actor in America at that time to keep a carriage. According to Dunlap, "It was in the form of a coach, but very small, just sufficient to carry himself and his wife to the theatre. It was drawn by one horse and driven by a black boy. Aware of the jealousy towards players, and that it would be said he *kept a coach*, he had caused to be painted on the doors, in the manner of those coats of arms which the aristocracy of Europe display, two crutches in heraldic fashion, with the motto, '*This or These.*' " The explanation was that he suffered from the gout—a surprising affliction in so young a man. We do not know the date of his birth, but inasmuch as he had made his debut in London only five years earlier, and con-

sidering that he lived until 1795, we may assume that at this time (1767) he was still in his twenties.

The first season in the John Street Theatre lasted a bit more than six months, coming to a close on June 28, 1768, after fifty-one recorded performances, though the total may have been greater. Odell estimates that the season witnessed thirty-eight plays, fourteen of which were new to New York, and thirty-one afterpieces. It was by no means a succession of triumphs, for the company labored steadily under a barrage of attacks, and at times business was extremely poor. But the management did its dogged best, and occasionally was rewarded for its persistence.

Among the more colorful incidents of the season were the several performances given in honor of visiting Indian chieftains. One of these occurred in December, when certain chiefs and warriors from South Carolina witnessed Shakespeare's *Richard III* and a Harlequinade. The visitors were reported to have regarded the play with "seriousness and attention," but "their Countenances and Behaviour were rather expressive of Surprise and Curiosity, than any other Passions."

THE CHEROKEES RECIPROCATE

In April a group of Cherokee chiefs and warriors (presumably the same as were entertained in December) "having lately return'd from the Mohawk Country," were treated to three performances at the theatre. And the day before the last of these, it was announced that the Indians, "being desirous of making some Return from the friendly Reception and Civilities they have received in this City, have offered to entertain the Public with the *War Dance*, which they will exhibit on the stage, after the Pantomime."

A week later began the long series of actor's benefits, attended by the usual hopes, fears, rewards and disappointments. Most interesting of these was Hallam's. Choosing *Cymbeline* for the occasion, he failed to draw a good house, and, inasmuch as the rules of the company forbade a second benefit, he was driven to an ingenious method of evasion. First, he explained to the public that the reason for the poor house was simply that everyone thought there was a sell-out, and consequently made no effort to obtain tickets; second, he announced that he had arranged with Mr.

Woolls, another member of the company, to exchange nights with him. In this way Mr. Woolls would receive the profits of *Cymbeline*, and Mr. Hallam would take a new benefit from the forthcoming performance of *The Orphan of China*. Poor Mr. Woolls!

After the closing in June the company evidently rested and nursed their wounds. But in October they are found reopening the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia, where they played until the first of the year. In January they returned to New York and inhabited the John Street Theatre for six months of troubled and certainly not prosperous playing. Following that they moved to Albany for a month (July, 1769), and thence to Philadelphia, where they opened a very successful season in November, and continued it until the following May. Pollock notes that during this engagement the company appears to have had the services of a regular orchestra, for in the advertisement of December 1st it was announced that on opera nights the orchestra would be augmented by "some musical Persons, who, as they have no View but to contribute to the Entertainment of the Public, certainly claim a Protection from any Manner of Insult." The likely explanation of this rather strange announcement is that boys in the gallery were inclined to throw things (oranges or verbal insults) at dignified Philadelphians "seriously busy at their music in the orchestra pit."

Such disturbances were, however, of minor importance. The season was on the whole very favorable, and, encouraged, Douglass led his troupe on into the ever-hospitable South, where he made stands at Annapolis, Williamsburg, and probably other towns, for he did not revisit Philadelphia until the fall of 1772—more than two years after leaving it. The company played in Southwark from October to March, after which they reopened the John Street Theatre in New York on April 12th, 1773.

Things seem to have gone fairly well during this, the last visit of the company to New York until long after the Revolution. The period was, however, marred by the death in June of Mrs. Harman, a well-liked comedienne, who carried considerable prestige as the grand-daughter of Colley Cibber, famous English actor, manager, playwright, and poet laureate. Her death notice stated that "her little fortunes she has left to Miss Cheer," who, incidentally, had retired from the stage some time after her re-

ported marriage in Philadelphia to young Lord Rosehill, a British peer, in 1768, but who now rejoined the company in time to receive this little bequest and to share a benefit night with Mr. Woolls on June 21st.

A NEW COMEDY

The highlight of the season came at its close, with two performances, on August 2d and 5th, of Goldsmith's brand new comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, which had had its premiere in London the previous March. Oddly enough, Hallam played Tony Lumpkin, and John Henry, Marlow.

The American Company then set out for Annapolis, where they were scheduled for a month's playing, then to Philadelphia for a brief two weeks (November 1st to 15th), and finally to Charleston, where they settled down for a long season.

Douglass evidently had spent some time in Charleston during the summer, promoting the construction of a new theatre in Church Street, for in a newspaper of August 14th he thanks those citizens who have subscribed money toward the project, and urges further subscriptions to insure the building's completion in November. On November 29th the *Gazette* announced his arrival with several members of his company by water from Philadelphia, and predicted that the theatre would be ready before Christmas. This prediction was accurate, for the house was opened on December 22d with performances of Garrick's *High Life Below Stairs*, and Kelly's *Word to the Wise*. According to a newspaper account, "the house is elegantly finished, and supposed, for the size, to be the most commodious on the continent. The scenes, which are new, and well designed, the dresses, the music, and, what had a very pleasing effect, the disposition of the lights—all contributed to the satisfaction of the audience, who expressed the highest approbation of their entertainment."

Although there were a few voices raised in criticism of the new theatre, and of the sinful waste of money on such frivolous luxuries as playgoing, the social-minded and aristocratic citizens of the town overwhelmingly out-voted the opposition and gave Douglass one of the most prosperous seasons of his long career. There were 118 performances in all, the last one being given on May 16th, 1774. Shortly afterwards the company broke up for the summer, some going to Philadelphia, others to New York,

and still others to England. Their intention was to reassemble in the autumn for a winter engagement in New York. Political matters, however, were moving swiftly toward a crisis, and on October 24th of that year the Continental Congress passed a resolution calling for the practice of frugality, and discouraging "every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock fighting, exhibition of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments."

DEPARTURE OF DOUGLASS

Douglass, on being informed of this resolution, retired to the West Indies, where he was joined by some other members of his company. Mrs. Douglass is supposed to have died soon thereafter, and in 1778 Douglass married a Miss Peters, "a Lady of very eminent mental, as well as personal endowments." So far as is known, Douglass never left the West Indies, but died there in 1786, leaving a reputed fortune of £25,000.

We must not assume, however, that during these years of professional stage plays, the public was without other types of theatrical entertainment. There was, during the 1760s and 1770s, a succession of musical and variety attractions. During the summer months, for example, New York was enlivened by two rural resorts, where food and drink were served indoors and out, where concerts were offered, and where wax-works, fireworks, and other novelties were put on display. These were the Vaux-Hall Garden and the Ranelagh Garden. In 1770, in a "large and commodious room . . . at the sign of Lord John Murray, in Orange Street, Golden Hill, Mr. Partridge exhibited his art in sleight-of-hand, and for good measure presented "Mr. Punch and his merry Family, with new Alterations every evening. Likewise his Italian shade."

EQUESTRIANISM

Salem, Massachusetts, as yet unsullied by stage plays, found innocent diversion in a display of horsemanship by one John Sharp, "late from England," who rode two horses, "standing upon the Tops of the Saddles, with one Foot upon each, in full Speed," and, as a climax, rode three horses, "standing with one Foot upon each of the outside ones." This took place on November 19th,

1771, and was, according to Greenwood, the earliest recorded notice of this sort of exhibition.

New Yorkers may take some consolation, though, in the knowledge that their town was not far behind Salem in these beginnings of the circus, for the following month an equestrian named Faulks, who had "performed before royalty and nobility in Great Britain," made appearance on several days at "a convenient Place . . . near the Windmill, above the Slaughter-House, in the Bowery." And one must admit that his performance sounds more thrilling than Sharp's, for he played a French horn while riding standing in the saddle, he threw himself on his back while riding two horses, and while riding three, vaulted from one to the other.

An even more famous European equestrian, Jacob Bates, performed in New York in the summer of 1773, riding *four* horses, and adding clowning to the marvels of horsemanship. But enough of horses.

In November the same town had the opportunity of witnessing a balancing artist named Benjamin Abram, who did extraordinarily clever things with tobacco pipes, wine glasses, swords, and peacock feathers. At one point he balanced a peacock feather on his nose, lay down upon his back, and got up again to music. Again he made the feather jump from one part of his body to another. As a finale he balanced twelve wine glasses on a stick.

THE DRUMS SOUND

Tiny seeds of vaudeville were in those days being planted in the vicinity of Broadway, for in March of 1774 the team of Johnston and Brenon appeared at Hampden Hall, near the Upper Barracks, and in April at the John Street Theatre, with an astonishing variety act involving many feats of dexterity on a slack wire. Their properties were similar to those of Mr. Abram, but were more extensive, and included a drum and a straw. These men, or at least one of them, could "Balance a straw on the nose on the wire, and beat a drum at the same time."

Other drums than this one, however, were soon to sound. They were the ominous drums of war.

Chapter III

Struggle and Growth: 1775–1800

ALTHOUGH professional theatricals were suspended during the Revolution, the drama was kept alive by the military forces, particularly by the British. The earliest performances by soldiers were given, ironically enough, in Boston, where no professional actors had dared display their art. General Burgoyne, commander of the British troops in that city, was devoted to the theatre, and in 1775 was responsible for turning Faneuil Hall into a playhouse, where he and his fellows presented several standard plays. Burgoyne is said not only to have acted in these, but also to have authored one of the plays—a farce entitled *The Blockade of Boston*, which ridiculed the Americans. It was while this piece was being rehearsed on January 8th, 1776, that news came of the American attack on Bunker Hill, resulting in a headlong flight of the soldier actors. This incident later was satirized by Mrs. Mercy Warren, one of our first native playwrights, and an ardent patriot, in a dramatic piece which she called *The Blockheads, or the Affrighted Officers.*

In September, 1776, after a period of strenuous fighting, the British under Sir William Howe took New York. Six days later a disastrous fire broke out which destroyed more than a third of the city. Conditions during the ensuing winter were extremely unpleasant for both residents and occupying troops, and a considerable portion of the population had to exist in tents and temporary huts. The British, however, were not to be denied their amusements, for in January they opened a season of dramatic performances in the John Street Theatre, the first offering being Fielding's burlesque, *Tom Thumb.* Whether the performance actually was a competent one we cannot determine, but it received favorable comment in a newspaper—*Gaine's Mercury*—which reported that the house was crowded, that the ladies made a brilliant appearance, and that the reviewer was convinced by

the performance that "a good Education and Knowledge of polite Life, are essentially necessary to form a good Actor." The implication was that the "Gentlemen of the Navy and Army" who did the acting were well equipped by background for their avocational histrionics.

FOR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

It was announced at the beginning of the season that profits from performances would be employed in the immediate relief of widows and orphans of soldiers. Inasmuch as soldiers who had fallen in the British cause were chiefly Hessian mercenaries, Odell wonders very properly how their widows or orphans happened to be in America!

The season ended late in May, after a total of eighteen performances of six plays and nine afterpieces. Although the complete personnel of the company is not on record, it is known that a Major Williams, of the artillery, played leading tragic roles, and that his mistress, "a beautiful English girl" who bore his name, played the heroines. Captain Oliver Delancey painted the scenery, and was perhaps assisted by the latterly notorious Major (then Captain) André. André may also have done some acting. Certainly he was associated with the same crowd of military Thespians a short time later in Philadelphia.

The British took Philadelphia late in 1777, and were no sooner settled than they began a series of dramatic performances in the old Southwark Theatre, which had recently been converted into a hospital. The occupying troops were those of General Howe, and the actors were now referred to as "Howe's strolling players." The season ran from January 19th to May 19th, 1778, and comprised thirteen performances. Delancey and André appear to have been leaders of the group, participating as actors, painting the scenery, and functioning as managers. A drop scene with André's name inscribed on the back is said to have been in existence at the Southwark until its destruction by fire in 1821.

Meanwhile the garrison in New York, now commanded by Sir Henry Clinton, had reopened the John Street Theatre, which was now renamed the Theatre Royal. The first performance was of the old favorite, *Douglas*, on January 6th, 1778. This was followed by productions of other standard plays, the most ambitious being *Othello*, which was presented late in March, and the

most interesting, the first American performance of Sheridan's *The Rivals,* given on April 21st. Altogether there were twenty-one performances during the season, which ran into June. As in the previous year, charity was announced as the primary purpose of the performances, but a financial report which has been preserved makes something of a mockery of this avowed intention. It is stated that for the entire season, the amount contributed to widows and orphans totaled a meagre £140, whereas the sums spent on "repairs, dresses, and all other contingent expences," added up to more than £3000. The inference must be either that the military actors and their assisting actresses were most lavishly costumed, or that members of the company considered themselves more deserving of financial benefits than the widows and orphans.

CATO AT VALLEY FORGE

Although the British were much more active theatrically than the American troops, the latter were not entirely without dramatic entertainment. At Valley Forge, only a few miles from Philadelphia, at least two plays were presented by army personnel during the spring of 1778, and at one of these, a performance of *Cato,* on May 11th, George Washington was in attendance. Although Washington had been one of the signers of the resolution of Congress in 1774 that plays be abandoned during the period of the revolution, he must have felt that an occasional diversion on the part of his long-suffering troops was amply justified.

Washington could, indeed, have consoled himself with the thought that a performance of *Cato* was something more than mere diversion. For this poetic tragedy by Joseph Addison was unquestionably of inspirational value to liberty-loving Americans. Written at the beginning of the century, when England herself faced the prospect of tyrannical rulers, the play attracted American interest from the very beginnings of our theatre. Performed as early as 1736 by the students of William and Mary College, it later proved a mainstay of pioneer professional companies, and was continuously popular for half a century. Although it is dull reading today, and would prove even duller on the contemporary stage, it held a strong appeal for our forefathers because of its glorification of Cato, the ancient Roman statesman who historically had become the symbol of liberty.

In the summer of 1778 American forces re-entered Philadelphia, and by autumn were offering plays in the Southwark Theatre. On October 16th, however, Congress passed another resolution condemning the practice of playgoing, and forbidding "any person holding an office under the United States" to take part in or attend or encourage the performance of plays. According to a newspaper item of the time, the Marquis de Lafayette innocently invited Washington to accompany him to the theatre the evening of the day on which the resolution was passed. When Washington politely refused, giving the reason, Lafayette replied that under the circumstances he would not go either. And this was the end of theatricals in Philadelphia for some time.

In New York, on the other hand, the British were still in control, and a new season of performances was inaugurated in January, 1779, which ran well into May. Although indications are that during previous seasons the officers and soldiers had recruited their actresses from among soldiers' wives and other sympathetic amateurs, the records show that during 1779 at least a few of the feminine performers were professional, and were paid for their services. The most notable of these, and she was given a benefit at the last performance of the season, was Mrs. Tomlinson, who twenty years before had been a member of David Douglass's company. Her daughter Jane also appeared as an actress, and was paid.

LUXURIES FOR AMATEURS

That the actors enjoyed themselves, and spared no expense in achieving their enjoyment, is evident from the expense account which has come down to us. Not only were large sums paid out for wigs, costumes, and other necessaries, but there were frequent bills for suppers brought into the theatre, for quantities of rum and sherry, and for carriage transportation, although the distances involved did not warrant such luxury.

The next season, the fourth of its kind, opened at the John Street Theatre on December 6th, 1779 with *The Miser* and *The Lying Valet*. Previous to the opening (in November) an appeal was made in a newspaper for volunteer actresses. Who, and how many of them, responded to this appeal is a question, but there must have been some response, for the season went forward successfully. And on December 22d appeared a newspaper advertisement offering opera-glasses for sale to playgoers at three

dollars a pair—the first recorded offering of the sort in this country. With a repertoire of sixteen plays, mostly old favorites, the players continued until July 30th, when they concluded with showings of *Jane Shore* and *The Citizen*.

The fifth season of the military company opened in October of that year, and extended to June 11th, 1781, achieving a total of thirty-five performances. During this period the management experienced considerable trouble over illegal admissions and unauthorized entry into private boxes. In November a published notice requested that no person go into a box without a ticket for that particular box, and in another notice in February the managers begged leave "to advertise the Public that for the future a particular set of tickets will be issued for each night, and those of any other impression will be stopped at the door."

The last season for these actors in New York was the short one which began in January, 1782, and concluded on May 8th. The war was drawing to a close, and Cornwallis had already surrendered at Yorktown. Although the British did not evacuate New York until the autumn of 1783, their spirits seem to have lagged during the final year of their occupancy. The bright spot, at least for us, in the final season of 1782 is the performance of Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (its first performance in America) on April 15th. This brilliant comedy, which had been presented originally in London only five years before, was evidently received with approval, for it was repeated on April 22d.

EUGÉNIE IN PHILADELPHIA

In Philadelphia, meanwhile, playgoers were suffering a real famine, for on March 30th, 1779, the Pennsylvania Legislature had passed a law which prohibited all forms of theatrical entertainment, and now, because of our independence of English authority, there was no repeal by the Crown, as on earlier occasions there had been. This law was in effect for ten years, although there was steady opposition to its enforcement, and a few infractions. The first evasion of the prohibition seems to have been made by Alexander Quesnay, a Frenchman, who presented his students in a French-language performance of Beaumarchais' comedy, *Eugénie*, at the Southwark Theatre on January 2d, 1782. In the "brilliant assemblage" which witnessed this presentation were George Washington and the French Minister. Em-

boldened, M. Quesnay announced a repeat performance for the 11th, the proceeds to go to charity. The authorities, however, suppressed this project. They had been caught napping on the 2nd, but they were now alert.

In Baltimore things were different, for Maryland had chosen to disregard the resolution of Congress concerning amusements. During 1781 a theatre was erected in East Baltimore Street, and on January 15th, 1782, it was opened under the management of Mr. Wall, a former member of the Old American Company, and Adam Lindsay, a public house proprietor. Both Mr. Wall and his wife acted with the company, Mr. Wall assuming leading roles which he was not entirely qualified to carry. The most creditable member of the troupe appears to have been Mrs. Robinson, an English tragedienne of real ability. Nearly all the actors were new to America, recruited in England. With a repertoire from the plays of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Otway, Mrs. Centlivre, and other standard authors, the company continued its season into June, but with only fair success.

THE RYANS FROM DUBLIN

The second season opened September 13th, and on the 20th the company was strengthened by the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Ryan, lately arrived from Dublin, and both of them leading players. In October the company visited Annapolis, but was back in Baltimore by the middle of November. Early in February Wall and Lindsay retired from the management, and Dennis Ryan took over. The reason for the change evidently was a matter of financial troubles.

Ryan ran his Baltimore season into the first part of June, when he moved his company to New York and gave performances at the John Street Theatre from mid-June to mid-August, 1783, and again for a ten-day period in October, at which time he alternated nights with the military actors.

With the evacuation of New York by the British in November, Ryan returned to Baltimore, where he opened his winter season on December 2d, playing until February 14th. The historical highlight of this season was his offering on February 3d, of the first *professional* production in America of Sheridan's *School for Scandal*. He then moved to Annapolis for a few performances, but matters were not going well with him, and presently he ceased

activity for the year. He does not appear in the record again until the spring of 1785, when he managed a brief season in Charleston. A year later he died. Although his record was not a distinguished one, it was respectable.

THE STUBBORN QUAKERS

As the war drew to a close, the professionals of the Old American Company, who had been biding their time in the West Indies, returned to the mainland and strove to regain their foothold. In July, 1782, John Henry petitioned the authorities in Philadelphia for permission to give the perennial Lecture on Heads, in order to raise money to pay off accrued ground rent and taxes on the Southwark Theatre, but his plea was refused. In February, 1784, Lewis Hallam petitioned the same authorities for a repeal of the anti-theatrical law, and his petition was supported by a number of citizens. The Quakers, however, presented a counter-petition, and the Assembly voted two to one against repeal.

Hallam, by now a veteran in battle, and accustomed to evasive tactics, as well as camouflage, stayed on in Philadelphia, and managed between April and June to offer several borderline entertainments—lectures, concerts, etc.—one of his offerings being the Lecture on Heads. The next winter, beginning in December, and continuing to the end of July, 1785, he and Henry combined their talents in the field of subterfuge and presented a number of entertainments at the Southwark Theatre under such innocent titles as 'lectures,' 'moral dialogues,' and 'pantomimical finales.'

These entering wedges, however, were not successful in opening the theatre to *bona fide* productions of plays, and in August the Old American Company departed for New York. There, at the John Street Theatre, Hallam repeated the familiar tactics. And, after a month of cautious 'entertainments,' he boldly launched a series of play performances, laying special emphasis on scenic spectacle and pantomime, perhaps with a view to popular appeal, and perhaps, as Odell suggests, because of the smallness of the company.

This series of performances was a short one, ending early in November. And it was attended at every step by public controversy. Its illegality was, naturally, the chief point advanced by its opponents, and when the management offered a hundred dollars for the benefit of the poor, the Commissioners of the Alms House

refused the offer on the grounds that the money came from a polluted source.

Yet scarcely had Hallam closed the theatre doors when John Henry reopened them—late in November. And by the end of the year Hallam had joined him in the management, and the two sailed merrily through a long season under the venerable banner of the Old American Company. Among the principals of the reunited company were such familiars as Mr. and Mrs. Morris, and Mr. Woolls, and, of greater significance, there was a newcomer who was to become one of the great names of our early theatre—Thomas Wignell.

MR. WIGNELL'S DEBUT

Wignell was a cousin of Lewis Hallam's, and had been a member of Garrick's company in England. Engaged by the American Company in 1774, he had arrived on our shores just in time to witness the closing down of the theatre. How he had spent the eleven years between his arrival and his debut in New York seems something of a mystery. But now in 1785 he was no mystery, but a delightful reality. For many years he proved himself not only a brilliant comedian, but also an astute manager. According to Dunlap, Wignell's comedy was "luxuriant," and he was "always faithful to his author."

This important season opened on November 21st with performances of Moore's *The Gamester*, and Macklin's *Love à la Mode*. A picturesque notice appeared in a newspaper the day of the opening, suggesting that traffic problems were not unknown to New Yorkers even in 1785. The management announced that "Ladies and gentlemen are requested to desire their servants, to take up and set down, with their horses heads towards the East-river, to avoid confusion; also, as soon as they are seated, to order their servants out of the boxes." The latter admonition was caused, of course, by the long-established custom (soon to be abandoned) of having servants come to the theatre several hours before curtain time and hold seats for their masters. As a matter of fact it was later in this same season that the practice of reserving seats by ticket number came into use.

At the conclusion of the opening bill, Henry delivered a speech which Odell characterizes as "calculated to propitiate those opposed to theatrical exhibitions." Henry reminded his audience of

the closing of the theatres at the outbreak of the Revolution, and, undoubtedly with emotion, sought their sympathy. "We went to the island of Jamaica," said he. "Ten years we languished in absence from this our wished for, our desirable home, and though often solicited to return . . . we as constantly refused, supposing it incompatible with our duty to the United States. . . . Many of us have passed the Spring and Summer of our days in your service, and we are now returned, trusting we shall be allowed to wind up peaceably the evening of them, under the happy auspices of your protection."

A SPREAD EAGLE

Performances were scheduled for every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but on a number of occasions, for various reasons of which illness was the commonest, the schedule was not kept. A total of seventy performances was, however, attained by August 2d, the closing date. A highlight of the season was a special display on July 4th, when American independence was celebrated for the first time on the stage of a theatre. For the occasion was prepared a "grand emblematic" painting, with Corinthian columns, "a spread eagle with a sword in one claw, and thirteen arrows in the other." The eagle held in his beak a label inscribed with the names of Washington and other heroes. Represented also were angels, a "flame issuing heavenward," and a ship under full sail.

July also provided two notable premieres for New York: Sheridan's *The Critic* on the 10th, and *As You Like It* on the 14th.

Although objections to the operation of the theatre were not effective, they were at times determined. In April, for example, a petition to the legislature demanding the prohibition of dramatic performances carried the signatures of seven hundred citizens. That it was refused was due, no doubt, to the impressiveness of a counter petition carrying twice as many names. This was strong support from a population of approximately twenty-five thousand persons.

POINTS SOUTH

After their New York closing, Hallam and Henry took their players south, playing for a time in Baltimore, and later in Richmond. Meanwhile, theatrical companies were multiplying. Mr.

and Mrs. Allen, who had been members of Hallam's company in 1785, organized a troupe of their own and played in Albany during 1786. In the fall of 1785 Mr. Godwin, a dancing master who a number of years before had been a member of the Old American Company, joined with a Mr. Kidd, who had been associated with Dennis Ryan in Baltimore, to form another troupe, which made its first stand, rather unsuccessfully, in Savannah, Georgia. The next year they invaded Charleston, that always-hospitable town, which, except for a brief visit of Dennis Ryan and his so-called American Company of Comedians in the spring of 1785, had been without plays since 1774. The theatre that David Douglass had built in Charleston before the Revolution had burned down in 1782, and Ryan had created a temporary playhouse for his own use out of the Old Exchange Building. Godwin and Kidd, however, set to work on the construction of a new theatre, and in order to evade the license fee of £100, located the building outside the city limits. In a spirit of caution which must have been born of experience in less theatre-minded communities, these managers called their new playhouse Harmony Hall (suggestive of concerts rather than plays) and opened it in July, 1786, with a mixed bill of music, oratory, and pantomime. The oratory consisted of our old friend, the Lecture on Heads!

It must be noted, however, that caution was not the only factor in determining the nature of the entertainment offered that summer in Harmony Hall. The truth seems to be that the company was short of actors. The managers tried rather desperately to lure Mrs. Ryan from Baltimore, and later offered inducements to Mr. and Mrs. Kenna, who had been acting with Hallam and Henry. But these efforts were fruitless, and the mixed bills of novelties continued. It was October before any standard plays were attempted, and these were made possible only by the assistance of local amateurs. One of the amateurs, incidentally, was Christopher Charles McGrath, who later became an actor-manager. In 1793, in partnership with Godwin, he opened a theatre in Baltimore, and during 1796 managed his own company in Virginia.

The 1786–87 season at Harmony Hall dragged along dispiritedly, aided somewhat by the arrival of a few actors from the north at the end of December, but never achieving real success.

Financial difficulties made it necessary for Godwin to give dancing and oratory lessons on the side. In March, under the pretext that official pressure was to blame, he brought the season to a close. And, except for a few sporadic entertainments, largely amateur, during the next two or three years, this was the end of Harmony Hall.

The Old American Company of Hallam and Henry, who had been playing in Baltimore and Richmond during the fall of 1786, returned to Philadelphia in January, 1787, and resumed their battle with the Quakers. During January and February they presented fifteen evenings of entertainment at the Southwark Theatre, but were careful to designate them as lectures and concerts. Evidence indicates, however, that at least some of the 'lectures' were actually plays masquerading under moral titles. *The Gamester*, for example, was announced as *A Lecture on the Vice of Gambling*, and *The School for Scandal* became *The Pernicious Vice of Scandal.*

A DIRTY PIECE OF CANVAS

For one reason or another the company moved to New York in mid-February, and, after a delay of a day or two caused by their baggage being held up by ice in the river, they opened at the John Street Theatre on either the 13th or 14th with *The Provoked Husband* and *Miss in Her Teens.* They continued until the beginning of June, and during the season attracted an extraordinary amount of attention in the public prints. Some of the criticisms were adverse, but most of them were laudatory. On April 4th the *Advertiser* published a communication which took the theatre management to task for its shoddy staging: "Tho' we do not look for a theatre here conducted in so regular a manner as those in Europe, or the decorations so expensive and elegant, yet a proper respect to the audience, and decent and proper scenery, is and ought to be expected . . . frequently where the author intended a handsome street or a beautiful landscape, we only see a dirty piece of canvas . . . nor is it uncommon to see the back of the stage represent a street, while the side scenes represent a wood."

It was not only the settings which caused complaint from this correspondent, for he added that: "The musicians too instead of performing between the play and the farce, are suffered to leave

the orchestra to pay a visit to the tippling houses, and ladies in the meantime, must amuse themselves by looking at the candles and empty benches."

Whether this rebuke had effect on the habits of the tippling musicians we do not know, but it is pleasant to note that only eight days later the same paper reported of a production that "The scenery is new got up with great taste, and afforded an agreeable feast for the eye."

HISSES AND INSULTS

A great deal was printed concerning the actors, too, some of it controversial as to their relative merits. Jealousies arose within the company, the public took sides, actors were hissed, insults were published. A good deal was said about Mrs. Kenna and Mrs. Morris, who were rivals, with the latter receiving the more support; about Hallam, who had passed his prime; and about Miss Tuke, whose unpopularity seems to have been caused in part by the fact of her being Hallam's favorite. In one printed invective, Mrs. Kenna was rated a talented actress, but was said to be "unfortunate in being connected with a husband who guzzles fat beef,—and with a gawky son whose eyes cross and pass under his nose, and whose tongue is tied, and with a daughter who ought to beat hemp in Bridewell." Of Hallam it was written that, "His battered looks, and shrunk carcase looks the debilitated rake;—but the soul, the animation, the fire, had left the withered body."

It was Wignell who received the most consistent praise—praise which at times grew fanatical. He had by now superseded both Hallam and Henry in public favor, and as a comedian was without rival. In April a reviewer reported that Wignell "deserved not only the plaudits of the house, but the embraces of the men and kisses of the women." He then saluted his idol with, "Antient Mythology said that Atlas supported the world upon his shoulders, you are the Atlas of the American theatre. . . ."

AN AMERICAN PLAY

Historically the season is notable for the production on April 16th of Royall Tyler's comedy, *The Contrast*, the first American play to be given a professional production in New York. Although the piece was criticized for its talkiness, a good deal of pride was expressed in its native authorship, and enough interest

was aroused by the first performance to warrant its being repeated on four later occasions. Regardless of the merits of the play as a whole, great importance attaches to one of its characters—Jonathan—created by Wignell, who was the first of a long succession of stage Yankees.

In June, after a disappointing series of benefits, when several of the actors were forced to take two nights for themselves in order to profit, the company returned to Philadelphia and launched a summer campaign against prejudice and restriction. Renaming the Southwark Theatre the Opera House, they presented a number of plays disguised as "moral lectures," and somehow managed to keep going until August 4th.

In December they were back in New York, where, on the 21st they launched a long but unhappy season which dragged out until May 31st, 1788. During a considerable portion of this season the number of weekly performances was reduced from three to two, and there was a strong emphasis placed on musical and scenic novelties—a sure sign of poor business. The benefit nights were advertised with even more than the customary plaintiveness, and when Mrs. Sewell had her night in *The School for Scandal*, the public was reminded that she was responsible for the education of her "two amiable children," one of whom had won a prize in oratory. It was further promised that in connection with her benefit appearance, Mrs. Sewell would perform on the guitar.

Another member of the company, Mr. McPherson, proved a lamentable case indeed, for at the season's close he was detained in the city for debt while the company moved on to Philadelphia. In his desperate efforts to escape from this dilemma he resorted on two or three occasions during June and July to the expedient of giving public lectures and recitals, the chief feature of which was the Lecture on Heads. He assured the public, however, that this trite piece was to be given with Alterations and Additions.

Mrs. Sewell did not make the trip to Philadelphia either, for, her motherly responsibilities weighing heavily upon her, she quit the stage and opened a boarding and day school for young ladies, where she taught them French, English, the guitar, needlework, and "reading with propriety."

During June and July the Hallam and Henry company presented another of their camouflaged series of performances at the Southwark Theatre, in the City of Quakers. There were fifteen

nights in all, most of them devoted to the presentation of standard plays masked as lectures. *She Stoops to Conquer* was delightfully characterized as a "Lecture on the Disadvantages of Improper Education, Exemplified in the History of Tony Lumpkin."

TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE

These performances did not escape notice on the part of the Quakers, who protested against them with their customary vehemence. But in October the players again opened the theatre, and in the course of three weeks offered ten performances of standard plays, one of these being the first Philadelphia showing of *The Rivals*. In November the Quakers pressed their demands upon the Assembly that the anti-theatre law be enforced. Hallam and Henry, in return, pressed their plea that a license be granted them. Suit was brought against the players for the collection of fines (authorized by law) amounting to the ruinous sum of £200 for each actor per performance. The situation was relieved, however, by the formation of a Dramatic Association, the members of which were prominent and respected citizens. This Association dedicated its efforts to the establishment of a theatre in Philadelphia "under a liberal and properly regulated plan." The fight between tolerance and intolerance went on and on. In February, 1789, the Association provided the Legislature with a statement which argued its case extremely well, and which defended the theatre as a rational institution. This was followed by a sequence of petitions, for and against the theatre. The pros mustered superior support for their cause, and on March 2d, 1789, the troublesome law was repealed as it applied to Philadelphia and its environs. Joyously the Old American Company opened the theatre on March 9th "By Authority," and gave fifteen performances by April 4th, when the closing was necessitated by the company's imminent engagement in New York.

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON

When that engagement began, on April 14th, the company entered upon a lively and unusually prosperous season, its success due in considerable part to the gaiety surrounding the inauguration of Washington as President on April 30th, and to the continued residence of government officials in New York during that year. Washington, who had been an enthusiastic playgoer

since his youth, attended the John Street Theatre on May 6th, when he saw *The School for Scandal* and the tremendously popular afterpiece, O'Keefe's farce, *The Poor Soldier*. Inasmuch as these pieces were said to have been the President's favorites, it may be that the bill had been chosen to please him. On June 5th Washington visited the theatre again to see *The Clandestine Marriage*.

THE FATHER OF AMERICAN DRAMA

The company took a recess of two months beginning July 7th. When it resumed on the 7th of September, it did so with what Odell calls "a novelty of the utmost importance." This was a new play by William Dunlap, the first major American playwright, who in the course of his career composed some sixty pieces, some of which were original, but a large number of which were adaptations and translations from the German and French. His talent was second-rate, but his industry was remarkable, and his influence on the course of our theatre was very great. Honest and idealistic, he brought respectability to a profession which needed it, not only in his practice of playwrighting, but also as a theatrical manager. Furthermore, it was Dunlap who first dignified our stage by chronicling its history. His *History of the American Theatre*, begun in 1828 and published in 1833, is read today for its flavor and personality rather than for its accuracy, but it occupies a unique place among dramatic documents.

The play of Dunlap's which opened the fall season of 1789 was his comedy entitled *The Father, or American Shandyism*. It was the first of his pieces to reach the stage, and was well received, although after a series of four performances its career seems to have ended.

The next notable event of the autumn was Wignell's benefit performance on November 24th, when this sterling comedian was honored by the presence of President Washington. And for this occasion Dunlap composed a comic sketch entitled *Darby's Return*, which made use of the popular character from O'Keefe's *The Poor Soldier*. Wignell, of course, was in the title role, and the sketch, which included topical allusions and complimentary references to Washington, was said to have given pleasure to the President.

The season closed on December 15th, and the company de-

parted for Philadelphia, leaving the gay and official-studded little city of New York (population 33,000) to content itself with concerts, wax-works, animal shows (which displayed ourang-outangs, sloths, baboons, ant bears, porcupines, lizards, sword-fish, tame tigers, and buffaloes) prestidigitators, and a few performances of pantomimes and comedies by amateurs. Such odds and ends of entertainment were, however, augmented the following autumn (1790) by the first production in New York of opera in foreign language. This fairly notable event was brought about by three French singers and dancers, M. and Mme. St. Aivre, and M. Cammas, who on October 7th presented at the City Tavern an operetta entitled *Le Tonnelier*. Several other operettas were presented during the ensuing weeks by the same trio, but in the spring financial difficulties seem to have curtailed these activities, and M. St. Aivre confined himself thereafter to conducting his dancing school, an occupation which apparently was his mainstay. Toward the end of April he announced in the public print that although it was true M. Cammas was returning to the West Indies, it was not true, as rumor had it, that he (St. Aivre) was also deserting the New York scene. "My enemies," said he, "(and sorry I am to say that enemies I could have here)" had circulated this false report in order to ruin him with his creditors. Whereupon he announced his firm intention of conducting his dancing school during the summer and the following winter. This was a ray of hope, at least, for the creditors.

Meanwhile, in Philadelphia, the Old American Company had opened its season at the Southwark Theatre on January 6th, and had made improvements in the playhouse itself, including a brick pavement from the street to the door, a new heating system (details lacking) for cold weather, and a cooling system (consisting of "a wind sail," which must have been a primitive fan, and the rather picturesque device of having fire engines play water on the roof) for hot weather.

The improvement they did not make, however, was one that they had promised the previous year—a strengthening of the company's personnel. Yet they got through the season (which ended July 19th) successfully, for the Philadelphians were happy to have plays presented regularly and legally.

In April they had a flurry of competition from a company headed by Mr. and Mrs. Kenna, who had been members of their

troupe in 1787. Under the name of the New American Company the Kennas offered performances in a small wooden theatre in Front Street which they called the Northern Liberty Theatre. Only four performances were given during April, and none in the two following months. In July, however, after the close of the Old American Company's season, the newcomers resumed activity and played with fair regularity during the remainder of 1791 and on into May, 1792. Although they presented a number of standard plays, as well as pantomimes and musical novelties, their program seems not to have interfered in any serious way with the older company's popularity.

WIGNELL SECEDES

Trouble came not from without but from within the Old American Company. Hallam, it is believed, had promised Wignell he should be sent to England to recruit new actors. But at the season's close this agreement was ignored, and Henry was named the recruiter. Wignell was a minor shareholder; Hallam and Henry were the major owners. Besides, Henry was jealous of Wignell's popularity. The result was that Wignell quit the company and (the following year) went to England to recruit a company of his own. First, however, he acquired a partner named Alexander Reinagle, a prominent musician, who immediately launched a fund-raising campaign toward the erection of a first-class theatre in Chestnut Street.

Hallam and Henry, after the defection of Wignell, returned to open the John Street Theatre in New York on October 10, 1791. After several months of undistinguished performances of familiar plays they were joined (late in January) by M. and Mme. Placide, dancers and pantomimists extraordinary, lately arrived from France, and early in February by additional members of the Placide troupe, who landed in Charleston and made their way shortly to New York. The Placides attracted considerable attention, and aided conspicuously in enlivening an otherwise routine season, which ended in May. Henry left the company in March for his voyage to England, further depleting an organization which had already suffered from the absence of Wignell, and from the death of Mrs. Harper, a leading actress, at the beginning of the season. An item considered worthy of mention by historians is the fact that during this year a member of the company

was John Martin, who had made his debut in Philadelphia, and who was the second American-born actor to appear on the professional stage. The first was, as will be remembered, Mr. Greville, who had acted with Douglass in 1767.

The company moved to Philadelphia at the end of May, 1792, and performed in the Southwark Theatre until the first week of July. Then it disbanded, and underwent a serious reorganization, with several members quitting the troupe for good. Mr. Harper and Mr. Woolls, both veterans, were among the deserters. At this time, too, came a significant change in the economic policy of the company. For forty years it had been the practice (introduced by the Hallams in 1752) to have all the principal players on a sharing basis. Now, with few exceptions, they were paid salaries.

HODGKINSON ENGAGED

Henry's trip to England was not without reward, for in Bath he engaged a brilliant actor, John Hodgkinson, who, the previous December, had addressed a letter to Hallam and Henry in New York applying for engagement as leading man with the Old American Company. In the letter he had expressed his interest in America, but although this interest may have been genuine, it was sharpened, we discover, by Hodgkinson's desire to shake free from a Mrs. Munden, with whom he had been living in Bath, and to escape into a new world with a Miss Brett, an actress with whom he was enamored.

Henry proved a godsend to Hodgkinson (and to Miss Brett, who presently became Mrs. Hodgkinson) and Hodgkinson proved a godsend to Henry, from a business point of view. Personally and artistically he was difficult, for he demanded all the good roles, and his versatility was so great that he could demand them with justice. Although he was only twenty-six years old when he arrived in New York, his range in acting was extraordinary, and he became known as the "provincial Garrick." According to Odell, he was "probably the only performer even approaching first-rate abilities that New York had yet seen."

Hodgkinson (and his wife) made their American debut with the company at the Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia, on the 26th of September, 1792, along with several other English recruits, including Mr. Prigmore, Mr. King, Mr. West, and the famous Mrs. Pownall, who under her previous name of Mrs. Wrighten,

was well known on the London stage. The season was a short one, for the company was due to return to New York after the first of the year. They closed in Philadelphia on January 12th and opened at the John Street Theatre on the 28th. It was at this time that Hallam married Miss Tuke, the popular comedienne with whom he had been long enamored, and the event served to intensify the jealousies and political intrigues which plagued the troupe. Young Mrs. Hodgkinson (wife of the new star) was talented and ambitious; Mrs. Henry (the former Maria Storer) was definitely a rival of Mrs. Hodgkinson for comedy roles, and as the wife of a manager, was in a strong position; Mrs. Hallam, now the wife of the other manager, was also strategically placed. Mrs. Pownall's outstanding talent both as actress and singer was resented by the other actresses; and, as a final complication, Hodgkinson and his wife had brought the wife's sister (another Miss Brett) into the company, and she, of course, played her part in the confused throat-cutting. We leave the reader to imagine the savagery of this internecine strife.

THE ICE IS BROKEN IN BOSTON

Before moving into the events of 1793, however, we should pause to note the addition during 1792 of another city to the small list of early theatrical centers. The reference is to Boston, which, as a stronghold of Puritanism, had resisted, with the aid of a law made effective in 1750, all efforts to encourage the drama. The only infractions of the rule had been the performances by the British military in Faneuil Hall during the Revolution.

Now, in the summer of 1792, a number of actors, several of whom were recently arrived from England, notably Charles Stuart Powell and a Mr. Watts, joined with the truant Mr. Harper and Mr. Woolls (late of the Old American Company) in a campaign to free Boston from its anti-theatrical tradition. With the support of certain citizens who subscribed funds for the purpose, the group acquired a site in Broad Alley near Hawley Street, and erected on it a temporary theatre seating about five hundred, which they judiciously christened the New Exhibition Room. Here, in August, they began a series of mixed entertainments, including ballets featuring the famous Placides. About the end of September they were emboldened to present standard plays, and continued on this policy until the evening of December 5th,

when a sheriff intruded on the performance and arrested Mr. Harper, the co-manager. The audience protested vigorously, but the law prevailed, and the theatre was closed. Mr. Harper, however, was released the following day.

The significant thing is that the ice had been broken, and strong public sentiment had been aroused in favor of theatricals. An association of drama-lovers was formed, repeal of the law was effected (1793), plans were drawn for the erection of a first-class playhouse in Federal Street, and in June of that year Mr. Powell departed for England to recruit a company for Boston.

Now, after our brief excursion to New England, let us turn back to New York, where we find the Old American Company opening its season in John Street on January 28th, 1793. This was a season during which Hallam noticeably declined in importance as an actor, as did Henry also. It was Hodgkinson who carried most of the leading roles. And his versatility appears to have equaled his omnivorousness. The plays presented covered a wide range, but there was a distinct emphasis on comedy, for the talents of the company at this time were not displayed at their best in tragedy. Besides a number of old favorites, there were many new plays, chiefly comic, from such contemporary dramatists as Holcroft, O'Keeffe, Reynolds, and Mrs. Inchbald. There were also a good many musical pieces. Dunlap refers to the season as a highly successful one, but against this we have a reminiscence of Hodgkinson (who was not getting on well with managers Hallam and Henry) in which he speaks scornfully of the quality of the management and states flatly that business was bad. "Pieces were given out," he recalls, "and no Manager attended to point a single Direction. The Orchestra was composed of about six Musicians, some of whom were incapable of their Business; and had I not been induced by Considerations for my own Reputation as an Actor, to take Care that the Stage Department was not totally destroyed where I was concern'd, this neglect would have been more apparent than it was! Notwithstanding my Exertions, the Theatre was nearly deserted."

At any rate, after a long-drawn-out series of benefit nights, the season came to an end on June 14th, and the company moved to Philadelphia, where they played during July and August, a recurrence of the yellow fever plague cutting short their engagement.

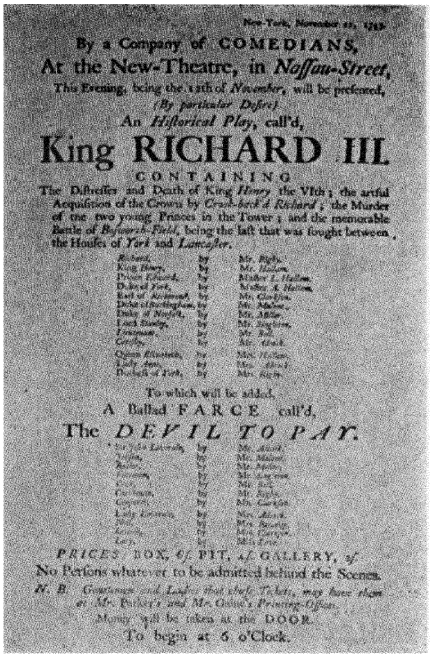
A TASTE FOR THE ROMANTIC

An interesting sidelight on this period is furnished by Dunlap, who notes that although fashions in dress were changing, the actors clung to the traditions of the century that was coming to a close, thus setting themselves apart from the citizenry. "Long after others wore their hair short and of nature's color," he reports, "Hodgkinson had powdered curls at each side, and long braided hair twisted into a club or knot behind! Instead of pantaloons and boots, breeches and stockings and shoes. This costume, with his hat on one side, and an air and manner then known by the appellation of theatrical, marked him among thousands." Other members of the Old American Company exhibited a similar taste for the romantic. "West usually appeared in boots and leather breeches, always new, and three gold-laced buttonholes on each side of the high, upright collar of a scarlet coat. While Robins, a very tall and large framed young man, in addition to the gold-laced collar, wore three gold hat-bands." Perhaps this explains some of the animosity of the sober Quakers toward the players.

The summer of 1793 was enlivened by several theatrical events other than the Philadelphia engagement of the Old American Company. In New York, for example, a circus was opened in Greenwich Street by the famous Mr. Ricketts, outstanding equestrian of the period, who had before this been operating in Philadelphia. Although Ricketts was presently to expand his circus bill to include dramatic performances, during this first season he contented himself with feats of horsemanship and clowning acts executed by himself and a small number of assistants. From early August until early November he regaled his audiences twice weekly with numerous "astonishing tricks," and then disappeared, presumably in the direction of Philadelphia, a city for which he had great plans.

A THEATRE IN NEWPORT

Another event was the opening of a theatre in Newport, Rhode Island, following the repeal of the anti-theatre law in that state. The theatre was created by Alexander Placide, the dancer, who purchased a large brick building previously used as a market, and remodeled it for dramatic use. And in this enterprise he was



New-York, November 22, 1753.

By a Company of COMEDIANS,

At the New-Theatre, in *Nassau-Street*,

This Evening, being the 12th of *November*, will be preferred,

(By particular Defire)

An *Hiſtorical Play*, call'd,

King RICHARD III.

CONTAINING

The Diſtreſſes and Death of King *Henry* the VIth; the artful Acquiſition of the Crown by *Crook-back'd Richard*; the Murder of the two young Princes in the Tower; and the memorable Battle of *Boſworth-Field*, being the laſt that was fought between the Houſes of *York* and *Lancaſter*.

Richard,	by	Mr. *Hallam*.
King *Henry*,	by	Mr. *Hallam*.
Prince *Edward*,	by	Maſter *L. Hallam*.
Duke of *York*,	by	Maſter *A. Hallam*.
Earl of *Richmond*,	by	Mr. *Gardiner*.
Duke of *Buckingham*,	by	Mr. *Adcock*.
Duke of *Norfolk*,	by	Mr. *Allen*.
Lord *Stanley*,	by	Mr. *Singleton*.
Lovel,	by	Mr. *Rigby*.
Catesby,	by	Mr. *Hallam*.
Queen *Elizabeth*,	by	Mrs. *Hallam*.
Lady *Ann*,	by	Mrs. *Adcock*.
Duchess of *York*,	by	Mrs. *Rigby*.

To which will be added,

A Ballad FARCE call'd,

The *DEVIL TO PAY*.

Sir *John Loverule*,	by	Mr. *Adcock*.
Jobson,	by	Mr. *Malone*.
Butler,	by	Mr. *Rigby*.
Footman,	by	Mr. *Singleton*.
Cook,	by	Mr. *Kirk*.
Coachman,	by	Mr. *Rigby*.
Conjurer,	by	Mr. *Gardiner*.
Lady *Loverule*,	by	Mrs. *Adcock*.
Nell,	by	Mrs. *Rigby*.
Footman,	by	Mrs. *Footman*.
Lucy,	by	Miss *Lane*.

PRICES BOX, 6*s.* PIT, 4*s.* GALLERY, 3*s.*

No Perſons whatever to be admitted behind the Scenes.

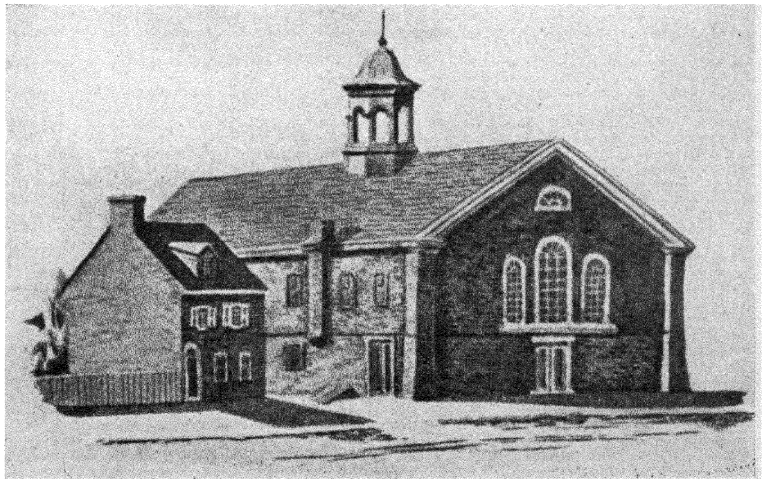
N. B. Gentlemen and Ladies that have Tickets, may have them at Mr. Parker's and Mr. Gaine's Printing-Offices.

Money will be taken at the DOOR.

To begin at 6 o'Clock.

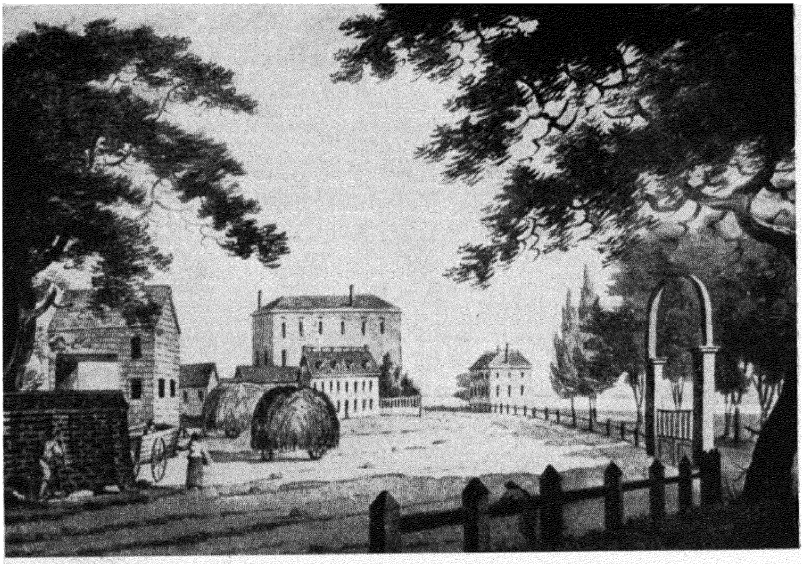
Oldest known American playbill, 1753.

(Courtesy J. B. Lippincott Co.)



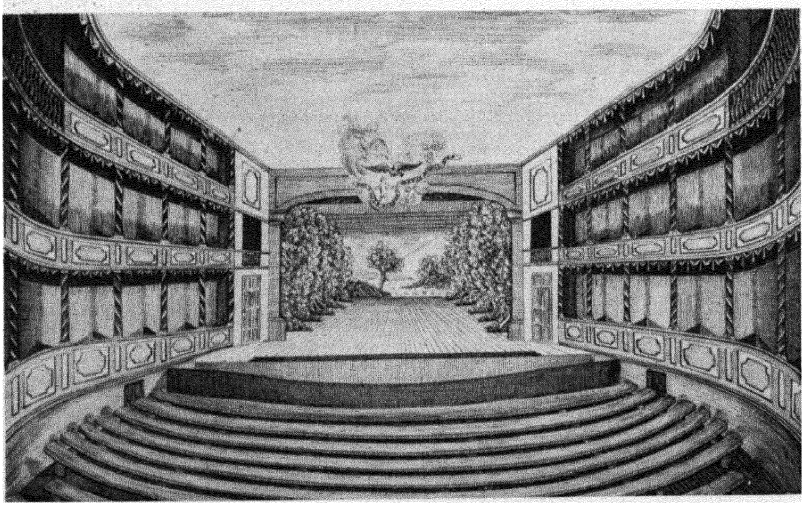
The Old Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia, 1766. The first brick playhouse erected in America.

(Courtesy of The Library of the Univ. of Pennsylvania.)



The Haymarket Theatre, Boston, 1796.

(Courtesy of Little, Brown & Co.)



Interior of the New Theatre, Philadelphia, 1794.

(Owned by the Cooper Union Museum.)

joined by Joseph Harper, the manager who had been arrested in Boston, and who, the previous season, had presented some plays (disguised as moral lectures) in the Court House at Providence. The Harper-Placide forces opened in Newport on July 3d and continued a series of standard plays, operettas and pantomimes until October 8th. This playhouse, known as the Newport Theatre, remained in use for half a century.

THE CHARLESTON THEATRE

Meanwhile, down in Charleston, where entertainment had been at low ebb for several years, there was exciting activity. Ground had been broken in August, 1792, for the erection of a new and first-class theatre on Savage's Green, a convenient and respectable location, and this theatre, promoted by Thomas Wade West, and managed by West and Bignall, was opened on February 11, 1793, with a performance of O'Keeffe's comic opera, *The Highland Reel.* The Charleston Theatre, for thus it was christened, gave this city at last a playhouse worthy of its fashionable citizenry. A contemporary description of the house gives its dimensions as being a hundred and twenty-five feet in length by fifty-six in width, and mentions such details as stone ornaments, a large flight of stone steps, a palisaded courtyard, windows with venetian blinds for every box, "three tiers of boxes decorated with thirty-two columns; to each column a glass chandelier with five lights," fancy paintings, mouldings and projections silvered, and three ventilators in the ceiling. How warmly the theatre was appreciated may be learned from a reminiscent note by Charles Fraser, a Charlestonian of the period. "I can never forget," says he, "the delight which this amusement produced in all classes of our community. The box-office was thronged of a morning and on the evening of representation the doors of the Theatre were besieged by crowds long before the hour of opening them. The stage was the general subject of conversation; and so enchanting was its influence, that the ladies were heard to say that 'they could live in the theatre.' "

The season ran till May 29th, with a total of forty-eight nights of performance, the repertoire being composed chiefly of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedies, popular operettas and pantomimes, with a few plays of Shakespeare.

After this southern excursion let us return to New York and the

autumn of 1793, where, a week after the closing of Ricketts' circus, we find the Old American Company reopening the John Street Theatre. That was November 11th. More sensational than the opening, however, was the debut on the 20th of the celebrated English tragedienne, Mrs. Melmoth, who had been in the city for some time, but had made herself known to the public only through dramatic readings. The play chosen for her debut was Murphy's tragedy, *The Grecian Daughter*, and although the actress was somewhat past her prime, and her figure was, in Dunlap's words, "commanding, but not a little too large," the occasion was satisfactorily impressive. An unfortunate aspect of Mrs. Melmoth's addition to the company was its heightening of the dissension between Hallam, Henry and Hodgkinson. The latter promoted the newcomer vigorously. Henry, already in a fever of irritation over Hodgkinson's popularity, resented Mrs. Melmoth not only because she was backed by his rival, but also because her roles were taken away from Mrs. Henry. Hallam, for reasons of his own, sided with Hodgkinson. This was but one more move in the three-sided game which ended in Henry's being squeezed out of the management the following May.

Another pathetic note in the season was the reappearance on December 2d of an actress bearing the name of Mrs. Long, who, a quarter-century earlier had achieved great popularity as Miss Cheer. According to Dunlap, "Time had deprived her of all attraction, and she was never heard of more." Odell, however, corrects the implication that the poor woman retreated into obscurity after a single performance. He points out that she made several appearances during the season, although her roles diminished steadily in importance.

A NATIVE OPERA

In March, 1794, the routine of standard plays was interrupted by the production of a new opera by Mrs. Hatton, a poetess, and a sister of the famous Kembles of the English stage. The opera was entitled *Tammany, or The Indian Chief*, and it was brimming over with noble expressions of republicanism, of liberty and equality. Its four performances were made occasions for demonstrations on the part of ardent patriots, and for a certain amount of scorn from the more aristocratic. Word got around that Mrs. Melmoth had refused to speak the epilogue, which had then been

assigned to another actor, and there was quite a surge of public sentiment against the tragedienne, the assumption being, of course, that she objected to its patriotism. One outraged contributor to a journal urged people to stay away from the theatre on a night when she was to perform. "I hope," he exclaimed, "she will be *convinced*, by the *absence* of republicans when she appears that the *people* resent her impertinence. I think she ought not to be suffered to go on the New York stage again." This indignant suggestion, however, went unheeded. Mrs. Melmoth continued her matronly march down the avenues of tragedy, reducing her audiences to tears with unfailing skill.

THE END OF JOHN HENRY

The latter part of the season, and an excessively long part of it, was devoted to a series of benefit performances for the actors (twenty-six nights in all), and for this purpose a number of new plays were brought out. For Henry's benefit, however, on May 7th, an old favorite was employed, *Jane Shore*, with Mrs. Henry in the title role. This was the farewell of the Henrys to the John Street Theatre and to all theatres. Before the end of the season, which came on June 28th, Henry had agreed to sell his interest in the company to Hallam and Hodgkinson for ten thousand dollars. Later the two partners quarreled over the division of Henry's share, but Henry was beyond reach of quarrels. Shortly after his retirement he died on board a vessel bound for Rhode Island, and, according to Dunlap, was "buried without ceremony under the sand of an island in the sound. His wife, who was with him, it is supposed never recovered from the shock, and died, deprived of reason, at Philadelphia, 25th April, 1795, after having had the dead body of her husband brought to her, from its first place of unceremonious interment."

Let us recall to mind now the ambitious plans of Wignell and Reinagle to establish a first-class theatre in Philadelphia. Wignell had recruited his company in England, and had brought them back with him in the summer of 1793—a veritable colony, consisting of fifty-six men, women and children. The new theatre under construction for them on Chestnut Street was not, however, ready for occupancy. Besides, the yellow fever was raging in the city. Considerable time, therefore, elapsed before the company became active. Finally, on February 17th, 1794, the play-

house was opened, and was described as "incomparably the finest home of the drama in America." Designed by Wignell's brother-in-law, it was a copy of the Royal Theatre at Bath, and held an audience of two thousand. Performance nights were, as usual, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the highest priced seats (boxes) were one dollar. The players were, with the exception of Wignell and Mr. and Mrs. Morris, entirely new to America, and included several actors of undoubted brilliance: Mrs. Oldmixon, James Fennell, John Harwood, John Pollard Moreton, and Mrs. Whitlock (sister of Mrs. Siddons).

The season ran until July 18th, and offered a total of forty-seven plays, thirteen of which were new to Philadelphia. According to Pollock, "It was the best season America had ever seen." At its conclusion the company moved to Baltimore, where Wignell and Reinagle had built a theatre also, and played there during the summer and early fall.

While the Chestnut Street Theatre was dark, Hallam and Hodgkinson arrived from New York and reopened the Southwark Theatre, where they played (with Mrs. Melmoth featured) until December 4th. On the closing night the Old American Company was honored by the attendance of President Washington. This was the last visit of the famous troupe to the City of the Quakers, and the last important season for the Southwark Theatre.

THE FEDERAL STREET THEATRE

The theatre was making progress in more than one city during 1794. On February 3d, two weeks before the opening of the new playhouse in Philadelphia, Boston witnessed the opening of the Federal Street Theatre (also called the Boston Theatre). This, too, was an imposing edifice of brick and stone, of Corinthian columns and a *porte-cochère*. It even boasted a wing which housed "a noble and elegant dancing-room."

Under the management of Powell and Baker, the Boston Theatre presented standard plays three nights a week until July, and with considerable success, although the company was not a very brilliant one. As a concession to conservative Bostonians, performances were carefully scheduled so as not to conflict with religious services. An outstanding feature of the season was the running fight carried on between the management and gallery

hoodlums, whose delight was to plague and assault members of the orchestra. The abused musicians at one time went so far as to publish a request in the newspapers "begging the thoughtless or ill-disposed not to throw apples, stones or other missiles into the orchestra."

This was an interesting year, also, down in Charleston, where, in their recently built theatre (1793) the West and Bignall company carried on with standard plays, and where, beginning in March, a newly organized company of French actors provided competition. In 1793 there had been a great influx of French people into Charleston as a result of a native uprising and massacre on the island of Santo Domingo. These refugees now formed a considerable proportion of the city's population, and naturally contributed richly to its amusements.

CHARLESTON'S FRENCH THEATRE

The French players gave their first few performances in the Charleston Theatre, but early in April moved into a house of their own, a remodeled brick building. The proprietor of the French Theatre was John Joseph Leger Solee, and the manager was none other than Alexander Placide, who had been in this country since 1791, had been at times associated with Hallam in New York, and was by now well known in Boston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. This was the second French-language theatre to be established in the United States—the first having been the Theatre St. Pierre in New Orleans, opened in 1791.

The French language did not prove much of a barrier to non-French theatregoers, for most of the productions relied on music, dancing, and pantomime rather than on spoken dialogue. Many operas were presented, and many harlequinades. Occasionally there was a literary comedy—the most notable of these being Beaumarchais' *Barber of Seville*, which was played on June 12th. Although later it attained extraordinary popularity as an opera, it was a spoken drama in 1794, just as it was at its Paris premiere in 1775.

The French Theatre was popular not only with the public, but also with some of West and Bignall's actors. In other words, during the season, several dissatisfied members of the latter troupe deserted and joined up with the French, among them certain members of the Sully family, who had recently assumed an im-

portant place in the Charleston Theatre. Matthew Sully and his family (wife and nine children) came to Charleston from England in 1792, chiefly because his sister was the wife of West, the theatre manager. The whole family (with the exception of Lawrence, the eldest son, who took up miniature painting in lieu of acting) appeared on the Charleston stage at one time or another, some only during their childhood, and others as adults. They seem to have been particularly useful in harlequinades and musical pieces, the older Sully having been billed as a "celebrated Harlequin."

The Charleston Theatre closed its season at the end of June, but the French Theatre (now without competition) ran on into August. In September West and Bignall absorbed the French company, and thus changed a troublesome rival into a useful ally. The large and versatile troupe which resulted from this merger opened the new season on October 6th, and ran straight through till June of 1795. Not, however, without a bit of opposition, for a Mr. Edgar, one of the actors, having quit West and Bignall, formed a company of his own, arranged with Solee for the use of the French (renamed the Church Street) Theatre, and opened there on December 20th. He had troubles. On February 23d he ended the engagement and returned to the fold from which he had strayed.

RICKETTS, THE CIRCUS MAN

The remaining activity of 1794 worth mentioning is that of Ricketts, the circus man, who opened a completely "new and commodious Amphitheatre" in New York (on Broadway) in November. His offerings continued at regular intervals until the following April, and included a great variety of equestrian feats, some musical numbers, and "Italian Fire-Works" exhibited by Mr. Embroise. Mr. Ricketts pledged himself that "no danger whatever need be apprehended from the Fire-Works, as the materials are of such nature as will entirely counteract it."

Now, lest this narrative of theatrical events grow tedious, let us summarize briefly the few remaining years of the eighteenth century.

Highlights of 1795 were as follows:

Hallam and Hodgkinson had reopened the John Street Theatre on December 15th (1794) and played three nights a week until

June 27th, alternating nights during the spring with Ricketts' Circus, the latter showing on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. There was a threat in the spring that Wignell would bring his strong Philadelphia company to New York and compete with Hallam and Hodgkinson. Wignell went so far as to suggest that Ricketts rent him his amphitheatre for this purpose, but the deal did not go through.

JOSEPH JEFFERSON I

During the summer New York was swept by the yellow fever, and theatricals ceased. In the autumn the Old American Company moved to Boston, where they inhabited the Federal Street Theatre from early November until late January. The Boston company which, under Powell's management, had operated in Federal Street during the first half of the year, had broken up early in the summer, and Powell had been forced to resign his position because of the unfortunate financial results of the season. Several members of this company did find employment, however, with Hallam and Hodgkinson. And a more notable recruit was Joseph Jefferson (the first), who had been engaged by Powell, but who arrived from England after Powell's resignation. His acquisition by the Old American Company was therefore an unexpected piece of luck on its part. This young actor (the son of Thomas Jefferson, one of Garrick's company in London) immediately took his place as an outstanding comedian on the American stage, and held that place until 1830. He was the grandfather of Joseph Jefferson III, immortal delineator of Rip Van Winkle, and the greatest Bob Acres.

In Philadelphia Wignell's company played steadily at the Chestnut Street Theatre from December 5th, 1794 to July 4th, 1795. During the autumn they played in Baltimore. And while they were away, on October 19th, the indefatigable Ricketts opened a new amphitheatre, which he called the Art Pantheon, just across the street from the theatre. Although this circus was constructed of wood, it was shaped like a circular tent, was "ninety-seven feet in diameter, with white walls, straight for eighteen feet, slanting upward to make a conical roof fifty feet high." Although at first the performances were chiefly equestrian, by December Ricketts had begun to augment his show with farces and pantomimes. His season was a great success, and he is

said to have played to six or seven hundred persons at every performance.

In Charleston, the West and Bignall company ended their season of standard plays on May 7th, and on May 20th the French Comedians took over at the Charleston Theatre for a summer series of comedies, operettas and pantomimes. During that summer Mr. Solee, proprietor of the Church Street Theatre, formed a new company made up largely of recruits from the recently disbanded Boston troupe, and including the famous Mrs. Pownall and her two daughters, the Misses Wrighten, who made their theatrical debuts in Charleston. Renaming his playhouse the City Theatre, Solee opened it on November 10th, and played through the entire season. He had no competition from West and Bignall until early in 1796.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1796

The Old American Company opened in the John Street Theatre on February 10th, and continued until June 25th. The repertoire was the customary mixture of old plays and new, interspersed with musical pieces and farces. On April 18th was given the first performance of an opera by William Dunlap entitled *The Archers,* which had a Swiss setting, and was based on the story of William Tell. According to the author, the piece was "received with great applause . . . was repeatedly played, and was printed immediately." It was during this season that Joseph Jefferson was introduced to New York audiences, and another distinguished newcomer was Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, "a tall, elegant, beautiful young woman, whose taste in dress made her a model for the belles of the city, and whose manners were as fascinating off as on the stage. . . . America had not seen so perfect a fine lady in comedy." The quotation is from Dunlap.

Trouble brewed all year between Hallam and Hodgkinson, the joint managers, with Mrs. Hallam contributing to the trouble by getting drunk and displaying an ugly temper. Hodgkinson was working constantly to squeeze Hallam out of the management, and toward the close of the season he sold half of his interest to Dunlap, whom he could count on to side with him, and henceforth Hallam's path was thornier than ever. Dunlap, of course, was glad to buy into the management as a means of furthering the production of his own plays. When the company reopened

on September 26th it was under triple management, and continued thus throughout the year, with friction mounting steadily toward a climax of combustion.

WIGNELL VS. RICKETTS

In Philadelphia it was a case of Wignell vs. Ricketts. And so popular was the Pantheon circus that the Chestnut Street Theatre was driven to the strategy of employing Signior Joseph Doctor, an acrobat from England, and M. and Mme. Lege, pantomimists from the Italian Theatre in Paris, to supplement with colorful novelty their presentations of standard plays. Furthermore, because he lacked outstanding dramatic stars, Wignell left for England in April on a recruiting mission, while his company continued until the first of July. When Ricketts opened his new season in October, he strengthened his position even more by offering a series of new and elaborate stage pantomimes in connection with typical circus acts. In retaliation, the Chestnut Street Theatre, shortly after its opening in December, tried encroaching on the Pantheon's Saturday night business. Heretofore, by agreement, the theatre had played only Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the circus on the three other days. When this encroachment occurred, Ricketts promptly announced that hereafter he would play on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. So, for several weeks the rival houses divided the business on those nights. But soon Wignell and Reinagle hoisted the white flag, renounced their claims on Saturday night, and the original schedule was restored.

Ricketts, incidentally, had taken time off from his Philadelphia activity to conduct a lively season in New York during May, June and July. And it was in New York that he first produced his spectacular stage shows.

POE'S MOTHER

In Boston the Federal Street Theatre opened the year under the management of Colonel Tyler, and on January 25th occurred the debut of an English actor, John Brown Williamson, who in May succeeded Tyler as manager. Williamson had been drawn from the Haymarket Theatre, London, and achieved immediate success on his appearance in America. His debut was as Othello. On April 15th there was another debut, less heralded

but in some ways more significant—that of Miss Arnold, who appeared on that occasion merely as an entr'acte singer, but who later won praise as a comedienne, and who, more importantly to us, also became the mother of Edgar Allan Poe.

During this spring Charles Stuart Powell, who had been let out of the management of the Boston (Federal Street) Theatre the previous year, promoted the erection of a rival playhouse. So popular had theatricals become in Boston by this time that Powell had no difficulty in raising the required capital (a matter of $12,000) and the house, which he called the Haymarket Theatre, was built during the summer and fall, and opened to the public on December 26th. It was a huge, wooden structure, and stood near the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets. Powell obtained most of his actors direct from England.

Down in Charleston the two theatres kept things lively. Solee operated his City Theatre straight through from January to May, and West and Bignall managed the Charleston Theatre during the same period. In the competition, Solee appears to have had the advantage in popularity, a fact due to his policy of constantly strengthening his company with good actors. On May 16th the city was swept by a disastrous fire, and although neither theatre was burned, a considerable portion of the population was suddenly homeless and in distress. Theatrical performances were abandoned for a time, and when they resumed during the summer, they were sporadic, and were given chiefly as benefits for the sufferers.

L'AFFAIRE PLACIDE

The fire, however, was not the only calamity in Charleston that season. M. Placide, who had contributed so much to the brighter side of the city's entertainment, was the active agent in an event which brought about a curious disaster. Although he had for several years been accompanied professionally and domestically by a woman known as Mme. Placide, and who, indeed, appeared on the stage with him as late as June 28th, he nevertheless startled the community by marrying on August 1st Miss Charlotte Sophia Wrighten, one of the twin daughters of the renowned actress, Mrs. Pownall.

The inescapable conclusion was that Mme. Placide had been the talented dancer's illegal consort. And the fact that during

July she had vanished from Charleston, whither no one knew, substantiated this conclusion. All this was bad enough, but worse was to come. Mrs. Pownall announced on August 2d that "on account of an unnatural change in her family" she would be compelled to cancel her engagement to appear in a concert on the 6th, and on the 12th she died of shock and a broken heart. Twelve days later Mary Wrighten, her other daughter, died of grief. Our only consolation, as we recount this sad tale, is in the knowledge that the Placides rose above any remorse that may have attacked them, and went on to successful careers. They even became the parents of several noted actors.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1797

The jealous strife that troubled the Old American Company as it followed its customary course in New York's John Street Theatre flared up in a striking incident on March 29th, when, during a performance of *The Fashionable Lover*, the embattled Mrs. Hallam walked out on the stage and prepared to address the audience. For some time previous to this, the actress had been deprived of her roles—had not been permitted to act at all—by Hodgkinson (presumably with the consent of Dunlap) because of her excessive drinking and general trouble-making. Now she was prepared to lay her grievances before the public. And she chose to make her sensational entrance at a moment when Hodgkinson, the enemy, was on stage.

"She entered from the right," reports Dunlap, "dressed in black silk, her hair parted on the top of her head, combed down on each side of her face, and powdered. She looked beauty in distress. She held a paper in her hands, and courtesied most profoundly. The plaudit which saluted her entrance caused Hodgkinson to look over his shoulder. . . . And now Hallam was seen, dressed in black, stalking down the centre of the stage, and advancing with many bows to the audience." The house was in an uproar. A messenger was sent to warn the city authorities that there was a riot in progress at the theatre. Hallam asked the audience to permit his wife to read her prepared statement. She did so, pleading that she was being wrongfully deprived of her livelihood. Hallam then spoke, and so did Hodgkinson, above the confusion of the audience. Finally quiet was restored, and the play proceeded. But the Hallams had won the sympathy of

the public, and the next night Hodgkinson was so loudly hissed that he quit the stage for almost the whole remainder of the season. He was still, however, the principal manager, and Mrs. Hallam did not appear in a performance until the tag-end of the season, on May 31st. In the meantime there had been constant bickering, and a suit was brought by Hodgkinson against Hallam, alleging breach of contract, followed by Hallam's insistence on being taken to jail instead of answering the charges in court.

When the unhappy season came to a close the middle of June, Hallam retired from the management, but contracted to stay with the company as an actor on a salary basis, with Mrs. Hallam engaged similarly.

RICKETTS IN GREENWICH STREET

In the midst of this excitement the renowned Mr. Ricketts built a new and more wonderful amphitheatre in Greenwich Street, which he opened on March 16th with great fanfare. Continuing his recently adopted policy of variety entertainment, he offered the public a *mélange* of horsemanship, clowning, ballets, musical numbers, and even dramatic readings. These performances ran well into July.

In the autumn Hodgkinson took his company to Boston, and Dunlap stayed in New York to supervise the building of the new theatre in Park Street which he and Hodgkinson had been promoting, and which now was faced with financial problems. A deal was afoot, also, for our old Charleston friend, Mr. Solee, to take over the John Street Theatre during five successive winter seasons. This long-term deal did not go through, but Solee did open the theatre on August 18th, and played thrice weekly until October 17th.

Solee's New York venture was not a happy one for the simple reason that five days after his opening, the much more impressive company of Wignell and Reinagle (of Philadelphia's Chestnut Street Theatre) opened a season in Ricketts' amphitheatre. Wignell had augmented his company with new talent from England, and foremost among his recruits were Mrs. Ann Merry, a tragic actress of tremendous appeal; Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, then young, but destined to become America's leading tragedian; and William Warren, the elder, an outstanding comedian who

later, with Joseph Jefferson, managed the Chestnut Street Theatre.

A PLAY EACH NIGHT

Inasmuch as the rival companies divided the week between them, three nights for each, New York enjoyed during that season for the first time a play each night. Wignell and Reinagle drew the better audiences, but Solee made a bold stand. He tried putting Mrs. Whitlock (sister of Mrs. Siddons) forward as a counter-attraction to Mrs. Merry, but the public preferred the latter. He produced a new and spectacular melodrama entitled *Bunker Hill* in an effort to attract attention from the other house. But he made the tactical error of scheduling this premiere on a night which conflicted with a benefit performance of his competitors (and it was also the debut of a famous English tragedian, James Fennell) with the result that he was accused of unfairness, and lost many friends. It was this same *Bunker Hill* with which he closed his season, for, in spite of the controversy it had aroused, it was his most successful offering. And he found an extra bit of satisfaction, undoubtedly, in the presence of President John Adams at the final performance.

With Solee routed, Wignell and Reinagle continued uncontested until November 25th, and then returned to Philadelphia. Their season might well have extended further had it not been for the physical conditions under which they played, and for the heavy expenses which they bore. It had cost them, it seems, a great deal to fit up the circus properly for their use, and they also maintained a large and well-paid company. It appears, furthermore, that the location of the Greenwich Street amphitheatre was not a convenient one, especially in bad weather, and it was extraordinarily difficult to heat. During November advertisements in the papers assured the public that "in order to make the New Circus more comfortable a large Fire will be kept in the rooms at each end of the house, where every person will be equally admitted." William Warren kept a diary in which he discussed these details, and left us, as well, a financial summary of the season. His records show that the total receipts for the forty-six nights of playing amounted to only $17,286. He then notes a net loss of $2350. for the engagement. Artistically the

venture had been tremendously successful; financially otherwise. And it was the only invasion of New York by this famous company.

CIRCUS IN PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia had had its share of entertainment during the year. The Wignell and Reinagle company had played steadily at the New Theatre in Chestnut Street from the beginning of the year until May 6th, and there had been almost continuous circus attractions from January to July. Ricketts had kept his Pantheon open until the end of February, and on April 11th a new circus had been opened at Fifth and Prune Streets by a Frenchman named Lailson. The building was a huge affair, with a dome ninety feet high, and with a seating capacity of two thousand. Emulating Ricketts, Lailson offered a great variety of acts, including many of a strictly dramatic nature. Although the enterprise proved eventually to be too ambitious, it weathered its first season with reasonable success, and continued with regular performances until July 27th. After its closing the city was without theatricals until December 11th, when the Wignell and Reinagle troupe returned from New York and reopened in Chestnut Street.

The record for 1797 displays no particular excitement occurring in Boston, though there was plenty of activity. The new Haymarket Theatre (which had opened in December) ran steadily under Powell's management until June 14th, and on alternate nights the Federal Street Theatre offered its plays, with a final performance on June 5th. During the late summer the Haymarket housed a short and disappointing season presented by Hodgkinson and his New York company. Powell had lost money at the Haymarket during his long season, Hodgkinson had lost money on his short one. Powell surrendered his lease on the house, and disbanded his company. Shortly afterwards the theatre was abandoned. After several dark months the Federal Street Theatre reopened on December 6th. So much for Boston.

In Charleston the theatre of 1797 belonged to Solee, for his City Theatre seems to have had no competition during the year. Opening on January 6th, he introduced a number of new players, several of them excellent ones, and gave regular performances

until the end of June. The pride of his company was Mrs. Whitlock (nee Elizabeth Kemble), who, with her husband, had been brought to Philadelphia by Wignell, and who made her Charleston debut at Solee's opening performance in *The Grecian Daughter.*

In the autumn, as we have noted, Solee inhabited the John Street Theatre in New York (where Mrs. Whitlock failed to dim the glory of Mrs. Merry), but he was back in Charleston in time to open a season on November 7th, with a number of new players engaged in the north, most of them in Boston. These included "the exquisite Mrs. Williamson," Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland, Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs, and Mrs. Tubbs' daughter by a previous marriage, Miss Arnold. The latter was the young woman mentioned previously as the eventual mother of the poet, Poe. We will speak again of Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs.

An item of small importance but some human interest gleaned from the Charleston record of this year relates to the Placides, who were actively involved in Solee's productions. It is merely the fact that whereas, in preceding years, the dancer had titled himself M. Placide, and his supposed wife as Mme., he now (having legally joined himself to the former Miss Wrighten) went officially before the public as Mr. Placide, with his wife, naturally, as Mrs. Whether this change had a moral basis, or was a diplomatic move, or whether it simply reflected the triumph of the wife's Englishness, it was, at any rate, permanent.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1798

In New York the first month of this year was marked by the closing of one theatre and the opening of another. The one to be closed was the historic but by then outmoded house in John Street; the one to be opened was the Park Theatre, which Dunlap and Hodgkinson had spent so long promoting, and of which they were the lessees.

The John Street Theatre held its last performance on the 13th of January, the bill being *The Comet* and *Tom Thumb*, with Hodgkinson and Mrs. Johnson the leading actors in the first piece, and Jefferson and Mrs. Seymour in the second. Odell is scornful in his comment on this farewell performance. He calls the bill "trifling," and laments the meagreness of the casts.

"Why," he exclaims, "for old times' sake, were the Hallams not allowed to appear? Why was not a famous tragedy acted? Why let a classic theatre die almost in disgrace?"

OPENING OF THE PARK THEATRE

The Park Theatre was opened on January 29th with *As You Like It,* Hodgkinson appearing as Jacques, Hallam as Touchstone, Mrs. Johnson as Rosalind, and Jefferson as William. The theatre was besieged by the curious public at the opening, and in the confusion a number of persons got into the theatre without paying. Prices of admission were from one to two dollars, the doors opened at five o'clock, and the curtain rose at a quarter past six. Nights of playing were announced as Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Called at first the New Theatre, it was situated in Park Row, a bit east of Ann Street. It was a substantial, three-story building of stone, and although its exterior was said to have been unimposing, it was commodious, well equipped, and harmoniously decorated. According to Hornblow, "the lobby was spacious and carpeted, and in cold weather two blazing fires were kept up at either end. There were three tiers of boxes, a gallery and a pit, the general color scheme being light pink and gold. Cushioned seats took the place of chairs in both boxes and pit."

An amusing episode of the first few weeks of the Park Theatre concerns Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, the talented young tragedian whom Wignell had brought from England. Although Cooper had played for Wignell during December in Philadelphia, he had deserted his manager about the first of the year, and returned to New York, supposedly in a fit of jealousy aroused by the success of James Fennell, another of Wignell's new stars. Wignell tried desperately to hold him to his contract, and even threatened him with arrest. But all in vain. Cooper wanted to join Dunlap and Hodgkinson, and would not budge. The New York managers finally arranged a special performance of *Hamlet* at the Park Theatre, with Cooper in the title role, the proceeds of which were used to pay Wignell the damages he demanded from Cooper. This performance took place on February 28th; Wignell was satisfied; and Cooper took his place happily as a member of the Park Theatre company.

TOO MANY PASSHOLDERS

The business arrangements in connection with the operation of the new theatre are interesting. So many persons had contributed to the funds required for construction (the total cost was $130,000., as compared with the original estimate of approximately $42,000.) that Dunlap found himself dealing with one hundred and thirteen proprietors, all of whom demanded free tickets for all performances. This, naturally, was a source of great irritation to the harassed manager. The rental fees paid to the proprietors during the first season were computed on a percentage basis, with an exemption of $450 on each performance. The fees on receipts over that amount started at 5% and rose gradually to 20%, the latter rate applying to receipts over $1200. Because of the many nights on which the receipts did not even reach the $450 mark, however, a flat rental was agreed on for the next season.

The first season came to a rather dreary close late in June, after a long siege of benefits, and at this point Hodgkinson withdrew from the management and went to Boston. Dunlap, now the sole manager (he took considerable pride in this) spent the summer reorganizing his company, establishing a new salary scale, and placating the proprietors with an offer of $5000 theatre rental for the fall and spring season to follow. Some indication of his harassed state of mind may be found in the fact that he offered to sell his lease to Hallam. The latter wanted none of it. Dunlap thereupon offered Hallam a chance to buy his way into the management, but this was refused also. Wise old Hallam settled for an actor's status, he and his wife to receive $50 per week between them. The highest salary in the company was $37, and this went to Mrs. Oldmixon.

A PLAGUE OF YELLOW FEVER

Added to Dunlap's financial worries was a recurrence of the yellow fever plague, which prevented the reopening of the theatre in early autumn as planned. There were two thousand deaths out of a population of fifty thousand. The long dark period was, however, used for extensive redecorating of the interior, and for the completion of portions of the building which had been left in an unfinished state at the time of its opening. Finally

the season got under way with the production on December 3d of *The School for Scandal* and *High Life Below Stairs*. Business the first week was disappointing, and had succeeding weeks proved as poor, Dunlap might well have met disaster. What saved him was the production on December 10th of a romantic melodrama by the German playwright, Kotzebue, entitled *The Stranger*. This play had been translated and presented shortly before in London, and a garbled version of it had fallen into Dunlap's hands. From this he made his own free adaptation. This specimen of German romanticism, with its *homme fatal* and its melancholy brooding over nature, struck the right note for the audience of that time, and proved a sensational success. Altogether it was given twelve performances during the season. Dunlap, having uncovered a vein of gold, set himself assiduously to the study of German, and prepared to adapt more plays by Kotzebue. The year of 1798 ended for him with that bright ray of hope.

It was a bad theatrical year for Boston. During January the Federal Street Theatre operated under the management of Barrett and Harper, but on February 2d, in the afternoon, the house caught fire and burned to the ground. There being no audience in attendance, there were no human casualties, although Mr. Barrett, in attempting to rescue his wardrobe, was hurt by a falling door. This was the first instance in America of a standard theatre being destroyed by fire.

COOPER AS HAMLET IN BOSTON

In July Hodgkinson arrived from New York and opened the Haymarket Theatre, which had been standing idle, with a performance of *Hamlet*, with Thomas Abthorpe Cooper in the title role. But the yellow fever scare had struck the city, and at Hodgkinson's second performance the audience was so slight that the performance was cancelled, and there were no more theatricals during the summer. The Federal Street Theatre, however, was rebuilt during this quiet period, and was opened in October by Hodgkinson. At the same time he reopened the Haymarket. But neither house prospered, and by the following spring the truant New York manager was applying desperately to Dunlap for a job as an actor.

In Philadelphia the year started out reasonably well, with the

New Theatre in Chestnut Street drawing good houses for Wignell's strong company, stronger than ever now because of the addition of John Bernard, an English comedian of outstanding talent. James Fennell, too, returned to the company (we have mentioned that his return drove the petulant Cooper to New York) after a considerable period of assorted activities, the most picturesque of which had been the promotion of a salt-making machine of his own invention. Fennell was incorrigibly restless and temperamental. In February he quarrelled with the management, and as a result the theatre was closed down for a week. But his value as a tragedian was so great that he seems always to have been forgiven. That he was not unaware of his difficult nature is proved by a comment in his *Apology*, quoted by Pollock, in which he admits that "Prudence . . . has always been with regard to me, so shy a goddess, that she never permitted me to touch the hem of her garment."

The season ended on May 5th, and when it came time to reopen the theatre in the fall, the plague was upon the city. Consequently there were no more plays to irritate the Quakers during the remainder of 1798.

SOLEE'S TROUBLES

In Charleston there were lively goings-on. Solee, who was proprietor of the City (Church Street) Theatre, took over the Charleston Theatre as well, leasing it from West. But scarcely had he opened his season at the Charleston (on January 1st) when a backstage fire forced him to close the house for a month and move his productions to Church Street. And he had barely reestablished himself at the repaired Charleston when he was faced with a revolt on the part of several of his actors. The trouble arose over a back-salary dispute, and raged during February and March. The papers were filled with acrimonious allegations and denials, an impasse was reached, and the embittered actors seceded from the company. Solee, always the business man, finally made the best of a bad situation by renting his other theatre to the recalcitrants, where they gave some performances during April and May under the leadership of Mr. Edgar. Besides Edgar and his wife, the seceders included Mr. and Mrs. Whitlock, Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs, and Miss Arnold. Although Solee was harsh in his criticism of them all, his animosity

reached a colorful climax in his public denunciation of Mr. Tubbs. At the height of the controversy, Solee contributed a long letter to the local newspaper, in which he declared that, "The piece inserted in the State *Gazette* of yesterday signed by Franciscus Decimus Coriolanus William, ending in Tubbs, who had got over the bar before his advertisement appeared, would have been beneath my notice, by its meanness, but I am inculpated with owing him forty-three dollars for salary."

He then went on to explain that Tubbs owed him a great deal more than that amount, and that, furthermore, if he had known soon enough of Tubbs' recent behavior in front of the theatre, where he had caused a commotion and driven prospective patrons away, he would have horsewhipped him. "I ask of the public," he cried, "if such a man as Mr. Tubbs ought to be considered a member of any Company? No indeed! He is a *vermin* and for that reason I did not wish to have him arrested and put in prison which I could have done, for his having taken away from the wardrobe of the theatre the Harlequin dress and some boy's clothes made for Miss Arnold; but I am not as bad-hearted a man as I am represented."

It is surely with regret that we discover the retirement of the spirited Solee that summer from the Charleston battleground. The City Theatre was turned over to the management of Williamson, Jones and Placide; the Charleston Theatre was converted into a seminary for young men, where a complete and liberal education was offered; and there were no more theatricals in the community until the beginning of 1799.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1799

The New York season which had begun at the Park Theatre early in December, 1798, ran through the whole first half of the year 1799, with a playing schedule of three nights a week. The busy Dunlap, after discovering the effectiveness of Kotzebue on December 10th, brought out during the season four more adaptations from the work of the prolific German, and added to these five other plays of his own craftsmanship, more or less original. It was also a season for Shakespeare, with productions of *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry VIII*, and *Coriolanus*, the latter two being shown for the first time in New York. By the end of the season, which

occurred July 4th, there had been a total of eighty-eight performances.

A sad incident of the closing weeks was the death of Mr. Woolls, who had braved the fortunes and hazards of the American stage for thirty-six years. A performance of *The School for Scandal* was given at the Park on June 19th for the benefit of his wife and daughter, and the printed announcement of the performance reminded the public that "the character and conduct of the deceased was undeviatingly irreproachable, and the disposition of his mind highly amiable."

FENNELL AND THE SCRIPTURES

The year was enlivened, however, by the activities of James Fennell, the talented but intractable tragedian. Having deserted Wignell, and having a seeming aversion to steady employment at the Park (he appeared there brilliantly but briefly in May) he spent most of the season in offering dramatic recitals, lectures, and miscellaneous entertainments in New York. In January he announced a series of thirty lectures on the Old and New Testaments, "intended as a Refutation of the Doctrines of Thomas Paine and others, comprehending historical proofs of the fulfillment of the Prophecies, and Dissertations on the Miracles." A few of these were given, but the series did not prove a success, and the actor fell back on dramatic readings. In March he began presentations of dramatic and musical recitals, in company with a Mrs. Danvers, at the Pantheon (circus) in Greenwich Street, and during June and July he staged several plays in the same building, with casts recruited partially from the Park Theatre. Fennell, we may conclude, was an individualist.

It was not until November 18th that the Park Theatre reopened. A feature of the opening was the reappearance of our old friend Hodgkinson, returned from his chastening experience with management in Boston. And although he came back simply as an actor, he had won a good contract from Dunlap, for a list of salaries for that season shows Hodgkinson and his wife receiving $100 a week, whereas Mr. and Mrs. Hallam were set down for only $50, Cooper for $32, and Jefferson for $25.

The season started out with a strong emphasis on Shakespeare, but Kotzebue bobbed up again, and during succeeding months became the leader. Dunlap was now digging feverishly in his

German mine, and there was plenty of paying ore. During the 1799–1800 season, fourteen Kotzebue plays were presented, many of them hits. They paid the bills for Dunlap.

DEATH OF WASHINGTON

On December 20th news reached New York of the death of George Washington (it had taken six days for transmission from Mt. Vernon!) and the Park Theatre was closed for ten days. At the performance on the 30th, according to Odell, "the stage was hung in black, and Cooper attempted to deliver a monody on the death of the great patriot." But he made a "miserable fiasco" of it. A newspaper, reporting the event, said that "his voice stuck in his throat. . . . He edged a little nearer the prompter, caught his cue, and went on . . . stopt again . . . the Pit groaned aloud, and a small hiss began to issue from the gallery. . . ." Poor Cooper! He should have learned his lines.

The last year of the century was a rather desultory one in the other cities. In Boston the Federal Street Theatre operated intermittently and unsuccessfully under several managements; in Philadelphia the New Theatre in Chestnut Street limped along from February to May with a weakened company (no Fennell, no Cooper), and did not reopen until December 4; in Charleston the City Theatre ran (under its new triple management) from January through April, and again from October 28th to December 31st, but without notable events. And, adding calamity to dullness, on December 17th Ricketts' Pantheon in Philadelphia burned to the ground, preventing an announced performance of a spectacular pantomime entitled *Don Juan*, which was to have included a scene representing "the Infernal Regions with a view of the mouth of Hell." It was difficult to convince many Philadelphians that there was no connection between the fire and the forthcoming production. This disaster left Philadelphia with no circus at all, for Lailson's mammoth amphitheatre had been out of use since a Sunday morning in 1798, when the huge dome had fallen and wrecked the building.

We have seen now in considerable detail the course taken by American theatricals during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. We have observed the establishment of permanent playhouses and large companies of players in the principal centers of the Eastern seaboard. Presently we will follow the expansion of

our theatre westward, advancing with the frontier. As our narrative continues we cannot, obviously, call attention to every individual enterprise. As we advance in time and space we must concern ourselves more and more with general developments or with specific instances of outstanding importance.

Chapter IV

Stars and Adventurers: 1800–1825

THROUGHOUT the first quarter of the nineteenth century there continued to be only four important centers of theatrical production in America, and these four cities were, as in the preceding period, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Charleston. And, although there is a division of opinion among historians as to the date of the change, it is indisputable that at some time between 1800 and 1825 theatrical leadership passed from Philadelphia to New York. Obviously no specific date could be assigned by anyone for this transition, for it was a gradual process. The fact that it occurred during the period mentioned is the important point.

There were other cities, of course, besides these four, which enjoyed an increase in dramatic activities, but they were dependent for plays and players on the production centers. On the Atlantic seaboard the outstanding secondary theatrical cities were Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, and Savannah. During the second decade Albany came into the picture. The most colorful expansion, however, involved the introduction of professional performances in the frontier towns beyond the Alleghenies. At the close of the present chapter we will furnish some details of this romantic movement. Meanwhile, proceeding in what seems to be the most natural and orderly fashion, let us summarize the events which transpired in the production centers and their tributaries.

NEW YORK

The history of theatricals in New York City during this period is principally a history of the Park Theatre, for that was the only playhouse which offered standard dramatic entertainment every season, and it housed the city's only permanent acting company. Such competition as it met with during the regular fall-winter-spring season was either sporadic or weak or both. This quarter-century did, however, witness the rise of special summer

theatres, beginning with Corre's Mount Vernon Gardens in 1800, and reaching a climax in Barrière's pretentious Chatham Garden Theatre, which opened in 1824. There were other resorts offering summer entertainment, notably Columbia Garden and Vauxhall Garden, but for the most part their offerings were limited to concerts, variety acts, and fireworks. Corre was the first to venture the presentation of standard plays, and for this purpose he employed several leading actors of the Park company, including Mr. Jefferson, Miss Brett, and young Hallam. Following this innovation it became quite usual for actors to find summer employment in such resorts. A complete account of the activities of these precursors of our present-day "straw-hat" theatres may be found in Odell's all-inclusive *Annals*.

DUNLAP AND KOTZEBUE

As for the Park Theatre, it will be remembered that the house was, at the turn of the century, under the sole management of William Dunlap, who, although harassed by financial problems, had recently found considerable relief from these problems by the discovery of the plays of Kotzebue. The years 1800 and 1801 stand out as probably the most successful of Dunlap's management, and although the strength of his acting company must be considered a factor in that success, the popularity of the romantic German plays was a more important one. The chief reasons for Kotzebue's vogue were, according to Coad, his skill in "producing superficial effectiveness and showy characters," his presentation of "the aristocrat as vicious, the common man as the embodiment of virtue,"—an attitude harmonious with the times following the French and American revolutions—and, finally, his "constant use of sentimentality." The public reveled in the Cinderella stories, royal romances, and missing-heir themes with which he provided them, and Dunlap made the most of the vogue while it lasted. Unfortunately for him, it did not last long.

The autumn of 1800 was enlivened by the return of the erratic James Fennell, who rejoined the company after a year of disastrous experimentation with a salt-works on the Battery. This was not, of course, the first time that Fennell had deserted the stage in quest of a fortune in salt. But on this occasion he seemed more beaten than usual, and his engagement at the Park was motivated largely by the necessity of paying off his creditors.

During the summer of 1801 Dunlap essayed a special short season in his theatre—a project undoubtedly inspired by the menace of the "garden" theatres which had started up—and brought Mrs. Merry and Mr. Cooper from Philadelphia as guest performers. The scheme did not work out too happily, however, because Mrs. Merry was ill a good deal of the time, and when she was playing there was constant friction between her and Hodgkinson, who disliked her heartily, and who made life as miserable for her as he could.

NO LIGHTED SEGARS

The fall season of 1801 was not opened until November because of a recurrence of the yellow fever plague. This misfortune, though, was partly offset by the return to the company of Cooper, whose public following was very great. A minor trouble encountered by manager Dunlap that season is reflected in a newspaper advertisement quoted by Odell as follows: "It is earnestly requested that no person will carry a Lighted Segar into any part of the Theatre, or attempt to renew the very dangerous practice of Smoaking, either in the lobbies or in the presence of the audience."

In the spring of 1802 Mrs. Merry came from Philadelphia for a two-week engagement, and received a great ovation. Otherwise things went along in a routine way. The next fall, after an opening on October 11th, Dunlap made a strong effort to push Mrs. Whitlock upward to stardom, but the effort failed. Public memory of Mrs. Merry (and Mrs. Melmoth) stood in her way, and she remained only a featured player. Yet, if the Park could not boast of an outstanding tragedienne, it could, beginning in November, take pride in a comedienne of the highest calibre. This was the beautiful Mrs. Johnson, who rejoined the company in that month, and immediately captivated both public and critics. She continued to captivate them every season until 1806, when she departed for England, where she was to stay for ten years.

Now that we have used the word "critics" it is perhaps advisable to note that the first years of the nineteenth century saw the development of the first professional dramatic criticism in New York. In the *Evening Post* William Coleman carried on a series of bold and intelligent *critiques*, while to the *Morning Chronicle* a sagacious and delightful satirist calling himself Jona-

than Oldstyle contributed his now famous letters. Jonathan was actually, of course, the distinguished man of letters, Washington Irving.

SALUTE WITH A ROTTEN PIPPIN

Irving lost no time in calling attention to the faults of the theatre. In his very first letter, published on December 1st, 1802, he poked fun at absurdities and inadequacies of current productions at the Park, and in subsequent letters jibed amiably but tellingly at foibles of audiences, faults of plays, and at all aspects of the theatre which could bear improvement. Particularly was he annoyed by the unruliness of the gallery, by the dirty benches of the pit, by the excessive amount of eating during the performance, by the soiling of patrons' clothes from the drippings of candles in the chandeliers, and by the orchestra's being tormented and bullied from sections of the audience. He confesses to being "a little irritated at being saluted aside of my head with a rotten pippin," and he compares the noise issuing from the gallery with "the yells of every kind of animal."

In January the Park suffered a severe loss in the departure of Cooper for Europe, where he was engaged to replace the great Kemble at Drury Lane Theatre. His farewell performance was in Macbeth on January 5th. And, although his absence was only one of several causes, business at the theatre fell alarmingly during the remainder of January. Coleman blamed the situation on the indifference of fashionable New Yorkers, who were said to be spending their time at balls and card-parties. Others felt that the fault lay within the theatre itself, especially in its physical inconvenience and unattractiveness. One newspaper critic laid the blame on Irving's letters, which, he said, had made the public aware of defects which previously had gone unobserved. At any rate, Dunlap felt that something must be done, and therefore closed the house for two weeks in February for renovations. When it reopened it was noted that "the benches had been newly covered," and the backs of the boxes had been re-colored a lighter blue. Dunlap was not the first, and certainly not the last, theatre manager to attempt the resolution of a complex problem of the box-office by the simple device of renovation. In his case the expedient helped a little, but the season limped rather badly to its close.

LOSS OF THE HODGKINSONS

In September of that year more trouble descended upon the Park. Mrs. Hodgkinson, one of the feminine mainstays of the company, died of consumption, and Hodgkinson, valuable as he was difficult, quit New York for the balmier climate of Charleston, where he played during the year under the management of Placide. This veteran comedian never again appeared at the Park, though he did perform briefly in New York during the following summer. Another loss which occurred at the same time was the departure of the Jeffersons for Philadelphia, where they became fixtures at the Chestnut Street Theatre.

Dunlap was able partly to compensate for these losses by the engagement of John E. Harwood, an excellent comedian from the Chestnut Street Theatre, who fairly well replaced Hodgkinson, but the season of 1803–04 was not a successful one, and Dunlap's management was declining rapidly toward its fall. In February, 1804 the theatre was put up for auction, and although Dunlap tried to purchase it with a bid of forty thousand dollars, it was finally taken for forty-three thousand by the same group of citizens who had financed its construction. It was then released to Dunlap for the following season at a hundred dollars a week.

Matters were not helped any by the opening in March of a rival house, the Grove Theatre in Bedlow Street, which, although small and operated with an undistinguished company, did nevertheless attract some patronage and ran regularly on alternate nights with the Park during the remainder of the season.

DUNLAP BANKRUPT

The last season for Dunlap opened in October, 1804, proceeded badly (except for a short period of Cooper's engagement) and came to an ignominious close toward the end of February, followed by the retirement of Dunlap and his going through bankruptcy. A committee of actors was formed, and two of them, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Tyler, were appointed managers. The company agreed to cuts in salary, and the house reopened in March. A touching tribute was paid Dunlap late in June, when he was given a benefit performance, and the mighty Cooper returned to play in it. Odell records, however, that the net proceeds amounted to only six hundred dollars.

In summarizing Dunlap's career as manager of the Park, Odell credits him with various virtues and accomplishments, but he also finds many defects of judgement and standards. On the whole, he thinks, Dunlap's reputation as "the father of the American drama" has been exaggerated. His chief merit seems to have been industry, and his principal contribution to dramatic technique the innovation of the tableau-curtain—the quick drop on a striking pose or scene. He accuses him of having catered excessively to popular taste, particularly with the plays of Kotzebue and Matthew Gregory Lewis, both melodramatists, and of having neglected the classics. As a manager he also was remiss, thinks Odell, in failing to import acting talent. It was his habit to engage outstanding actors after other managers had taken both the trouble of finding them in England and the financial risk of bringing them to this country. Yet, whatever the balance sheet shows, William Dunlap must remain in our minds a likeable figure, an amusingly industrious fellow, whose heart was definitely in the theatre.

During the spring and summer of 1805 there was a plan afoot whereby Hodgkinson should return from Charleston and take over the management of the Park. This plan might have worked out had it not been that Hodgkinson contracted yellow fever and died (somewhere in the vicinity of Washington) in September. It was then decided that Johnson and Tyler should carry on. They opened the theatre in November, and ran it through the whole season—not brilliantly, but with moderate success. Their bright star was Mrs. Johnson, a tremendous favorite, and business was helped in January by a brief engagement of the meteoric Fennell.

PAYNE THE PRODIGY

The most interesting novelty of the season was the production in February of a new play by an anonymous American playwright. The play was *The Wanderer*, and the author, then just short of fifteen years of age, was John Howard Payne. This prodigious boy had previously attracted the attention of literary men, including William Coleman, the editor-critic, but this was his first produced play. It was thoroughly disliked by both public and critics, and was immediately withdrawn. Odell calls it a "combination of stilted and indecent language, with absurd and formless plotting." He wonders where so young a writer could have acquired the background for such vileness of situation and

style. Later, of course, Payne was to attract much attention in both Europe and America as actor and playwright.

In April the dissatisfied owners of the Park sold the house to John Jacob Astor and John K. Beekman for fifty thousand dollars. The new owners promptly allotted between ten and twenty thousand dollars for improvements, and began negotiations with Cooper to take over the management. These negotiations were successful, and the ever-popular actor took charge the following autumn.

Meanwhile, in June, 1806, that veteran of veterans, Lewis Hallam the younger, played his farewell performance in New York. It was almost, but not quite, his farewell to the theatre, for he was to appear once or twice afterwards at Philadelphia in benefits. He had been on the American stage for fifty-four years, and was now worn out in service. He died in 1808.

COOPER AND MRS. MERRY-WIGNELL-WARREN

Cooper, as has been indicated, assumed management of the Park in the fall of 1806, and it became apparent before too long that he was a better actor than manager. Probably aware of this himself, he engaged Dunlap to assist him. Even so, the season was a failure. The company was strengthened by the engagement of Fennell, but seriously weakened by the departure of Mrs. Johnson, who sailed for England, to remain there ten years. The brightest spot in the rather dreary winter was February, when the *grande dame* of tragedy appeared as guest star. This was Mrs. Warren, formerly Mrs. Merry, and, in-between-times, Mrs. Wignell. This redoubtable actress had been at the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, for several seasons. In January, 1803, she had married the aging actor-manager, Wignell, and the latter had died the following month. In August, 1806, the widow had married her partner-in-management, William Warren. This 1807 appearance was her last in New York, and she died in the summer of 1808.

The 1807–08 season at the Park proved only slightly more successful than the previous one in spite of frantic efforts on the part of Cooper. The theatre had been remodeled during the summer, and now was both more attractive and commodious. Its new capacity was 2372. The season, too, was made attractive with novelties of a scenic and musical nature. But it came to an early

close in April, and it was clear that Cooper, as a sole manager, had failed.

This situation at the Park was remedied in the fall of 1808 by the addition of a co-manager, Stephen Price, who, being neither a playwright nor an actor, was able to bring to the management a completely businesslike point of view, and who, in addition to this advantageous attitude, was also possessed of an excellent promotional talent. He was not able to effect any sudden miraculous improvement in the Park's finances, but over a period of years he put them on a very sound basis, particularly through his engagement of foreign stars.

PAYNE THE ACTOR

The most interesting event of the first Cooper-Price season, was the debut on February 24th, 1809 of John Howard Payne as an actor. The prodigy was now seventeen years old, and had been attending Union College. His first appearance was as Young Norval in *Douglas*, a favorite role among young actors making their debuts. Payne scored an immediate hit, and appeared several times during the succeeding months, once as Romeo, and, at his benefit on May 31st, as Hamlet. Hailed by critics as "The American Roscius," he gave a decided lift to an otherwise sagging season.

The theatrical year 1809–10 was uneventful, if not to say dull. But in the fall of 1810 occurred one of the red-letter episodes in American theatre history. This was the sensational visit of George Frederick Cooke, the temperamental and alcoholic star of Covent Garden Theatre, London. The visit was arranged in England by Cooper, who was playing there, and was a *coup* of the first magnitude on his part and on the part of Price, who handled the arrangements on this side of the Atlantic.

The Park company was badly in need of a stimulant. The absence of Cooper was felt keenly, and Fennell was literally on his last legs. The ill-fated Hamlet of the salt-works was, indeed, making his last appearances on the New York stage at the beginning of November. His final performance, made when Fennell was desperately ill and weak, was as Richard III, on the 5th of the month. In bidding him farewell, a newspaper critic remarked that "As a correct and classical player he has never found an equal on the American boards, and is perhaps surpassed but by one

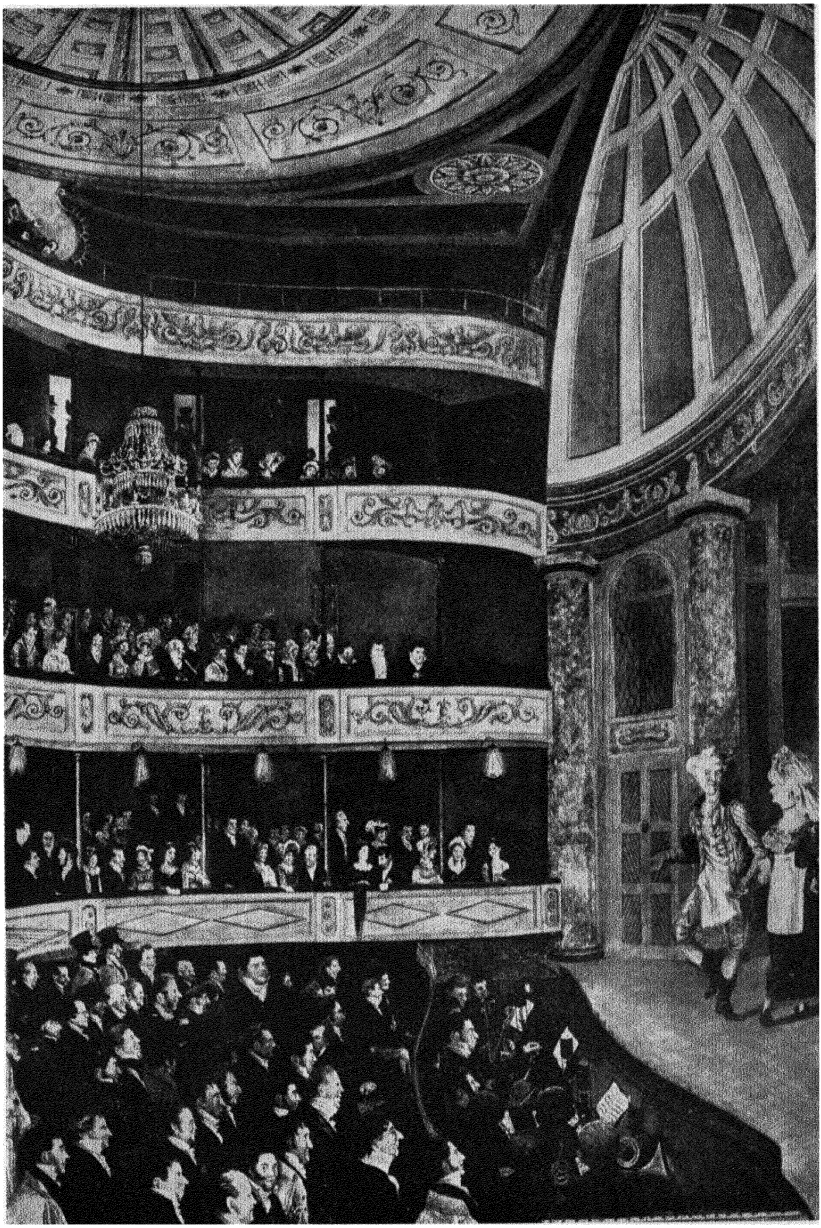
man living." We are left to our own assumption as to the identity of the "one man." Obviously either Cooke or Kean. In any event it was a nice tribute to Fennell.

Other actors had been brought from England to America—nearly all our actors had been obtained thus—but none previous had been of Cooke's reputation. There was, in fact, considerable incredulity on both sides of the ocean when his visit was announced. Why should he leave England when he was such an idol there? Wasn't he too old to make the trip? And there were other questions. It was also rumored that Cooper had caught Cooke when he was drunk and shanghaied him. Cooper, of course, denied the rumor as entirely false.

THE GREAT COOKE ARRIVES

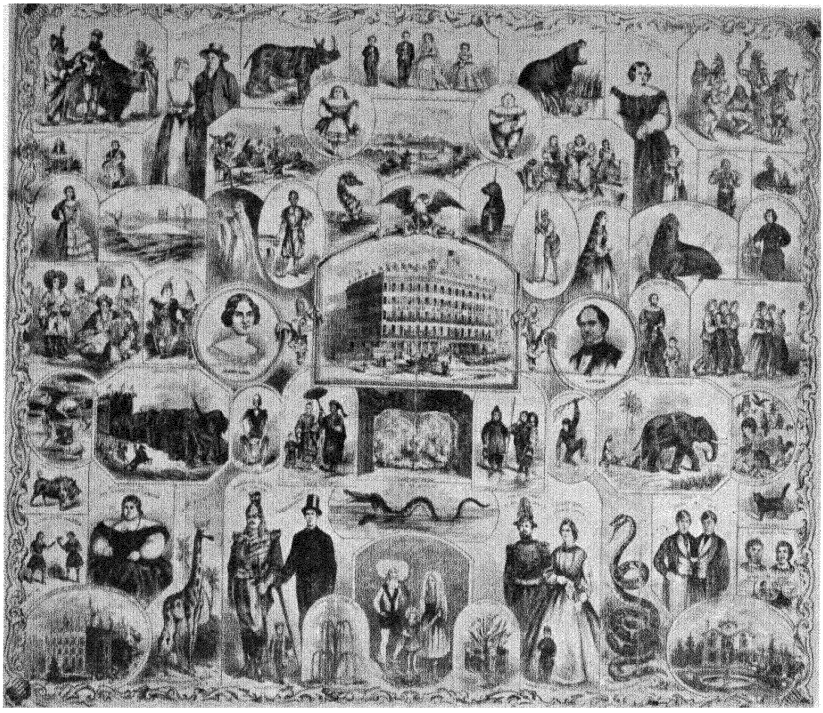
The advance publicity on the engagement was startling—and Odell considers it "almost the beginning of advance agenting, or press-work in America." Among other interesting details, the public was informed by the press that Cooke had been engaged for the season at a salary of fourteen thousand dollars, plus benefits in New York, Philadelphia and Boston. That was a great deal of money in those days. When the actor arrived in New York, and the announcement was made of his opening performances, a paper reported that "The fashionable world . . . is all alive on the arrival of this first of players in this city; and within a few hours after it was known . . . that he was to appear on Wednesday, every disposable seat in the house was taken up, as are a great proportion for Friday." At his premiere, on November 21st, in *Richard III*, there was a veritable stampede at the theatre, and a confusion so great that a number of persons got in without tickets. Many would-be patrons were sent home in disappointment.

Cooke came off quite well on this occasion, though he was said to have been extremely nervous. A veteran player, he was nevertheless subject to fright before a new audience in a new world. Some of the reviewers were disappointed in him, but most of them agreed on his originality, his forcefulness, and his vividness. One called his style of acting "the product of genius." His weakness was not so much age as drink. Yet it could be said that drink had aged him. Although only fifty-five years old, he gave the im-



A Society Audience at the Park Theatre, New York, 1822.

(Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.)



Wonders of Barnum's Museum. From a wood engraving by Waters and Son after a drawing by Edward A. Hall.

(Courtesy of Harry T. Peters Estate.)

pression of infirmity, except at those times when his dramatic fire exalted him to a plane of vigor.

TOO DRUNK FOR WORDS

It was not long before his demon became apparent. At his third performance, according to Dunlap, he came to the theatre after too much drink, and on stage "his voice broke short and sudden—the high notes failed, and of low notes there were none—the audience encouraged—every remedy he could devise was tried behind the scenes, in vain—he could only whisper—he apologized to the audience, who generally supposed the hoarseness proceeded from a cold, and he was encouraged to continue his whispering; in the meantime some of the remedies applied having been stimulants, the latter part of Richard, though only pantomimic, became very spirited, and to those who knew the cause, approached very near the comic. The public, however, did not suspect, and gave him credit for the zeal with which he exerted himself for their amusement under the pressure of indisposition."

There were later occasions, however, when the public was not so naive, and toward the end of Cooke's engagement, during the third week of December, he lost a great deal of its confidence. At his own benefit, on the 19th, he appeared in *Cato*, a play with which he was not familiar, and between this unfamiliarity and his intoxication he made a huge fiasco of the performance. After a total of seventeen nights in New York, he moved to Boston, where he attracted enormous business, then returned to New York for a series of performances during February and March (when he was received only moderately well) and after that to Philadelphia and Baltimore.

"KING OF THE YANKEE DOODLES"

Cooke played in the principal theatres of the country off and on for a period of two years, at times with triumphant success, again disappointingly. Always, however, he attracted public attention, whether in admiration or disgust. And histories are full of anecdotes in illustration of his erratic nature. Of his tremendous talent for acting there can be no doubt. Nor can there be of his unreliability, his arrogance, or his rudeness. One of the most revealing stories, recounted by Hornblow, has Cooke flying

into a rage in Baltimore when he hears that President Madison is coming from Washington to see him perform. "If he does," he is said to have declared, "I'll be damned if I play before him. What? I! George Frederick Cooke! who have acted before the Majesty of Britain, play before your Yankee president! No! . . . it is degrading enough to play before rebels, but I will not go on for the amusement of a king of rebels, the contemptible king of the Yankee doodles!"

Evidently he was spared the necessity of carrying out his threatened insult, for one does not find a record of President Madison's having paid the actor the honor of a visit. Nor did Cooke play again for "the Majesty of Britain," for he died in New York in September, 1812, a physical wreck at the age of fifty-seven.

DISASTER IN RICHMOND

The season of 1811–12 at the Park was enlivened somewhat by some reappearances of Cooke, and of course was helped by the presence of Cooper, who had rejoined the company on his return from England in the spring of 1811, but it was a season of ups and downs, and as a whole was not a prosperous one. One specific depressant was the destruction by fire of the theatre in Richmond, Virginia, on December 26th, 1811. During the second act of a play being presented by Placide and his company from Charleston, the scenery caught fire, the flames spread rapidly to all parts of the house, and in the panic which resulted, seventy-one persons lost their lives. This was the first disaster of its kind in America, and its repercussions were terrific. Business was suspended in Richmond on the day following, and a law was passed forbidding amusements of any kind for a period of four years. Word of the Richmond fire spread throughout the country, striking terror to the hearts of theatre managers, and frightening the public away from any large indoor gatherings.

Adding to the Park's troubles, a rival playhouse opened in May, 1812. This was the Olympic Theatre, made by remodeling the circus in Anthony Street. The company was brought from Philadelphia and was under the management of Dwyer and McKenzie. Performances were given on the same nights as those at the Park, and were a mixture of standard plays and variety acts. In July Dwyer and McKenzie gave up, but the house was reopened al-

most at once by Twaits, Placide and Breschard, the latter being a well-known circus equestrian, and stayed open until the middle of September. It had not been a successful venture, and part of the blame could be laid on the fact that in June war had been declared against England.

The Park Theatre felt the war, too. It struggled through the season of 1812–13 as best it could, but it was an undistinguished and unprosperous time. Dissatisfaction struck the company, and in the fall of 1813 several of the actors quit and, under the leadership of Twaits, formed their own production group, which they called the Commonwealth. Taking over a circus building at the corner of Broadway and White Street, they opened it on November 1st and continued until January 10th. After a recess this group moved in April to the Anthony Street Theatre (which probably was the Olympic Theatre renamed) and performed until July, then for another period in August and September.

RELIEF FROM WAR

The year 1814–15 was an uneventful one at the Park Theatre, a year of novelties and patriotic pieces, performed in routine fashion by an uninspired company. The most favorable thing that occurred was the ending of the war with England. When the peace treaty was ratified by Congress in February, 1815, business of all sorts, including that of the theatre, began to improve. Not only were there indications of immediate economic improvement; there was also a resumption of theatrical contact with England. In other words, the flow of acting talent from the old world to the new—the bloodstream of the theatre—could now be renewed.

The Anthony Street Theatre reopened in August, 1815, ahead of the Park, which started its season the first of September, but the former fared badly and closed for good in October, whereas the Park ran along through the winter with gradually increasing business. It also ran with hope in its heart, for the ambitious co-manager, Stephen Price, had gone to England on a recruiting mission. About time, too! for his company was woefully depleted.

Price returned with several prize actors, who made their debuts in April, 1816, and who brought much-needed life to the Park. These included Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, from Drury Lane Theatre,

Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin (Mrs. Barnes and Mrs. Baldwin were sisters), and Mr. Betterton. These acquisitions marked the beginning of an upsurge in the fortunes of this theatre which continued for a quarter of a century. They also established the superiority of the Park company (for the first time, thinks Odell) over that of the Chestnut Street Theatre.

SIX NIGHTS A WEEK

When the next season opened, in September, 1816, Price attempted a bold change of policy—performances on six nights of the week. But the city was not yet quite ready for this, and after a few weeks the schedule was shortened to four nights. On either schedule the leading players normally were not asked to play more than three nights a week, for with a change of play at every performance the strain on actors was very great. A year later Price attempted again to establish the six-night policy, and by a clever alternation of straight plays and musicals, succeeded in doing so. By 1820 the practice was firmly rooted.

An event of the 1816–17 season was the return, after ten years abroad, of the beautiful Mrs. Johnson, who for several years before the war had reigned at the Park as queen of high comedy. Whether she had been too long away from New York audiences, or whether age had dimmed her splendor, the sad fact is that her return was not attended by success. There was compensation, however, in the reception accorded her daughter Ellen, who made her debut at the Park in January, 1817, and proved an instant hit. Soon this young woman, whom everyone pronounced lovely, was a featured player.

Early in 1818 Edmund Simpson, a British actor who had joined the Park company in 1808, and had risen steadily in value and importance, made a recruiting trip to England. Among his finds was a young man destined to add a great name to the annals of our theatre. This was James William Wallack, then twenty-four years of age, handsome, versatile, and ambitious. His American debut was as Macbeth, on September 7th, 1818. Although, during the years following he occasionally returned to England, he eventually settled in New York. He appeared on the American stage more or less regularly over a period of forty-three years, and became the leading actor-manager of his time.

RETURN OF PAYNE WITH "BRUTUS"

A noteworthy happening of the spring of 1819 was the production at the Park of a new play by John Howard Payne, the erstwhile prodigy. After his successful venture as an actor in this country during 1809 and 1810, Payne had gone to Europe, where he had attracted a great deal of attention. The new play was *Brutus*, considered his best work, and it had been lately performed at Drury Lane Theatre, London, with the fabulous Edmund Kean creating the title role. Both because of the prestige the piece had thus acquired, and because of its intrinsic merit, it was an outstanding success at the Park, and it remained in the repertory of American tragic actors (including Edwin Booth) for many decades.

Altogether (what with the country enjoying an era of prosperity and expansion, and the Park company enjoying a sufficient stock of talent) show business in New York rolled merrily along during these years. There was, however, one serious interruption. On the night of May 24th, 1820, after the audience had left the theatre, the house caught fire and burned to the ground.

Dismayed by their loss of all scenery and costumes, but not defeated, the company promptly moved into the smaller Anthony Street Theatre, and carried on till the traditional closing date, July 4th. Meanwhile plans were launched for rebuilding the Park.

IDOL OF DRURY LANE

In their temporary home the company opened its new season on September 4th, and in November enjoyed what was perhaps the most thrilling episode of its career—the appearance as guest star of the leading actor of the English-speaking world, Edmund Kean. This idol of Drury Lane, beside whom even the late, renowned Cooke lost stature, had been engaged by Price not only for performances in New York, but also for other American cities. His contract guaranteed him fifty pounds a night, plus a percentage of the profits, and the records indicate that his earnings averaged approximately a hundred pounds a performance. Although Kean had faults, financial prodigality seems not to have been one of them, for his diary shows that while he was dispatch-

ing thousands of pounds back to England, he was paying out thirty-five dollars a week for board in New York.

Kean opened on November 29th, 1820 in *Richard III*, and continued for a total of sixteen performances, which included *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and Payne's *Brutus*. Public response was tremendous; the theatre was packed. The critics, although not unreservedly enthusiastic, admitted the actor's brilliance. It is well known, of course, that Kean's style of playing was temperamental, tricky, and erratic, and therefore, no matter how intense its brilliance at times, there were always moments in between when the auditor could feel let down. That is, of course, what Coleridge meant when he so strikingly remarked that seeing Kean play was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning.

KEAN INSULTS BOSTON

At the end of December Kean left for triumphant engagements in Philadelphia and Boston, after which he returned to New York for a series of performances in March and April. Thus far all had gone happily for him. But, flushed with success, he insisted, against the advice of the managers, on playing a return engagement in Boston. When he opened in that city in May, business was shockingly bad, due to the lateness of the season. After playing to two poor houses, he peeped through a hole in the curtain on his third night, and, seeing about twenty people in the house, walked out of the theatre. A few minutes later a number of additional patrons arrived, and Kean was begged to return and play, but he refused. This stubbornness on his part so infuriated the Bostonians that his season was completely wrecked. Newspapers inveighed against him, and the controversy spread to other cities. Kean issued a public apology and tried to regain favor, but his cause was lost. As Odell says, "All this seems incredible to us, who are used to being submissive to actors and box-office men; but in 1821 the player was still looked on as the servant of the public, and Kean had irretrievably offended. Boston never forgave him or even allowed him to appear there again. . . ."

The rebuffed tragedian sailed for England, leaving behind him a paradoxical memory of triumph and defeat. Before leaving, however, he had made one gesture which endeared him to old theatregoers: he had erected at his own expense a monument in

St. Paul's churchyard over the grave of his illustrious predecessor, George Frederick Cooke.

THE NEW PARK THEATRE

The new Park Theatre was built hastily during the spring and summer of 1821, and opened with fanfare on September 1st. Financed by Astor and Beekman, it was heralded as a glorious architectural achievement, though certain contemporary accounts describe it as ugly. Odell, in commenting on the fact that the new house was raised on the site of the old one, mentions that a modern reader would expect the new site to be farther uptown. He reminds us, however, that in 1821 New York was still a city of not more than 125,000, and that this population was pretty well concentrated at the lower end of the island.

Joseph Cowell, an English actor who joined the Park company that season, left in his reminiscences a very sarcastic description of the theatre and its environment. "The pavement," he says, "was horrible, and the sidewalks, partly brick and partly flagstones of all shapes, put together as nearly as their untrimmed forms would permit. . . ." The little park on which the theatre fronted, was "of a shape defying any geometrical term to convey the form of it . . . the little grass the cows and pigs allowed to remain was checkered o'er by the *short cuts* to the different streets in the neighborhood. The exterior of the theatre was the most prison-like-looking place I had ever seen appropriated to such a purpose." And the interior he found "excessively dark; oil, of course, then was used, in common brass Liverpool lamps, ten or twelve of which were placed in a large sheet-iron hoop, painted green, hanging from the ceiling in the centre, and one, half the size, on each side of the stage." The boxes, he declared scornfully, were "designed in the taste of an upholsterer, and executed without any taste at all; the seats were covered with green baize, and the back of the boxes with white-wash, and the iron columns which supported them covered with burnished gold!"

Regardless, however, of the artistic merits of the structure, the new Park was commodious for both players and audience. It had a large, well-equipped stage, and it accommodated twenty-five hundred in its auditorium. It opened under the management of Price and Simpson (the latter had replaced Cooper as co-manager

some time before this, though Cooper still performed intermittently with the company) and the opening production was made up of Mrs. Inchbald's *Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are*, and Payne's *Thérèse*. There was also delivered on opening night a prize address written for the occasion by Mr. Charles Sprague of Boston, who had competed with some sixty other literary aspirants, and had won the gold medal offered. This address was spoken by Mr. Simpson.

DEBUT OF THE ELDER BOOTH

The first really interesting event in the new theatre after its christening was the New York debut on October 5th of Junius Brutus Booth, founder of one of the most famous stage families in our history. Booth, still a young man, had made his London debut in 1815, and had risen to prominence at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, but had suffered from the shadow of Edmund Kean, which regularly dimmed his lustre. Having landed in Virginia, he had played in Richmond before coming to New York, and had been received with superlative acclaim. His first appearance at the Park was (almost inevitably) as Richard III, and although the public reaction was favorable, the critics were inclined to moderate their praise with references to Kean, and to suggest that Booth was Kean's imitator. After ten days at the Park, the actor moved to Baltimore, then to Charleston, and, in the spring, to Boston. He did not reappear at the Park during that season, a fact which indicates his success in New York had not been sensational.

RICHARD III IN COLOR

Although Booth was very likely unaware of it, his performance of *Richard III* followed close on the heels of a less publicized but probably more picturesque production of the same piece in New York. During the summer of 1821 the negro members of the community had fitted up their own imitation of the various "gardens," such as Vauxhall, Chatham, and Columbia, which was established "back of the hospital," and given the name of the African Grove. Here, according to a newspaper account, as reported by Odell, were "little boxes . . . filled with black beauties." And, in addition to ice-cream, punch, and other refreshments served *al fresco*, certain entertainments were offered.

Among these was a performance in the "upper apartments" of the Grove, of *Richard III*, in which "a little dapper wooly-haired waiter at the City Hotel personated the royal Plantagenet," in "robes made up from discarded merino curtains of the ball room." All the roles appear to have been carried by males, and the cast was considerably shortened. Later in the fall, other all-colored productions were presented in a little theatre called the Pantheon, at the corner of Bleecker and Mercer Streets, and at one time a section at the back of the house, separated from the rest by a partition, was set aside for white patrons. This seems not to have worked out so well. And even with all-colored audiences, there was constant trouble in connection with the performances, the audience usually being noisy and often riotous, so that police supervision was necessary.

The autumn of 1822 was made uneasy for New Yorkers by a recurrence of the yellow fever, and the Park company, fearing to open the season in its centrally-located theatre, avoided the congested district by taking over the circus in Broadway, between Grand and Howard Streets, where it opened on September 8th and remained until the first of November.

"AT HOME" WITH CHARLES MATHEWS

On November 7th, back at the Park, the company had the pleasure of presenting another English guest star, the tremendously popular comedian, Charles Mathews. Although Mathews appeared in several standard plays, including *Henry IV* (in which he played Falstaff), he did so protestingly, and whenever possible he presented his own unique series of monologues and impersonations which he called "At Homes." His success in New York was tumultuous, and he boasted later that he had drawn more money at the box-office than either Cooke or Kean. After spending nearly a month at the Park, Mathews went on a tour of other American cities, and returned triumphantly for a re-engagement in New York during April and May, 1823. His influence on other actors was so great that he has been called by some historians the founder of the "modern" school of light comedy.

On the whole the season of 1822–23 was a satisfactory one for the Park Theatre, though thanks for this were due largely to Mathews. And it was becoming increasingly apparent that there was a price to pay for the engagement of guest stars. That is, the

regular company did not draw well during the periods between guests. This was a fact that plagued the management frequently during this and the whole decade. Also, there were various competitive ventures in the city. Mrs. Baldwin, for example, who had quit the Park in a huff during the spring of 1821, had, in the summer of 1822 set up a company of her own in the little City Theatre in Warren Street, and although there were gaps in her season, she nevertheless drew some patronage in various months of 1822 and 1823. Also, there was the circus. Most active in this field was West, who by 1823 had become so troublesome to the Park management that they bought him out (with threats to build a circus of their own) and shipped him off to England. In the summer of 1823 Price and Simpson, therefore, operated the circus themselves, with Joseph Cowell as actual manager.

ICE CREAM AND CANVAS

The "garden" theatres, too, were a constantly recurring, and ever-growing, menace. In May, 1823, for instance, Barrière, the ice-cream magnate who was developing more and more interest in theatricals, announced the opening of his newly erected Pavilion Theatre in Chatham Garden. This was not a building, but an outdoor theatre "covered with a broad expanse of white canvas which will protect the audience from the evening dews." Here, daily were presented concerts, variety shows, operas, farces and comedies, with such success that Price was made unhappy, and in retaliation was impelled to propose a law against canvas playhouses. The result of this move we shall recount presently.

The Park opened its season promptly the first day of September, 1823, and on the very next day introduced a new member of the company in the person of Henry Placide, a young man from Charleston, and son of the renowned Alexander. He was, of course, at the time of this appearance merely another young actor, but he was eventually to become one of the best comedians of the American stage.

"HOME, SWEET HOME"

A highlight of the autumn was the production of John Howard Payne's opera, *Clari*, which had already won acclaim in London, and now was to charm New York. This, as nearly every-

one knows, is the opera which introduced the immortal song, "Home, Sweet Home," which, at the Park Theatre premiere, was sung by the delectable Miss Johnson, and was declared by a contemporary critic to be "the most beautiful and tender music we have ever heard."

Booth was back for some performances this season, and so was the sturdy Cooper, who maintained his popular following year after year with amazing consistency. Actually, at this time he was at the height of public favor.

A real blow fell on Price and Simpson in May, 1824, when Barrière opened his new Chatham Theatre. Smarting under the competition offered the previous summer by the ice-cream man's canvas playhouse, Price had succeeded in having such flimsy structures outlawed. But his action proved a boomerang, for Barrière had proceeded to build a solid theatre of brick and mortar in the Garden, with all the furnishings and appurtenances that could be desired, and with a seating capacity of thirteen hundred. There was also special ventilation to combat the heat of summer. The house opened on May 17th, and during succeeding months it presented a dazzling parade of dramas, comedies, musicals, ballets, and spectacular novelties, with a large and extremely competent company. It was Barrière's policy to bring new actors before the public almost every night, and in the course of the summer he presented such outstanding personalities as Mrs. Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. Wallack, Mr. and Mrs. Durang (of Philadelphia), Mr. Jefferson (his farewell appearances in New York), and another famous Philadelphian, F. C. Wemyss.

HEROINES ON HORSEBACK

This theatre was still going strong in the early autumn, but although there may have been uneasiness at the Park Theatre, there was by no means despair. Price opened confidently on August 30th with *The Poor Gentleman*, which caused no sensation, but on September 1st achieved a surprise hit with a production of *The Cataract of the Ganges*, one of the first of a long series of equestrian melodramas—the popularity of the type extending throughout the nineteenth century. The heroine in this piece, leaping her horse to safety across the cataract, was blazing the trail for hundreds of later heroines and later horses. So sensational was the success of the melodrama at the Park that it was

given a total of forty-two performances during the fall season—an extraordinary run for the theatre of that period.

And right on top of this hit came another—a comedy entitled *Charles II*, which had been adapted from the French by John Howard Payne and Washington Irving. There were a number of other novelties, several of native authorship, during the season. There was a dramatization of James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Pilot*, an adaptation of Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*, a stage version of Mrs. Shelley's melodramatic *Frankenstein*, and, as the second sensational hit of the season, a spectacular fantasy entitled *Cherry and Fair Star*, which ran for thirty performances. In this piece, says Odell, with its "glitter and trickery," one finds anticipations of the fabulous *Black Crook* of later years, and even of the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

It is then an active, varied, and flourishing theatrical life that we find in existence in New York at the close of the first quarter of the century.

PHILADELPHIA

The beginning of the century found the Chestnut Street Theatre operating successfully under the management of Wignell and Reinagle, who were always diligent in the matter of maintaining a strong company, and who, also, were ambitious to extend their activities to nearby cities. No sooner had Washington been designated the national capital (1800) than they moved onto the scene and opened a theatre in a building which had been erected as a hotel. Although this playhouse, known as the National Theatre, was in use for a comparatively short time, it was soon replaced by a new theatre building in Pennsylvania Avenue, and here the Philadelphia company performed regularly during the summer months for many years. At the same time they were playing short seasons at their Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore, and occasionally in Alexandria, Virginia.

The Chestnut Street company at this time included many excellent performers, particularly in the field of comedy, wherein it surpassed the Park Theatre of New York. Outstanding names were William Warren, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard, William B. Wood, Mrs. Merry, Mrs. Oldmixon, and Miss Arnold. In the fall of 1800 the female contingent was strengthened by the addition of the

Westray sisters, three young women of considerable charm who were the daughters of Mrs. Simpson, an actress in Dunlap's Park Theatre company, and who had all appeared at various times on the Park stage. Early in their careers they married into the profession, Elizabeth becoming first Mrs. Villiers, and later Mrs. Twaits; Ellen becoming Mrs. Darley; and Juliana achieving the best marriage of all with William Wood, one of the co-managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre.

At this time Wignell and Reinagle had comparatively little competition in their territory. During the summer of 1800 there were a few productions offered at the old Southwark Theatre under the leadership of Durang and Rowson, comedians and circus performers, but these proved inconsequential. And it was more than ten years before an important rival attraction was to disturb their monopoly.

HISSED TO DEATH

In the fall of 1801 the company was notably augmented by the engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Whitlock, accomplished and well-established players, and of Mr. Fullerton, from the Theatre Royal, Liverpool. The latter, however, intrudes a curiously macabre note into our record. It appears that during the 1801–02 season the management suffered a great deal from rowdyism both in and around the theatre, and this persisted in spite of every effort to abate it. The most spectacular result was the suicide, in February, 1802, of Mr. Fullerton, who, it is reported, could no longer stand the hissing. Evidently deportment had been better in Liverpool.

A change in the proprietorship of the Chestnut Theatre occurred early in 1803, when, as we have previously mentioned, the veteran Wignell died, leaving his widow (the former Mrs. Merry, to whom he had been married only a little more than a month) as co-owner of the enterprise with Reinagle. Mrs. Wignell naturally assumed some responsibility for the operation of the theatre, but actually from this time on the real management was in the hands of Warren and Wood. And at the end of the season (April, 1803) Wood sailed for England to recruit actors. Not only did he accomplish this aim, but he also brought back with him for the next season some new plays, one of which introduced melo-

drama to Philadelphia. This was Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery*, which proved somewhat of a sensation, just as similar novelties were doing for Dunlap in New York.

THE SHUTTLING OF COOPER

Although the era of big, imported stars had not yet arrived, the Chestnut company offered during the next several years a very strong company, both from its stock personnel and from a succession of guest players from New York. Wood brought back with him from England the highly talented comedian, William Twaits, who was to develop a large following in this country; Joseph Jefferson joined the company in the autumn of 1803, and became one of its mainstays; and during the next three years guest engagements were played by John E. Harwood, James Fennell, Mrs. Melmoth, and the mighty Cooper, who during one season achieved the then extremely difficult feat of playing two nights a week in Philadelphia and two in New York.

In August, 1806, Mrs. Wignell, after three and a half years of widowhood, married William Warren, who then became in fact as well as name the manager of the theatre. Durang, in his historical record of the Philadelphia stage, attributes this marriage to the famous actress's desire "to give the right of government to one more resolute than herself." And certainly her confidence was not misplaced, for Warren proved an energetic and capable manager for many years. To his great sadness, Mrs. Warren's domestic partnership with him was shortlived. She died at Alexandria in June, 1808, four days after giving birth to a still-born child.

Somewhat more than a year later, in September, 1809, Alexander Reinagle died. This left Warren completely in control of the Philadelphia and Baltimore theatres, though very shortly Wood, who had been active in the management, bought into the ownership, and this partnership endured for a number of years.

A NEW CIRCUS

Meanwhile, early in 1809, a team of equestrians, Pepin and Breschard, had promoted the erection of a new circus building at the corner of Ninth and Walnut Streets. These performers, who billed themselves as "Professors of the art of Horsemanship and Agility," and who had arrived from Spain a year before this,

made the usual claims of having exhibited before the "principal courts of Europe," and also of having "received the most unbounded marks of approbation from the inhabitants of New York and Boston." At any rate, they attracted attention with their Philadelphia circus. The building itself, according to Durang, "was very spacious. The dome over the ring was an immense affair; it had from the pit the appearance of being some eighty feet in height, and looked very oriental and magnificently imposing." At first the performances were limited to equestrian and variety acts, but even so they made themselves felt at the box-office in Chestnut Street.

The excitement of 1811 in the Quaker City was the appearance of George Frederick Cooke, whose American adventures have been noted previously. These were busy times for Warren and Wood. They had four theatres under their control, and to these they moved their company in rotation each year. Customarily they opened the fall season in Philadelphia, continued it till April, then moved to Baltimore, where they played to the fourth of July, then went to Alexandria and Washington for short summer seasons in each place.

The year 1812 was a difficult one for them, partly because of the outbreak of war with England, and partly because of the expansion of activities by Pepin and Breschard. During the winter of 1811–12 the circus had been fitted up with an adequate stage for standard plays, and on January 1st the house, which was now renamed the Olympic, opened a series of productions in direct competition with Chestnut Street. The result was a season enlivened by rivalry, and by countering attractions of a novel and spectacular nature. Both houses survived the conflict, but when they reopened after a summer recess, the Olympic showed weakness and closed in three weeks. The Chestnut went through the regular season of 1812–13 without pause, though the box-office reflected the troubles of war time.

Despite uneasy conditions, Warren and Wood managed to open their new theatre in Baltimore during May, 1813, and did fairly good business in it. Their usual season in Washington, however, was spoiled by the threat of British attack on the city. All in all, this company contrived to ride out the war with only moderate discouragement.

In June, 1816, during the Baltimore engagement, James Fennell

died. Perhaps because of frustrations in the world of salt-manufacture, perhaps for commoner reasons, he died alcoholic and unhappy. Reese D. James, in his excellent account of the Philadelphia stage, quotes Warren's *Diary* to the effect that Fennell "had been a wretched sot for many years past and consequently much distressed in his last days."

GAS LIGHTS INTRODUCED

The autumn of 1816 was marked by an interesting innovation in Chestnut Street. This was the introduction of gas lights in the theatre—the first such use, claimed the managers, in this country. Proudly they announced to the public that the superior safety of gas, "its brilliancy and neatness" would be satisfactorily appreciated by the audience. They were right. Business at the theatre showed a brisk upturn.

The other feature of that autumn was not so favorable. At the Olympic, where circus and standard plays had alternated or appeared in combination for several years, a large new company headed by Mr. J. West made its Philadelphia debut. The company had come from New York, where they had achieved success, and they offered a dazzling array of equestrian acts, ballets, and pantomimes. For admirers of equine beauty, they presented "a splendid stud of different-colored horses," which, according to Durang, were the first spotted horses to be seen in America. The most sensational hit of this troupe was the equestrian melodrama, *Timour the Tartar*, which drew as much as a thousand dollars a night into the box-office—a very impressive sum in that period.

A PLAGUE OF FIRES

Despite horses and Tartars, however, things went along passably well in Chestnut Street, with the famous Betterton appearing as guest star in December, 1817, with Henry Wallack making his debut in December, 1818, and James Wallack registering a solid hit in January, 1819. It was in 1820 that bad luck struck with a vengeance. On April 2d of that year the Chestnut Street Theatre (Old Drury of Philadelphia, as it was affectionately called) burned to the ground. "The destruction was so complete," said Wood, that "a green-room mirror, a beautiful model of a ship, and the prompter's clock, were alone preserved." Scenery, cos-

tumes, properties, furnishings (including two valuable grand pianos) library, music, even the new and expensive gas-works, went up in smoke. As though this were not calamitous enough, the fire occurred shortly after the insurance policies of the theatre had expired! The reason for this unhappy state of affairs was that, because of a prevalence of fires in Philadelphia during the preceding months, the insurance companies were showing reluctance to renew the coverage on the theatre, and, while the case was being argued, the fire came.

Shock followed shock. Seventeen days later came news to Warren and Wood that their theatre in Washington had burned down. This left them temporarily with only one important playhouse—the Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore. To this they repaired for a summer season, meanwhile effecting a lease on the Olympic in Philadelphia, which, fortunately for them, was at the time without a tenant. There seems no rational explanation of the extraordinary fact that within less than two months three of the half-dozen first-rate playhouses in the country were destroyed by fire. The third was, of course, the Park Theatre in New York, which burned on May 24th.

DEBUT OF EDWIN FORREST

Making the best of things, the Chestnut Street company remodeled the Olympic, which still was more of a circus than a playhouse, removing the dome, which spoiled the acoustics, and fitting it up with reasonable adequacy for their use. They renamed the house the Walnut Street Theatre. Here they opened the season in November, and, although some of their patrons sniffed at the surroundings, they got on fairly well. On the 27th of that month a talented lad of sixteen, named Edwin Forrest, made his debut in the standard role of Young Norval. He was destined, as everyone knows, to become a leading tragedian of the American stage. The following spring Edmund Kean animated the scene with his eccentric power, but he irritated more than he impressed the Philadelphians, who, at least on one occasion, rewarded him with hisses, apples, oranges, and "other light missiles."

New playhouses were now built in both Washington and Philadelphia. The one in the former city, seemingly not very pretentious, was opened by Warren and Wood in August, 1821.

Business, however, was poor in the capital that summer, and the company lost little time in moving to Baltimore, where they had the pleasure of introducing Junius Brutus Booth to their public.

THE CHESTNUT STREET REBUILT

Then followed the long, regular season in Philadelphia, given, perforce, in the Walnut Street Theatre. But finally, in December, 1822, the new Chestnut Street house was ready, and was opened on the 2d of that month with *The School for Scandal.* It was an imposing building, with a marble façade in "Italian style," and had a seating capacity of something over two thousand. During its first year its stage was trod by Cooper, Wallack, Booth, and Charles Mathews. The season was a good one, and its close was enlivened by a production of the tremendously popular *burletta, Tom and Jerry,* a piece whose title is immortalized in a mixed drink.

In 1823 and 1824 Warren and Wood had on the whole not too happy a time, though there were periods when their fortunes rose. Business in Washington proved worse and worse, and even in Baltimore the box-office suffered. In Philadelphia there was intermittent trouble from the circus folk, for the Walnut Street Theatre had reverted to the name of the Olympic and, under the new management of Price and Simpson, attracted crowds with its equestrian melodramas. When the business barometer in Chestnut Street fell, the hundred and twenty stockholders in the new theatre (who, incidentally, had free admissions to the performances) grew restless, and put pressure, through a committee of five, on Warren and Wood for revisions of policy. Wood, knowing his business, and possessed of a firm nature, resisted this pressure; Warren, on the other hand, proved more pliant, and in some instances sided with the stockholders against his partner. Wood, for example, was forced to lower prices of admission during 1824 to seventy-five, fifty, and twenty-five cents. It was his belief that this reduction would not increase the theatre's earnings, and eventually he was proved to be right. But because of this and other matters the rift between him and Warren widened, and finally (though not until 1828) resulted in the dissolution of their partnership.

The quarter-century ended in Philadelphia, therefore, on a note of discord.

BOSTON

The career of a theatre in almost any place at any time is one of ups and downs. But this was particularly true of the Boston theatre during the late years of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries. In 1800 there were, it will be recalled, two playhouses in the city—the Haymarket and the Boston Theatre in Federal Street. The former was opened only occasionally to house visiting companies, and was closed finally in 1803 when the building was sold at auction. The latter, from 1803 to 1823 operated regularly without competition, except now and then from the circus.

For several years previous to 1800 the Federal Street Theatre had operated at a loss. There seemed to be two reasons for this: poor management and a lack of wholehearted enthusiasm for the theatre on the part of a sufficient number of Bostonians. When the season closed at the end of April, 1800, Mr. Barrett, the actor-manager, found himself in the same situation that several of his predecessors had faced—in the red. He withdrew from the management, and Mr. Whitlock took over for the next season during which he lost four thousand dollars. That settled Mr. Whitlock as manager.

In November, 1801 the theatre reopened under the joint management of Powell and Harper, and, although the financial results were not satisfactory, they showed some improvement. The improvement, it appears, was due chiefly to the acumen of Snelling Powell (brother of Charles Stuart Powell, who years before had waged a losing managerial fight in Boston), for in the fall of 1802 he was put in sole charge of the Federal Street, and during the next four years achieved distinction as Boston's first successful theatre manager. From 1806 to 1811 he was joined in the management by Bernard and Dickson, and from 1812 to the time of his death in 1821, by Dickson alone. For twenty years he was actually the guiding genius of the Federal Street.

To present a detailed account of this theatre's activities for the period mentioned would be to risk a great deal of repetition, for many of the outstanding personalities in the record are those whom we have already met in New York and Philadelphia, and the plays, naturally, were drawn from a common source. The Boston company was not as strong as either the Park or the Chest-

nut Street organization, but it was strengthened frequently by guest actors, and by an occasional distinguished recruit from abroad. John Bernard joined the company in 1803, after successful appearances in New York and Philadelphia, and was one of its mainstays until 1811, when he left for Albany, New York, and promoted the construction of that young city's first theatre the following year.

ARRIVAL OF THE DUFFS

Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, the indefatigable, was a guest star in Federal Street during 1805, and returned for engagements almost every season thereafter until his retirement. In 1806–7 Bostonians were introduced to James Fennell, whom they liked especially as Lear. In 1808 there was a joint appearance of Cooper and Fennell, who scored a great hit with *Venice Preserved*. In 1809 came young Master Payne, who amazed everyone for six nights with his youthful talent. In 1810 there arrived from England Mr. and Mrs. John R. Duff, who proved highly valuable acquisitions. Mary Ann Duff, the wife, a very beautiful woman, was the admiration of Bostonians for many seasons, and later achieved stardom in Philadelphia and New York. She came to be known as the "American Siddons."

In 1811 and 1812 George Frederick Cooke performed on-stage and off in Boston, sober and drunk. His success was, inevitably, both *d'estime* and *de scandale*. In 1818 there were performances of Shakespeare by Wallack. According to Clapp, "He was too melodramatic to please those who remembered Hodgkinson, Cooper, and Cooke, and the critics asserted that he wanted both simplicity and nature, though his Hamlet was favorably received. Wallack was, however, popular both on the stage and off, and he was honored by full houses." In 1821 occurred the historic visits of Edmund Kean, who packed the house for his performances in February, but who, on his ill-fated return in May, incurred the wrath of the natives by walking out on a nearly-empty house, and soon after retreated to his native English heath in disgrace.

THE CITY THEATRE

In 1821, upon the death of the competent Powell, the management was placed in the hands of Kilner and Clarke. The following year (with no theatrical significance) Boston was legally declared

a city. And in that year also appeared, for the first time in the vicinity, Junius Brutus Booth, who made a highly favorable impression, particularly as Richard III. Later in 1822 the big attraction was Charles Mathews and his fabulously popular "At Homes." In 1823 the news was of the establishment of a rival house. This was the City Theatre, formerly the Washington Garden amphitheatre, a brick building that had been erected in 1819 in Tremont Street by our old friend, John Bernard, for summer theatricals. Although previous to 1823 it had been devoted to circus, vaudeville, and music, it now, under the aegis of Joseph Cowell, entered the field with a combination of straight plays and spectacles, which it continued for several seasons. This did not help matters in Federal Street, but neither did it wreck them. The old established playhouse kept on an even keel, and in 1824 scored a resounding success with an engagement of William Conway, an actor recently imported by the Park of New York, and of the never-failing Cooper. Year in and year out, who could hold up like Cooper?

That, in capsule form, is the report on Boston for the first quarter of the century.

CHARLESTON

On January 1st, 1800, the nimble Alexander Placide, actor, manager, pantomimist, and rope dancer, started the new year at his City Theatre, Charleston, with a performance of Garrick's *The Country Girl*, followed by *Rosina*, a comic opera. By now he was an institution in that community, which, with its population of approximately ten thousand whites, was hardly a city, and yet was one of the most appreciative theatrical centers of America.

The theatre which he controlled (not a very adequate one) had been known at various times as the French Theatre, Solee's Hall, and the Church Street Theatre. Gradually it was borne in upon the mind of Placide that he and his company deserved something better, and, as he himself stated, he was advised by "the most respected friends of dramatic amusement" in the town to lease the Charleston Theatre, a much better establishment, then standing idle.

The lease was duly effected, and the company moved at the end of March, meanwhile having carried out extensive renovations in their new house, which had been built for West and Big-

nall some eight years earlier, and which, with its "combination of elegance and novelty," was the pride of Charlestonians. Here their productions were offered until early May, when Placide and certain members of his troupe transferred their talents to the *al fresco* atmosphere of Vaux-Hall Gardens, a fashionable summer resort where, as Hoole tells us, "music and pantomimes were presented, and ice cream and cold baths offered to the public." Incidentally, it would seem that any American city must have felt inferior during the early years of the nineteenth century without an imitation of the famous Vauxhall of London. The spelling of the name varied, but the idea was the same. Placide managed this resort in Charleston regularly each summer until his death in 1812, and afterwards for some time it was managed by his widow (surely the reader recalls the former Charlotte Wrighten!).

In 1801 Placide enlarged his scope by setting up a season in Savannah, and this became a regular policy. Later on he added Richmond to his circuit, and was playing there when the terrible fire destroyed the theatre. He was, in fact, an energetic manager. And he tried to bring the best acting talent to the South, though the competition of the Northern theatres made his efforts difficult. In 1803 he acquired the extremely valuable services of Hodgkinson, who had left the Park after the death of his wife, and this veteran comedian filled until his death in 1805 the position of "acting manager." That is to say, he directed the actors in their business. Then, in 1806, Placide was successful in bringing Cooper to his theatre for a series of performances, thus inaugurating the guest-star policy in Charleston. Cooper was followed, in 1810, by young John Howard Payne.

THIRTEEN DOORS

The 1811–12 season began unhappily and ended fatally for the conscientious and hard-working Placide. In December occurred the Richmond disaster, which sent him home *sans* music, scenery, and wardrobe, and which frightened him so that the moment he reached Charleston he had his home theatre thoroughly inspected by the City Council, and increased the number of exits so that "thirteen doors open into the street, by which the House can be emptied, almost in an instant." The season then went forward, but threats of war with England hurt business, and in June came the

declaration. In that month Placide took his company to Augusta, Georgia, for a short summer engagement, and during it he died.

Mrs. Placide tried bravely to carry on her husband's enterprises, but odds were against her. Added to the uneasiness of war and the resultant blocking of commerce (especially serious to a seaport such as Charleston), was the competition of a new circus erected in Vaux-Hall Garden by the adventurous team of Pepin and Breschard. Early in December, 1812, the widow opened a season at the Charleston, but it proved a quick failure, and came to an end within a month.

This was the last of Placide management, though various sons and daughters of the family went on to successful careers in the theatre. These included Henry, Thomas, Jane, Elizabeth, and Caroline. The most fame was garnered by Henry, who became one of America's leading actors. Jane was the runner-up, and came to be known as "the Queen of the Drama in New Orleans."

EFFECT OF THE WAR

Some idea of the drastic effect of the war on Charleston theatricals may be gained from the fact that between January, 1813, and the fall of 1815 the city had no stage entertainment other than an occasional concert and a few circus acts.

Charleston must have read with real joy the announcement that the theatre would reopen on November 1st, 1815. When this promise was fulfilled the house was under the management of Joseph G. Holman, formerly of the Park Theatre, New York, and before that of Covent Garden, London. The theatre had been altered and thoroughly renovated. (One wonders if a theatre has *ever* been reopened without these rituals!) And from a contemporary newspaper notice, quoted by Hoole, we learn with great satisfaction that "Among the alterations made in the theatre, due care has been taken to secure ladies of character from the possibility of being improperly associated . . . the *first* Boxes, together with the Pit, are appropriated to the reception of Ladies of respectability exclusively."

Manager Holman provided himself with two excellent leading actors: Thomas Hilson, who had appeared with acclaim in New York, and Mrs. Charles Gilfert, who was Holman's sister. Mr. Gilfert, incidentally, was leader of the orchestra. As an extra feature, Cooper was brought down for a guest-star engagement

in March. The season was a highly satisfactory one, and shortly after its close (in the summer of 1816) Holman sailed to England in search of talent.

CALDWELL AND TROUBLE

In the autumn he returned with some talent, but also with a bundle of future trouble in the person of James H. Caldwell, a comedian. All went merrily for a few months, and Caldwell proved his merit, but in March he quarreled with Holman and was summarily dismissed from the company. The quarrel was primarily over the assignment of roles. Caldwell laid his case before the public, Holman did likewise, and eventually matters were sufficiently settled to permit Caldwell to play the rest of the season. At its close, however, he left Charleston and launched upon an adventurous career in the frontier theatre of Kentucky, New Orleans, and St. Louis. At the same time Holman relinquished his managership in favor of his brother-in-law, Gilfert, who held it until 1825.

Gilfert, although by profession a musician, was also an actor, and during his ten years of responsibility, proved himself an extremely able manager. He kept the drama alive and flourishing in the whole region, and played frequently in Richmond and Savannah. The latter city, indeed, was so hospitable to the players that during the winter of 1822–23 they did not appear in Charleston at all. This caused a good deal of unhappiness among the Charlestonians, and Gilfert took advantage of the situation by pressing for a better theatre. He even went so far as to threaten to build a new one himself. The proprietors of the Charleston Theatre thereupon agreed to extensive remodeling of the house, and Gilfert, declaring himself pleased with the results, opened his regular season in November, 1823.

During this period he was able occasionally to present a guest star. Cooper came several times, Booth played in both Charleston and Savannah in 1821, and Wallack in 1824. For the most part, however, the company got along with its regular stock players, many of whom, if not distinguished, were at least competent. To appreciate Gilfert's merits one needs only to compare his regime with those of the various managers who followed him in quick succession during the next decade. Charleston learned then, if

it did not already know, that good theatre and good management are virtually synonymous.

THE FRONTIER

Although there are records of a few amateur performances of plays west of the Alleghenies before 1800 (notably at Washington, Kentucky, in 1797, and at Lexington by students of Transylvania University in 1799) the professional theatre did not penetrate to frontier towns until the second decade of the nineteenth century. We are speaking now of the English-speaking stage. If we include the French theatre, then we must begin with 1791, when Louis Tabary and his company of actors from Paris set themselves up in a hall in the Rue St. Pierre of New Orleans, and gave performances for the French-speaking public of that preponderantly French city. For similar performances a new theatre, the St. Pierre, was built in 1808; another, the St. Philippe, the same year; and a third, the Orleans, in 1809. Here were displayed the classic plays of Racine, Molière, Beaumarchais, together with operas, spectacles, and such other entertainments as pleased the taste of the Gallic audience.

The story of the extension of the English-American drama into the wilderness begins in 1814 with the arrival at Albany, New York, of one Noble Luke Usher, a strolling player from Kentucky. His mission was to recruit a company for his "theatres," of which he claimed to have three—one each in Frankfort, Lexington, and Louisville. It proved to be true that in these towns there were places fitted up for dramatic performances, though as playhouses they were rather primitive. And it is also an established fact that as early as 1810 professional actors had performed in these localities. But it was the results of Usher's mission to Albany which firmly planted dramatic seeds in Kentucky and other "western" soil.

LUDLOW AND THE DRAKES

John Bernard, the erstwhile Boston actor-manager, was at the time of Usher's arrival managing Albany's first theatre, the construction of which Bernard had promoted in 1812. And, naturally, it was to the personnel of this theatre that Usher appealed for help. He was frank in admitting the hazards of his proposed

tour, and he found few willing to embrace those hazards. Fortunately for him, however, the call of adventure appealed to Samuel Drake, Bernard's stage manager, who enrolled not only himself in the enterprise, but also his entire family, including several sons and daughters and a brother. In addition to the Drake clan, five other persons, male and female, announced themselves as willing to join up. One of these five, a young man of eighteen, named Noah M. Ludlow, was to become the narrator of the adventure, as well as one of the most interestingly intrepid of frontier theatre-managers. Ludlow, as a stage-struck youth, had for some time haunted the Albany playhouse, and, shortly before Usher's arrival, had made his first appearance on the stage in a role which required him to speak only two words. The role was that of a fiend in a melodrama entitled *Forty Thieves*, and the words were "Dread master!" In his well-known volume of reminiscences, he recalls that he was so overcome with stage fright that afterwards he was not even sure he had uttered a sound. But he was assured by a fellow fiend that he had spoken up boldly. The reassuring fiend, incidentally, was Henry Placide, then a lad of fifteen.

BY WAGON AND FLAT-BOAT

Ludlow was all for adventure. And, under the leadership of Drake, he set out the next spring (1815) by wagon for the headwaters of the Allegheny River. Usher, meanwhile, had gone ahead, but had died en route to Kentucky. The company, on reaching the river, disposed of its two wagons and purchased a flat-bottomed boat. In this rough conveyance, which had a sort of roof, and two partitioned enclosures for the ladies, the troupe navigated its way to Pittsburgh, where the actors found ready for their use a sooty, improvised theatre, which was little more than a shack. Here they gave their first performance about the middle of August, and continued their season until November. These were the first professional performances in Pittsburgh.

The company then started for Frankfort, four hundred miles away, making part of the journey by flat-boat on the Ohio River, and partly by wagon. Here they were joined by some other actors, among whom were Tom Jefferson, eldest son of the first Joseph Jefferson, and James Douglass, son of David Douglass, one of the first theatre managers on this continent. They opened their season in December, and continued till March. They then moved on to

Louisville, where, in a town of only three thousand inhabitants, they were able to play successfully for ten weeks. Following that, they went to Lexington, where the second story of a brewery had been converted to dramatic use, and here they opened their season in June.

It would be tedious to follow in detail the peregrinations of these pioneers. Those with a special interest in the subject may find everything in Ludlow's life story. Here we must content ourselves with a few highlights, together with a general comment to the effect that the frontier communities of what was then the Far West, were starved for entertainment, and therefore gave to such troupers as came among them a welcome such as could hardly be matched by the comparatively jaded towns and cities of the present.

DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI

In 1817 Ludlow, with certain other actors, left Drake's organization to form their own "commonwealth" group. That year the new troupe played in Nashville, Tennessee, and also in Cincinnati, Ohio. In both places the performers were received enthusiastically, and things were particularly prosperous in Cincinnati, which, because of the development of steam navigation, was booming. In the autumn of the year Ludlow and his companions started for New Orleans, and en route gave a single performance in Natchez, Mississippi—the first such performance ever given there. Reaching New Orleans, they found among the inhabitants a marked hostility to English-speaking people, but they were undaunted by the atmosphere, and opened a series of plays at the St. Philippe Theatre on December 24, playing four nights a week through the season, which closed the following April. These were the first professional performances in English to be offered in New Orleans, and were, on the whole, well received.

After having established the English drama on the banks of the Mississippi, Ludlow embarked on a barnstorming tour of Alabama and other virgin territory, arriving in St. Louis in March, 1820. There was not at this time a proper playhouse in St. Louis, but the town had seen a few plays. In 1815 some local amateurs had given two productions in the court house, and in January, 1818 a small professional troupe headed by William A. Turner

had arrived and begun a series of performances which, although seemingly infrequent, continued into the summer. Turner and his wife (the leading lady) were English actors, and had appeared in various theatres in America. Mrs. Turner had played at the Park in New York. Although they made a highly favorable impression in this rough-and-tumble town of some two thousand inhabitants (including a considerable proportion of French and Spanish), they did not remain for a second season. But they had stimulated the dramatic impulse in the natives, and during 1819 a new hall was erected for dramatic use, and it was this hall (called, of course, a theatre) which Ludlow used in the spring of 1820.

MEETING IN ST. LOUIS

No sooner had Ludlow and his company opened their season early in March than news reached them of the imminent arrival of another company, headed by no other than Samuel Drake, the actor-manager under whose guidance Ludlow had set out from Albany five years before. Presently, therefore, St. Louis had two companies. Inasmuch as Ludlow was occupying the so-called theatre, Drake was forced to improvise a playhouse. This he promptly accomplished by fitting up a large room in the City Hotel. The competition did not last long. Drake had the better company, and, besides, the hotel was warmer than Ludlow's hall. The two companies soon amalgamated. After a short season, Drake and his Kentucky Comedians departed, and Ludlow's company seemingly fell apart. At any rate, in June Ludlow was offering his services and those of his wife to the citizens of St. Louis as ornamental painters and decorators.

Presently, however, this intrepid character was saved from the tedium of gilt paint and brushes by an offer to join up with the theatrical company of Collins and Jones, which was then playing in Nashville. Off he went. With this company he returned to St. Louis for a short time at the end of the year. Late in 1821 he was in New Orleans, where he allied himself with James H. Caldwell. This association lasted until 1824, when Ludlow formed a company of his own and launched a barnstorming campaign in Tennessee and Alabama, in the course of which he built the first theatre in Mobile.

CALDWELL IN NEW ORLEANS

James H. Caldwell, whom the reader will perhaps remember as the imported actor who caused trouble in the Charleston Theatre in 1817, had opened a season at the St. Philippe Theatre, New Orleans, in January, 1820. This proving a success, he had returned to the city in 1821 (after a season at Petersburg, Virginia) and had strengthened his hold there by a series of attractions which included guest-star engagements of both Cooper and Booth. The results of this season were so encouraging that in 1822 he promoted the construction of a new and first-class theatre, the Camp Street, which was opened on January 1st, 1824, and was the first building in New Orleans to be lighted by gas. Caldwell established himself firmly in the life of New Orleans, and was its chief provider of English-language entertainment until his retirement in 1843.

Ludlow, Drake, Caldwell, Turner, Collins and Jones—these were the men who carried the theatre into the West during the first quarter of the century. There were others, of course, but these are the best known. Their courage and persistence in the face of every conceivable hardship justify our placing them high up in the ranks of American pioneers. As Carson says in his fascinating study of the St. Louis stage, "The picture of these ardent players fighting their way by buggy and horseback through swollen streams and over fallen timber in a cold and stormy night, and putting up in rude cabins, the owner of one of which was so hostile that Jones slept with a pistol in each hand, is as stirring as any tale of adventure."

They liked the theatre.

Chapter V

Talent and Gold: 1825–1850

THE theatre of the second quarter of the nineteenth century was vigorous and colorful. It did not always prosper, for in the excitement of increasing population there were at times more ventures launched than the public could support. And the financial depression of the early forties had its effect on theatricals. But both in the large cities of the Atlantic Coast and in the western wilderness the audience for stage entertainment grew steadily throughout the period, and the number of stars increased proportionately. Although most of the famous actors still came from England, the native-born star was gradually taking his place on our stage. James H. Hackett, Charlotte Cushman, E. L. Davenport, and Edwin Booth all made their debuts between 1825 and 1850. And Edwin Forrest, though he had acted previously for several years in Philadelphia, did not make his first New York appearance until 1826.

It was in this era, as a matter of fact, that the American theatre first suffered severely from the star system. Having exploited both foreign and native stars in their efforts to popularize their productions, the managers now discovered to their chagrin that they had spoiled the public for performances by the regular stock companies. Obviously it was not possible to present a guest star every week of the season. Even had there been enough stars to go around, the financial burden would have proved too great. Stars, particularly the imported ones, had a way of taking most of the profits for themselves. Then, when they had departed, and the resident company was left to its own drawing-power, the box-office slump was often disastrous. In the face of this dilemma, it was an astute manager indeed who kept his theatre solvent for any number of seasons. But hope and self-confidence are the badge of the whole theatrical tribe, and none wears this badge more properly than the manager. Defeated in one playhouse he

will move to another. He will even change cities. And usually only death will drive him from his profession.

The changes in management of many of the American theatres during the period under discussion were so numerous and so frequent that we shall not always attempt to note them in our narrative. Nor shall we pretend to mention most of the actors who peopled the stage. As we go forward in time we must place greater and greater insistence on the inclusion of only the highlights.

NEW YORK

In 1825 the Park Theatre still held the leadership in New York City, although it had a fairly strong rival in the Chatham Garden, which was presenting standard plays with a good company. There was also the usual competition from the circus—Price and Simpson were operating their amphitheatre on Broadway—and during the summer months there were various counter-attractions of variety shows and musical concerts at Vaux-Hall Garden and other similar establishments. On July 4th of that year a new amphitheatre in Laurens Street was opened with much fanfare under the name of the Lafayette Circus, so named in honor of General Lafayette, who was at the time paying our country an official visit, and who, during the previous September, had been tendered a great fête at Castle Garden.

The Park opened its fall season late in August, with its regular company headed by the mighty Cooper, W. A. Conway, Mrs. Hilson, and Mrs. Barnes. The opening double bill was *The Hypocrite* and *Thérèse*. The second night brought *The Merchant of Venice*, the third, *The Stranger*, and the fourth, *The Jealous Wife*. And so on into the season which Odell considers one of the most brilliant of the theatre's long history. He notes also that so satisfied was the Park's management with its supremacy that the advertisements referred to the house simply as "*The Theatre.*"

RETURN OF KEAN

The first real excitement of the season came in November, when the great English tragedian, Edmund Kean, reappeared in New York after an absence of four years. It will be recalled that he had sailed for England in 1821 under a cloud of disapproval brought on by his insult to a Boston audience. Meanwhile he had by his immoral conduct estranged himself from the British public,

and had only recently been fined eight hundred pounds in damages as a result of legal action brought against him by Alderman Cox, with whose wife Kean had carried on an amour. Literally driven from the London stage by outraged public opinion, he turned to America in desperation. But New York was none too willing to accept the prodigal. When he attempted to appear at the Park on November 14th, 1825, in *Richard III*, he was met with such a storm of abuse (verbal and otherwise) that the performance was a complete fiasco. The noise was so great that not a word of the play could be heard, and from time to time missiles were hurled at the star, who was at one point struck by an orange. Kean, however, refused to retire, and the whole performance was given in dumb-show. The next day the contrite actor issued a public statement which could scarcely have been more humble, in which he apologized for his indiscretions and begged for indulgence. The evening of the 16th he appeared again as Othello, and this time he was received without opposition. Between that date and December 2d he performed on eight occasions in a variety of roles, and to a very great extent re-established himself in the estimation of New Yorkers. It was a different story, however, when he reached Boston.

OPERA AT THE PARK

The second excitement of the season was the opening of a series of Italian operas at the Park on November 29th. On that night an Italian-Spanish company presented Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, the first full-length, foreign-language opera to be heard in New York City. The company, lately arrived from Europe, was under the management of Signor Garcia, and most of the singers were members of Garcia's own family. Its star was Signorina Maria Felicita Garcia, a young woman of the highest operatic talent, and who, later, as Mme. Malibran, became the rage of Europe. It is interesting to observe that this world-renowned artist achieved her first metropolitan success in New York.

The management of the Park was so favorably impressed by the reception given to their new venture that it arranged for Garcia's troupe to perform on two nights of the week for the whole season. This policy not only relieved the strain on the regular Park company, but it also strengthened the theatre's prestige with the public.

Another event which cannot be ignored occurred almost at the close of the season. On June 23d, 1826 young Edwin Forrest made his New York debut at the Park in the role of Othello. Although at this time he was twenty years of age, he had been on the Philadelphia stage for six years. Following closely on the heels of Edmund Kean, the young actor was at a distinct disadvantage, but nevertheless he created a highly favorable impression on critics and public, and in the course of the next decade he established himself firmly in the forefront of American-born stars.

Shortly after the opening of the next season, in October, 1826, the Park stage was dignified by the guest appearance of the eminent English tragedian, William Charles Macready, whose fame, earned at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, had preceded him, and who aroused great public interest on his introduction to America. He appeared in a succession of standard classic roles, and achieved his greatest success as Macbeth. Although he lacked the color and theatrical intensity of Kean, he was much admired for his consistency of performance and for a kind of nobility which could not fail to impress his audience. Furthermore, his personal character was untainted by scandal. Eventually, because of the feud that developed between him and Forrest, he was to suffer violent opposition from the American public, but in 1826 he was a triumphant hit.

OPENING OF THE BOWERY

In the same month of October New York saw a new theatre opened. This was the Bowery, a handsome house seating three thousand persons, and therefore the largest in the country. Its first manager was Charles Gilfert, whom we have met before in Charleston, and its company included not only such veterans as Mr. and Mrs. Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. Duff, and Mrs. Gilfert, but also the young Edwin Forrest, who rapidly became the star of the new theatre. An additional source of strength came in late November with the engagement of W. A. Conway, and in December came Thomas S. Hamblin, a tragedian who failed to attain the eminence of Forrest, but who for years remained a favorite with Bowery audiences.

It was in this theatre during its second season that there appeared two performers destined to become not only leading figures of the American stage, but also founders of celebrated theatri-

cal families. The first of these was George Holland, an English comedian who had attracted much favorable notice in London, and who had been invited previously to come to America and join J. B. Booth's company at the Chatham Theatre. Holland did not accept Booth's offer, but he did accept a later offer from Gilfert, and made his first New York appearance at the Bowery in September, 1827, using for his debut a farce entitled *A Day After the Fair*, in which he impersonated six different characters. In this novelty he was a tremendous hit, and was soon appearing in other American cities, including those of the West. For more than forty years he was a popular figure throughout the country, and on his death in 1870 he left behind him three actor sons, all of whom were successful. These were George, Edmund Milton, and Joseph.

LITTLE CHURCH AROUND THE CORNER

It was Holland's death which gave rise to one of the most picturesque of American theatrical traditions. His family, having requested funeral services in a fashionable Fifth Avenue church, were refused because the deceased had been an actor. On inquiring of the clergyman where the services might then be held, they were told "there's a little church around the corner where they do that sort of thing." The reference was to the Church of the Transfiguration in East 29th St., where the services were hospitably held, and which since that day in December, 1870, has been known as "The Little Church Around the Corner," and also as "the actor's church."

The second personality of the season, though obviously her importance could not have been realized at the time, was Louisa Lane, known to us as Mrs. John Drew. She was brought from England by her mother, who was also an actress, in 1827. Louisa made her first American stage appearance in September of that year at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, but she had played on the English stage all during her childhood. She was first seen in New York at the Bowery Theatre in March, 1828, and during the following summer she acted at the Park Theatre. This was the beginning of one of the longest and most brilliant careers in the annals of our stage. It covered seventy years.

This gifted young actress was married at sixteen to Henry Blaine Hunt, an English tenor, but the marriage was dissolved in

1847. The next year she married George Mossop, an Irish comedian, who died the following year. In 1850, while playing in Albany, she met another Irish comedian, John Drew, and married him. In 1851 the pair went to Philadelphia, where Mrs. Drew achieved renown not only as America's most versatile actress, but also as a highly successful manager. In 1861 she became manager of the Arch Street Theatre, and for many years made it the home of a brilliant stock company. She had four children: Georgiana, John, Sidney (adopted), and Louisa. The first three attained success on the stage, and Georgiana, after her marriage to Maurice Barrymore, became the mother of the most noted family on the twentieth-century American stage: Ethel, Lionel and John Barrymore.

THE BOWERY BURNS

Two months after the New York debut of little Louisa Lane, and before it had completed its second season, the Bowery Theatre burned down. In the early evening of May 26th, 1828, a fire started in a nearby stable, and, fanned by a fresh breeze, spread to several buildings, including the Bowery. Although the theatre was completely destroyed, it was covered by fifty thousand dollars of insurance, and plans were put immediately in operation for reconstruction. Meanwhile the dispossessed company prepared to move into a new playhouse being built by William Niblo in his gardens at Broadway and Prince Street. This house, which had a long and popular history, was officially called Sans Souci, but was commonly known as Niblo's Garden. It was opened by the Bowery company on July 4th, in an atmosphere of fireworks, oratory, and balloon ascensions.

But Gilfert and his actors were not long dependent upon the hospitality of Niblo, for, as the result of one of the most amazing building feats on record, the new Bowery, erected on the site of the old, and an even grander structure, was opened on August 20th. In sixty-five working days this large and complex theatre had been built, furnished, and decorated, with an entirely fireproof exterior, and a façade "covered with a newly-invented stucco (of extraordinary durability) in excellent imitation of marble."

The season of 1828–29 was noted for a desperate competition between the New York theatres. The Park, the Bowery, and the Chatham Garden engaged in a bitter struggle for patronage, and

matters were made even more difficult by the entrance of the Lafayette Theatre into the contest. The latter, originally a circus, had recently provided itself with a huge stage, and was now engaged in the production of spectacular melodramas. It was, however, soon destroyed by fire (April, 1829) and was not rebuilt. During the autumn the Chatham was managed by the curious partnership of the veteran Cooper and the western adventurer, N. M. Ludlow. It was not a successful combination. The Bowery, in spite of its new house, had a troubled time. It tried everything: classics, melodramas, novelties—but the net result was a loss. And shortly after the close of the season, in July, 1829, Charles Gilfert, its assiduous manager, died of overwork and discouragement. The Park held up best. It was still *the* theatre of New York. But then and during the next ten years it had to fight hard to hold its place. New York was growing fast; in the decade of the '20s its population increased from 125,000 to 200,000. And amusements were multiplying proportionately.

A PRIZE FOR "METAMORA"

There were two outstanding features at the Park during the next (1829–30) season. The first was the production on December 15th, of *Metamora,* a tragedy of Indian life by John Augustus Stone, and the winner of a $500. prize which had been offered by Edwin Forrest for the best play on an American theme. Although this play appears dull to the modern eye, it created a strong impression as acted by Forrest, and he played it frequently over a period of years. It was the first of a long line of plays glorifying "the noble red man," a type belonging to what Mark Twain called an "extinct tribe which never existed." Fifteen years later the vogue for Indian plays had run its course, and a contemporary writer called the *genre* "a perfect nuisance." In another ten years it began to be a subject for burlesque.

Forrest has received due credit for his encouragement of native dramatists, and it is indisputable that he was the first to extend such encouragement effectively. In a series of contests he awarded a total of nine prizes to plays, the prize in some instances amounting to $1000. Yet he has been accused of niggardliness and even dishonesty in his dealing with the playwrights whose welfare he was ostensibly promoting. And it is an accepted fact that Stone, the author of *Metamora,* became so despondent in 1834 over the

discrepancy between his own earnings from the play and those of Forrest that he drowned himself in the Schuylkill River.

The American playwright was emerging, but he had not yet achieved sufficient prestige to demand his fair share of the profits. It was not until the middle of the century that he began to receive royalties based on a percentage of the gross box-office income. And long after this practice came in, there were many playwrights who accepted flat sums (often pitifully small ones) in lieu of royalties. It was not until the present century that action of the Dramatists Guild made outright sale of author's rights impossible and protected its members against their own poor judgement and the avarice of producing managers.

RIP VAN WINKLE

The second feature of the 1829–30 season at the Park Theatre was the production of *Rip Van Winkle,* with Hackett in the title role. Although a dramatization by Thomas Flynn of this tale by Washington Irving had been played at Albany in 1828, and another version had been brought to the Philadelphia stage in 1829, this production at the Park in April, 1830, was New York's first view of a piece which, in various versions, was to entertain the American public, metropolitan and rural, for generations. It was also, as nearly everyone knows, to become inseparably associated with the name of Joseph Jefferson III, though it was to be a number of years before this actor made acquaintance with the play.

The next season opened on September 1, 1830, with the American debut of Charles Kean, son of Edmund. Still a very young man (he was not quite twenty), and a nervous one, Kean did not take the town by storm, either in his opening role, the inevitable Richard III, or in his subsequent Othello, Hamlet, and so on. Yet he was not a failure. He drew considerable praise, and by the close of his engagement late in the month he had established himself pretty well in public favor. And this standing was strengthened on his return engagement the following year.

The season of 1831–32 was enlivened, and complicated, by the opening of a new theatre, The Richmond Hill, in November. This playhouse was created by the remodeling of the Aaron Burr mansion at Varick and Charlton Streets, and for its operation a good company was assembled, of which Mrs. Duff was the most

notable member. Odell comments on the fact that there was no good reason for the creation of this theatre. It offered the same familiar actors, and the same familiar plays as the other theatres. He calls it an example of the "senseless multiplication of theatres" which characterized New York at the time. Yet Richmond Hill attracted its quota of patrons, and survived the rigors of competition until the end of August, 1832, when cholera broke out in the city and closed its doors. After that it operated sporadically, and without important results.

Meanwhile the Chatham Theatre had fallen on evil days, and in the spring of 1832 was converted into a Presbyterian Chapel.

"SO LOVELY, SO PERFECT"

The Park, on the other hand, enjoyed at this time one of its happiest periods. And the principal cause of this was the engagement in September, 1832, of the distinguished English star, Charles Kemble, and his daughter Fanny. Kemble was impressive, but Fanny was a sensation. Odell reports that "Nothing so lovely, so perfect (except Malibran) had been seen before in our theatre; few so lovely were to follow." The contemporary critics went into raptures, and when the Kembles departed for Philadelphia early in October it was a foregone conclusion that they would return. Return they did for three more engagements during the season—in November, February, and March—each time with electrifying effect.

Another excitement of the season was the benefit on the evening of November 29th for John Howard Payne, who, after years abroad, had returned as a famous but needy playwright. All the available stars in New York (with the exception of Booth, who was playing at the Bowery) enlisted for the gala event. The chief piece of the bill was Payne's own *Brutus,* in which Forrest played the leading role. There was a choral rendition of Payne's song, *Home, Sweet Home;* a scene from *Taming of the Shrew* by the Kembles; a recitation by Cooper; and a performance of *Charles II* featuring Wallack. For this extraordinary occasion seats in both boxes and pit were sold for $5, and, the performers all having volunteered their services, the net amount realized was the (for those times huge) sum of $4200.

While these activities were animating the Park, the Richmond Hill Theatre was housing the first attempt in New York to estab-

lish a regular season of Italian opera. Encouraged, no doubt, by the favorable reception accorded the Garcia company at the Park in 1825–26, a group of Italians announced a series of thirty-five performances to be given during October, November, and December, 1832. The managing director was Montresor, and the "general adviser to the scheme" was Signor Lorenzo Da Ponte, friend of Mozart and librettist of *Don Giovanni.* The plan was carried to completion, and, although it was not financially successful, it aroused great interest and stimulated talk of building an opera house. The season undoubtedly would have proved more successful had it not limited itself to a repertoire of only four operas.

"JIM CROW" RICE

The Bowery Theatre had its sensation also, in the person of T. D. Rice, the blackface comedian, who made his debut on November 12th, and became an overnight hit. Rice, several years earlier, while acting in Louisville, had observed an old negro, deformed and with a limp, who crooned as he went about his work, inventing words to the tune, and punctuating each verse with a peculiar step described as "rocking de heel." Taking his characterization from the old slave, and taking his name as well—which was Jim Crow—Rice developed his blackface act. Louisville went mad over it, and so, later, did Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. For years "Jim Crow" Rice was a fixture on the American stage, his success gave rise to innumerable imitators, and the tradition he established is still in evidence.

As though Jim Crow were not enough to carry the Bowery to prosperity, in July, 1833, manager Hamblin uncovered another golden vein when he produced the spectacular equestrian melodrama, *Mazeppa,* which ran and ran.

And now the dream of an opera house for New York became a sudden reality. A list of subscribers (who of course were boxholders) acquired a site at Leonard and Church Streets—a bad location, far from the theatrical district and in a disreputable section of the city—and on it erected a handsome playhouse with a huge stage, with lavish decorations of gold and crimson, and with seats of mahogany and damask. On November 18th, 1833, before an appropriately fashionable audience, the season opened with a performance of Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra.* The announced

schedule of forty performances (of six operas) was carried through, and in the spring there was an extra season of twenty performances. The latter, however, was not so much an evidence of success as it was a desperate effort to keep the house open and the artists employed. The venture was financially a failure. Another full season was offered during 1834–35, with even greater losses, and at its close, in May, 1835, the scheme was abandoned.

SCATTERED EVENTS

And now it seems justifiable to skip lightly over several years, resting for a moment on some items of unusual import. In October, 1834, Charles Mathews was again "At Home" at the Park after an absence of twelve years. And in the same month at the same theatre appeared Sheridan Knowles, the Irish-born playwright, acting in a series of his own melodramas, notably *The Hunchback*. At the Bowery, in February, 1835, was presented for the first time in New York, and "with great magnificence," *The Last Days of Pompeii*. It ran without interruption for a full month, which at that time meant astonishing success. In September, 1835, a small theatre, the Franklin, was opened in Chatham Street, with a good company of seasoned players, and enjoyed an excellent first year.

In September, 1836, also at the Bowery, Charlotte Cushman made her New York debut as Lady Macbeth. In a few years she was to become the most distinguished tragedienne of the English-speaking stage. On the 22d, a few days after this historic debut, the Bowery burned to the ground. But with the alacrity which characterized such operations in the last century, the house was rebuilt and opened on the following January 2d. In December the Park was glorified by the presence of Ellen Tree, one of the loveliest of English actresses, who made her American debut as Rosalind, and who captivated New York completely. In the autumn of 1836 the unfortunate opera house was rechristened the National Theatre, and was committed to a program of standard plays in competition with the Park. The year 1837 was a difficult one for theatres because the country was in the throes of a financial panic. Yet new theatres appeared. Two of these were the City and the Broadway. Neither was important.

In May, 1838, the Park offered the American premiere of Bulwer-Lytton's famous drama, *The Lady of Lyons*, which had

recently been produced in London, and which achieved great success in New York with Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman in the leading roles. This play was to hold a popular place in our theatre all through the nineteenth century. In September at the same house appeared the celebrated Mme. Vestris, the English actress-manager, with her husband, Charles Mathews the younger. Their alliance had been legalized by marriage shortly before they sailed from England, in order that they might not be refused admittance to the country. New York society, seemingly because of the actress's reputation for unconventionality, received her coolly, and her engagement was a moderate failure. In September, 1839, the National Theatre (formerly the opera house) burned. But in the same month was built the New Chatham Theatre, with a seating capacity of 2200.

In January, 1840, Stephen Price died—the veteran manager of the Park, who had brought more stars across the Atlantic than any other manager. The Park was running down hill now. It was old and tired. And times were still bad.

A GRASPING YOUNG LADY

In May it had a burst of excitement from the engagement of Fanny Elssler, the famous European dancer—by far the most brilliant ballet performer seen up to that time in America, and rivalled in Europe only by the great Marie Taglioni. But in spite of the fact that Elssler performed frequently at the Park during a period of four weeks, and that she drew capacity houses, the theatre lost money on the engagement because of the ruinous terms insisted on by the dancer. "Fanny Elssler was, I am sorry, for art's sake, to admit," says Odell, "a rather grasping young lady; her terms were $500 a night, and a clear benefit, or half the nightly gross receipts and a clear benefit." She made a fortune in New York. The only local manager who seems to have benefited from her appearance was Billy Mitchell, of the Olympic, who presented with success a burlesque of Elssler's popular ballet, *La Tarentule* (based on the effects of a tarantula bite). Mitchell's version was entitled *La Musquitoe!*

During the summer J. B. Buckstone, the eminent British actor and playwright, appeared as guest star at the Park, and in the fall, at the New National, which rose on the site of the old, and opened in October. In November the Bowery was converted to a circus.

The Olympic Theatre, which had opened in 1839 under the skillful management of William Mitchell, became in 1840 the most popular playhouse in New York. It presented a great variety of entertainment—comediettas, farces, sketches, spectacles, and burlesques of plays and operas. In October, 1840, G. H. Hill, an actor famous for his Yankee impersonations, took over the little Franklin Theatre, which for some time had been dark, and, after considerable refurbishing, opened it as Hill's Theatre. Here he ran through his repertoire of comedies, but by late November had exhausted his public, and abandoned the venture.

THE BOX SET

With Price dead, the Park, under the sole management of Simpson, became more conservative, eschewed expensive foreign stars, and contented itself with a straight stock company policy. In October, 1841, however, it achieved a sensation with the production of Boucicault's new comedy, *London Assurance*, which brought new life not only to the Park, but also to the whole field of comedy. The play itself was sufficiently bright and refreshing to warrant its success, but in addition its production brought to New York for the first time the new, realistic staging which had been introduced in London. This staging substituted the box set—i.e., the room with three complete walls—which has now for more than a century been employed in the stage representation of drawing-rooms, for the eighteenth-century device of back-drop and wings. And with the three walls came complete and realistic furnishings. It is difficult for a twentieth-century reader to imagine the excitement which was caused by this innovation. And the net result at the Park was a continuous run of three weeks for *London Assurance*, which at that house was an unprecedented phenomenon.

The season of 1842–43 was, according to Odell, the worst theatrical season in the history of New York. The city had grown amazingly (its population in 1840 was more than 300,000), but it was suffering from a severe business depression, and this was reflected in the box-offices. The high-toned Park was driven to reducing its prices to seventy-five cents for the best seats, and twelve and a half cents for its poorest. Yet it managed to present some interesting attractions, the first of which was a guest appearance of George Vandenhoff, a young English actor, and the son

of John Vandenhoff, a tragedian who had played extensively in this country. The newcomer, particularly in his performance as Hamlet, drew critical praise, but did not excite the public. Following him came Mr. and Mrs. John Brougham, also from England, who fared reasonably well considering the times. Brougham was famous for his Irish characterizations, and most of all for his portrayal of Sir Lucius O'Trigger in *The Rivals*. He was a popular fixture on the American stage for nearly forty years.

In April, 1843, the Park brought back an old favorite—Junius Brutus Booth, who had not trod its boards for fourteen years. In competition with Forrest, who was then playing at the New Chatham, Booth brought forth his old repertoire—Richard III, Hamlet, King Lear, etc.—and for a couple of weeks breathed life into the dying theatre. A contemporary critic cried out ecstatically in his praise, and called upon him to rescue the theatre in general and the Park in particular from the decay into which it had fallen. This, however, was more than one man could do. Legitimate drama was in the doldrums, and the only house to show a profit for the season was Mitchell's Olympic, where a clever and versatile company offered a bewildering variety of novelties, with an emphasis on pretty girls, and where the salaries of the performers ranged from $6 to $25 per week. The Bowery, forced to ruinously low prices of admission, struggled along with a combination of melodramas and boxing exhibitions. Its glory was lost and was never to be regained.

ENTER P. T. BARNUM

There was, however, money to be spent for amusement of one sort or another. And a man who proved this was P. T. Barnum, a shrewd young man who had begun his career as a showman in 1835 with the purchase of Joice Heth, an aged, withered negress, whom he had exhibited in various localities as the nurse of George Washington. Later he barnstormed with theatrical troupes in the East and West, sold Bibles in New York, and worked as a press agent. In 1841 he bought out Scudder's Museum of stuffed animals and curiosities and moved the exhibits to a building at the corner of Ann Street and Broadway, which he thereupon called the American Museum and Garden and Gallery of Fine Arts. His small auditorium he referred to as a "lecture room." During the winter of 1842–43 Barnum began to present variety acts in

this room, and also offered to the public his new acquisition, a midget whom he christened Tom Thumb, and who during the succeeding years became a virtual gold mine for his exhibitor. This character was less than two feet in height, and weighed less than sixteen pounds. He was at the time of his introduction to the public only five years old, but Barnum in his advertisements stretched this to eleven. By January, 1843, Barnum had achieved such success that he secretly bought out his only rival—Peale's Museum—and, retaining the former manager of that establishment, kept the place open to give the impression of competition.

BIRTH OF THE MINSTREL SHOW

The same season brought to birth an even greater theatrical tradition than Tom Thumb—namely, the negro minstrel show. There had been, of course, considerable use of negro music and dancing on the stage, but it was on the 6th of February, 1843, at the Bowery Amphitheatre, that the first public performance was offered by the Virginia Minstrels of that species of entertainment which throughout the remainder of the century delighted American audiences. The conception of the curious ensemble, comprising banjo, violin, castanets (bones), and tambourine, appears to have been rather accidental on the part of four blackface performers, Billy Whitlock, Dan Emmet, Frank Brower, and Dick Pelham. But once the idea was exploited, its effect on the public was extraordinary. And within a few months minstrel shows were the rage in all American cities.

During the 1843–44 season the legitimate drama looked up a bit. There were no thrilling successes, but there was at least improvement over the pathetic previous season. First of the stars at the Park was J. W. Wallack, always a favorite. Then came William Charles Macready, after an absence of seventeen years, to lend his very great dignity and prestige to a house which needed them. He was followed by Forrest, who disappointed at the box-office. Macready came again. Then Booth. And, at the end of the season, Macready for a third time. It was a season overladen with classic tragedies. The Bowery lifted its head a bit, and with the competent assistance of E. L. Davenport, offered the Park some serious competition in the classic field, but alternated its heavy drama with popular comedies and variety acts. The New

Chatham tried hard with novelties, but in spite of engagements by "Yankee" Hill and "Jim Crow" Rice—not to mention Ethiopian farces—barely weathered the season. Mitchell's Olympic kept afloat with farces and burlesques, and with the comic talents of George Holland and manager Mitchell himself. At this time, too, the Italian opera reared its ornate head again. A building in Chambers Street was remodeled by Ferdinand Palmo and opened in February, 1844, as a small but tasteful opera house. At the outset this venture attracted the usual fashionable audience, but their interest soon waned, and Palmo withdrew as impresario, to be followed by several others. Within six months the house was being rented to the Ethiopian Serenaders.

"THE VULGAR BRUTES!"

The season of 1844–45 was not a notable one, yet it held a few items of interest to us. The Park offered at the beginning the American debut of James R. Anderson, a young English actor who later achieved distinction as a tragedian, and after him a final engagement of Macready, who appears to have worn out his welcome in New York, for in his diary he entered on September 16th that he had "acted Hamlet, in *defiance* of the *dullest audience* I ever almost encountered." And in the same entry he spoke of having looked at the papers—"the coarse, vulgar wretches that are the editors! How my inmost soul sickens with loathing at them, the vulgar brutes!" Macready, as Odell aptly remarks, was "dour." He was also something of a snob. But he achieved a slight glow of satisfaction a few days later, when he recorded the fact that he was, after a year in this country, better off by more than £5000. For this circumstance he "gratefully, devoutly, and earnestly" thanked God.

This difficult actor had been supported in his engagement at the Park by Charlotte Cushman, whose talents were developing rapidly. At the end of October Miss Cushman sailed for England, where she was to spend four years, and at the conclusion of which she was to return to New York as a great star.

MRS. MOWATT'S "FASHION"

Mid-winter brought unhappiness to the Park—such unhappiness, in fact, that manager Simpson, after having exhausted the popularity of *The Bohemian Girl,* was driven to the expedient of

turning the theatre into a circus for two months. In March, however, there was a resumption of comedies and melodramas, and, on the 24th, a literary premiere of historic importance. This was the production of a new comedy of manners by an American woman, Anna Cora Mowatt, a lady of fashion who had been driven to the profession of writing by the financial failure of her husband. Her play bore the title of *Fashion*, and it was actually the first native comedy of manners—that is, a comedy dealing with the manners and morals of cultivated society. In this case there was also the matter of satire on the American *parvenu*. The play made a great hit and ran uninterruptedly for twenty nights. It is a matter of interest, also, that in June Mrs. Mowatt, not content to rest upon the laurels of authorship, made her debut as an actress at the Park as Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*. Her success in that debut was considered by some to be the result of her social standing in New York, but as a matter of fact a few years later she achieved distinct success on the London stage, where she was unknown, and this may be considered proof of her histrionic ability.

The Bowery during the season concerned itself chiefly with spectacular melodrama, and leaned heavily upon the stellar abilities of E. L. Davenport. But in April the theatre burned down, for the fourth time in seventeen years. The Chatham during the early part of the season offered less than mediocre fare, but in the spring attained a measure of respectability through a change of management, and through the engagement first of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Wallack, Jr., a very talented young couple, and of the veteran Booth. Mitchell's Olympic continued its variegated program of novelties. Palmo's Opera House tried another season of opera (a short one), but had to resort to minstrelsy and concerts to keep the house lighted. And in the summer of 1845 it was devoted to a series of German-language plays, presumably of an amateur nature.

FLOATING TEMPLE OF THE MUSES

The most picturesque event of the season was the appearance at the docks of New York of Chapman's Floating Theatre. This phenomenon was the brain-child of H. S. Chapman, a former actor at the Bowery Theatre, who for some years had been pioneering along the Western rivers with boats fitted up as theatres. As we learn from the reminiscences of both Noah M. Ludlow and

Sol Smith, Chapman had introduced this novelty in the West as early as 1831. Now (in February, 1845) he was busy at a mooring in the North River remodeling a large steamboat for theatrical use. When completed, it had a seating capacity of 1200, and boasted, in addition, a completely-stocked bar. On the second of April New Yorkers were privileged to attend an opening performance aboard the craft, which was given the impressive name of Temple of the Muses, at its dock near the foot of Canal Street. A few days later the theatre was moved to the foot of Chambers Street, where other performances were given; thence to Delancey Street, afterwards to the foot of Clinton Street, East River. More than a month was consumed in this progress, whereupon the floating Temple sailed away for points along the Hudson.

LAVISH MR. KEAN

The 1845–46 season may be dismissed briefly. At the Park appeared Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean for a series of five engagements, in September, October, November, December, and January. Mrs. Kean (the former Ellen Tree) was much the more popular of the two. The real feature of their engagements was the production in January of *Richard III* on a scale hitherto unknown to the American stage. On this lavish presentation Mr. Kean spent $10,000 chiefly from his own pocket. The results appear to have justified the extravagance, for the production ran nearly three weeks, and aroused unbounded admiration. In the spring Mrs. Mowatt was presented in combination with Vandenhoff. A new Bowery (the old one had burned down in April) was opened in August, with a seating capacity of 4000, and with a stage 126 feet deep and of proportionate width, said to have been the largest in the world. The opening bill consisted of *The Sleeping Beauty* and Payne's popular comedy, *Charles II*. E. L. Davenport was the star. The Chatham continued its policy of melodramas and extravaganzas. Mitchell's Olympic worked its customary vein. And in April, 1846, a new theatre, The Greenwich, was opened at Richmond Hill. Although it was classified as a "small" theatre, one notes that it seated 2500! (Relative to the Bowery, perhaps.) The new house began with standard dramas, but soon turned to light comedy and novelties. Palmo's Opera House had fallen on evil days indeed, for during the season it housed such attractions as Swiss Bell Ringers and various minstrel companies. It reached

toward dignity with a few performances of German opera, but these fared badly, and soon ceased.

INCLUDING TOM THUMB

The season of 1846–47 is unimpressive to the retrospective eye. Mr. and Mrs. Kean were again at the Park early in the fall, and were followed by Forrest. The grand old theatre was falling into tedium. And its regular company, without benefit of guest stars, failed to attract. Mrs. Mowatt and E. L. Davenport came presently to help matters, and after them James R. Anderson. In the spring, Wallack. But these were not enough to bolster a rapidly failing house. Brightest spot in the season was the engagement in April of the Havana Opera company, which boasted a personnel numbering seventy-two artists, and which was acclaimed the finest organization of its sort yet heard in New York. The Chatham, the Bowery, and the Olympic operated typically. The Greenwich struggled under a succession of managements, and in February, 1847, was renamed the New York Opera House, but did not present any opera. After a short time it closed finally. Palmo's tried variety, then straight plays, and at one time housed a French ballet troupe from Havana. It played the role of catch-all. But at Barnum's American Museum there were great events, including not only the Chapman Family in duets, songs and dances, Ethiopian Minstrels, orang-outangs, the Anatomical Venus, Calvin Edson, the living skeleton, models of the funeral of Napoleon Bonaparte, but also—and particularly—"the big little General Tom Thumb, fresh from his triumphs abroad," who appeared in court dress, did a highland fling in Scotch dress, and "posed as Napoleon, Frederick the Great, and Greek statues." On exhibit, too, were his gifts from Queen Victoria and other crowned heads.

WALT WHITMAN RAMPANT

It is interesting to note what the great poet, Walt Whitman, who at this time was writing reviews and articles for the *Brooklyn Eagle*, had to say in February, 1847, of the state of the New York theatre "Of all 'low' places where vulgarity (not only on the stage, but in front of it) is in the ascendant, and bad-taste carries the day with hardly a pleasant point to mitigate its coarseness, the New York theatres—except the Park—may be put down (as

an Emeralder might say,) at the top of the heap!" He went on to explain that although the Park was not vulgar, it fell far short of the standard one had a right to expect from the leading playhouse of "the leading city on the Western Hemisphere." He admitted the Park had some good actors, and that "there was a dash of superiority thrown over the performances," but it remained "a third-rate imitation of the best London theatres. It gives us the castoff dramas, and the unengaged players of Great Britain; and of these dramas and players, like garments which come second hand from gentleman to valet, everything fits awkwardly."

Whitman in the same article castigates the New York critics, whom he calls "slaves of the paid puff system," and asserts that he cannot find one independent critic "among the many talented writers for the New York press." He also attacks the star system, which he refers to as the curse not only of the Park but of nearly all the theatres. He speaks of seeing a good play well done by the regular company of the Park (including Miss Cushman, Mr. Placide, and other highly competent actors) before "a forlorn looking audience, thinly scattered here and there through pit and box—while the very next week crowds would crush each other to get a sight of some flippant well-puffed star, of no real merit."

RATS IN THE PIT

During 1847–48 it became more apparent than ever that the Park was nearing the end of its days. This was Simpson's last season as manager, and it was a difficult time for him. He alternated plays with operas, and presented in succession such familiar stars as Anderson, Hackett, Davenport, and Forrest. But the pattern was familiar and outworn. In December he closed his regular season and turned the house over to a circus troupe. In March he returned to straight plays, with Booth and Brougham as stars, and with prices reduced to the pathetic maximum of fifty cents. When these expedients failed, he sold his control of the house to Hamblin, manager of the Bowery, and retired. A few weeks later, on July 31st, he died of fatigue and depression. The theatre itself by this time was in such run-down condition that it shocked and repelled patrons of any refinement. There were holes in the floor, the benches were either bare or covered with rags, the air was polluted with unpleasant odors, and rats frequently ran across the pit during the performance.

The old gave way to new. In September, 1847, was opened the new Broadway Theatre (erected on the east side of Broadway, between Pearl and Worth Streets), which was bright, charming and comfortable. It opened with *The School for Scandal*, and its excellent company included Vandenhoff, Barrett, Bernard, and three Wallacks—Henry, his daughter Fanny, and his nephew Lester, fresh from England, and now making his American debut. The latter was to become an important figure on our stage. The Broadway achieved immediate popularity, and for the next ten years was to be the chief home of stars in New York.

In November there was another opening—that of the Astor Place Opera House, built by the subscriptions of wealthy persons and dedicated to the production of Italian opera—the fourth venture of its kind in New York. It was a comparatively large house seating 1800 (as compared with 800 at Palmo's), and is said to have been very attractive. And at first, as might be expected, it drew impressive audiences. But, as might also be expected, it encountered difficulties before the close of the spring season, and the chief reason advanced was the usual one that the repertoire was too limited.

DRAPED FEMALES

As for the other theatres: the Bowery ran through the season with mixed business and a mixed policy. Between Shakespeare, operas, and melodramas, it kept going, but barely. The Olympic kept its head above water, but set no records. Palmo's eked out a pathetic existence with minstrel shows, German vaudeville, and the novelty which had just come into vogue—"living pictures." The latter were tableaux of draped females (evidently not too completely draped) who were advertised as art models. It was not long before the law intervened and ended the vogue. The Chatham operated with a fairly competent company presenting standard plays, classic and modern, but Odell refers to its season as "vapid." Its stage, however, was the scene of at least one sensational occurrence. On the night of October 12th W. S. Deverna, who had retired as manager in July, but who still treated it as a kind of second home, came into the dark theatre at midnight and groped his way to a box, at the back of which he kept an iron bed. Thinking he was pulling himself into this bed, he grasped the iron scrollwork at the front of the box and propelled himself into space,

falling to the stage and breaking his back. There he was found dead.

When the next season (1848–49) opened in September, Hamblin tried operating both the Park and the Bowery, shifting his actors from one house to the other as needed. During the summer he had completely renovated the Park, inside and out. Ironically, the house caught fire backstage early in the evening of December 16th, and burned to the ground, thus ending a career of fifty years, most of it distinguished. The Bowery continued, of course, with its typical policy of melodramas interspersed with classics.

"THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO"

The Broadway was now the leading theatre in New York, and as such it had the pick of talent. Its outstanding hit during the season was the first production of an adaptation of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which opened on Christmas night and ran for fifty consecutive performances. Meanwhile the Chatham had been rechristened the National, and now operated on a mixed-bill policy—several plays each evening, most of them light and popular. Another change in name occurred when William E. Burton, the famous comedian, arrived from Philadelphia during the summer of 1848, took over Palmo's Opera House (of unhappy past) and after renovating it, opened it as Burton's Theatre. Soon he had established it as a highly successful rival of the Olympic as a home of farce, extravaganza, and novelty. The Olympic itself (due partly to an exhausted repertoire, and partly to actor-manager Mitchell's ill health) began to show signs of failure. At the Astor Place Opera House a new season of opera was launched, but a certain number of standard plays were presented there also. And it was at this house that the historic riot occurred in May, 1849.

For several years a feud had been in progress between Forrest and Macready, having sprung from the ill-treatment accorded the former when he had appeared on the London stage in 1845. Forrest was certain in his own mind that the English public had been prompted in its hostility by Macready, though the latter denied it. At any rate, Forrest's friends were determined that Macready should suffer a similar hostility in this country. When it was announced that Macready would play Macbeth at the Astor Place on May 7th, Forrest scheduled himself for the same role the same

night at the Broadway, where he was playing an engagement. A number of Forrest's friends stationed themselves in the audience at the Astor Place, and created such a disturbance during the performance that the curtain had to be rung down after the third act. Not only had the play been drowned with noise, but a quantity of rotten eggs, apples, potatoes, and other missiles had been hurled at the actor.

ASTOR PLACE RIOT

As events transpired, Macready would have been wise to desist from further appearances in New York. But on the advice of friends he agreed to try Macbeth again on the 10th, and on that occasion such a terrific disturbance took place, both inside the theatre and out, that first the police and then the militia were called into action. Macready finished his performance, but in the appalling riot outside the theatre the militia fired on the crowd, killed twenty-two persons, and wounded thirty-six. Macready escaped from the theatre in disguise, hid in the home of a friend most of the night, and got safely out of the city. A few days later he sailed from Boston for England. The Astor Place Riot is one of the most disgraceful episodes in our theatre history.

As a comic relief from this sanguinary business we may mention that the season was enlivened by the exhibition at Barnum's American Museum of Major Littlefinger, who was even smaller than Tom Thumb; and of Robert Hales, an English giant, who stood over eight feet high and weighed over a quarter of a ton. And because a rival showman had recently imported a Quaker Giant from England, Barnum announced that Hales was originally a Quaker also, and that henceforth he would wear Quaker garb. Soon he had even found a giantess mate for Hales, and he excited public interest by advertising their romance.

The season of 1849–50, the final one of the period which we are summarizing, did not distinguish itself, although it was busy enough. The notable event at the Broadway was the return of Charlotte Cushman after four years on the English stage. Her matured art now called forth the highest critical acclaim, as well as the unbounded admiration of the public. It was declared that she was establishing a new tradition of acting, and one that was based on naturalness rather than on the stilted and artificial tragic style of the past. At the Bowery the three Wallacks continued to

provide interest with a succession of classics and new romantic melodramas; and the National presented a steady flow of romance gleaned from Dumas, Dickens, and other popular sources. In January it offered *Rip Van Winkle*, with Charles Burke as Rip and Joseph Jefferson III (his half-brother) as Knickerbocker. It could not be foreseen at this time that Jefferson eventually was to become Rip to the whole nation and to history.

BARNUM'S "LECTURE ROOM"

Burton's launched its second year with a highly successful group of novelties—farces, comedies, operettas, and burlesques, and, at the end of the season turned to standard plays, featuring in these the veteran legitimate actor, Henry Placide. Meanwhile the Olympic, which for many years had furnished the cream of light entertainment, reached the end of its course, and closed finally on March 9th, 1850, leaving many New Yorkers with a feeling of acute sadness. This marked the retirement of the popular William Mitchell both as actor and as manager. It was in this season, also, that Barnum entered the field of drama. In September, 1849, he employed a company of actors, including the well-known F. C. Wemyss (who directed the company) and began presenting standard plays in his so-called "lecture room." So successful was he that at the end of the year he acquired additional space in the adjoining building and fitted up a new "lecture room" with a seating capacity of 3000, and advertised it as being furnished in the "most voluptuously luxurious style." It was here that he offered shortly afterwards the moral melodrama of *The Drunkard, or The Fallen Saved*, which he had produced previously at his museum in Philadelphia, and which was to break all records for a New York run up to that time. This venture did not, of course, mean Barnum's abandonment of freaks and novelties; it was merely an addition to his variegated program.

By 1850 the New York theatrical scene was a complex one, quite a rich one, in fact. For, added to the attractions we have mentioned were many others, such as a series of operas at the Astor Place, various minstrel shows, circuses, concerts, and, at the appropriate time, summer theatres. In short, entertainment was keeping pace with the population, which in that year slightly exceeded half a million.

PHILADELPHIA

The first season of this era in the City of Brotherly Love, that of 1825–26, was the last for the joint management of the Chestnut Street Theatre by the famous team of Warren and Wood. It was a good season artistically, but a spotty one financially. The competent company was augmented by several guest stars—Cooper, Kean, Conway, and Forrest. When Kean arrived in January, he encountered a tide of public animosity (hardly a new experience for this tempestuous character), and was driven from the stage by the usual means—noise and bad eggs. He offered, however, to return in the summer, and when he did so the feeling against him had abated sufficiently to permit a successful engagement (in spite of hot weather) for twenty-five nights. Following the short summer season Wood withdrew from the management, and Warren assumed complete control. Things went fairly well at the Chestnut for another year, but in August, 1827, a serious rival appeared when Cowell, who had been operating the Walnut Street Theatre as a circus, remodeled the house for the production of standard plays and opened with a company recruited largely in England, and with such popular guest stars as Hamblin, Booth and Cooper. The effects of this venture were felt keenly in Chestnut Street.

The following year came another blow to Warren with the erection of a new theatre in Arch Street, which seated 2000, and which was opened in October, 1828, with Wood as manager. This triple competition was too much for all the contestants. The three houses vied for guest stars, paid them more than the box-office could afford, engaged in a fatal war of admission-price reduction, and by December all of them were bankrupt. Then followed a period of changing managements which we shall not recount in detail, but the net result of which was to weaken the whole structure of Philadelphia theatricals. It was a period of vacillating policies, of confusion, and of the loss of public confidence. And, if before this time there had been any question as to the passing of theatre supremacy to New York, that question was no longer valid.

WARREN BREAKS DOWN

Both Warren and Wood were, of course, reputable actors, and in this capacity they continued after their failure as managers. Wood, being thirteen years younger than Warren, had a considerable career ahead of him. Warren gave his last performance, and a very pathetic one, on November 25th, 1831, in *The Poor Gentleman*. During the fifth act the failing actor suddenly laid his hand on the shoulder of his fellow-player, Wemyss, saying, "Frank, lead me off the stage, for I do not know what I am talking about." He retired to Baltimore, where he spent his last years as the proprietor of a small inn.

F. C. Wemyss was a veteran actor, with a large public following, and he was also ambitious as a manager. In 1834 he obtained control of the Walnut Street Theatre, and ran it for a time with moderate success against the competition of the Chestnut and Arch, which at the time were under the control of Maywood and Company. But Wemyss's ambition carried him a bit too far, for in the autumn of 1836 he remodeled a church in Coates Street and opened it as the Pennsylvania Theatre. Three theatres had proved more than the city could support; now it had four. But seldom during the next few years were all of them open at any one time. Usually they alternated with short seasons for each.

Considerable life was injected into the Chestnut's policy in 1838, when William E. Burton, the popular comedian, became its manager, and during the summer of that year introduced a series of short novelties which he described in a public announcement as "Les Vaudevilles." Within two years Burton's astuteness had carried him to a very powerful position in the Philadelphia theatre. Wemyss, however, was a dogged opponent, and he countered with novelties at the Walnut, and with reduced prices. He even captured public attention in September, 1839, by the stunt of completely renovating and redecorating the theatre over a week-end, without the loss of a performance. After the Saturday night show workmen moved in, and, following carefully prepared plans and ready-cut materials, had the house ready in its new dress for Monday evening. The audience was amazed. But the amazement wore off after a few days, and business dropped back to the level which had frightened the manager into this ingenious but desperate maneuver.

MUTUAL MISERY

The 1839–40 season was a most unhappy one. The Arch Street did not open at all, and the Chestnut and Walnut carried on their miserable warfare with mutual losses. Both houses resorted to almost innumerable benefit nights, the benefits being for all sorts of causes, but chiefly, it would seem, for firemen. In the space of three months at the Walnut alone there were twenty-four benefits for fire companies. But these conditions did not discourage Burton, for in the summer of 1840 he rebuilt Cooke's Circus (in Chestnut Street) and opened it as the National Theatre at the end of August. In this house he established a strong stock company, and during the following months was able to develop good public support for productions of standard plays without the aid of guest stars. Later on, however, he made what proved to be a mistake by returning to the ruinous guest-star policy, and he closed the theatre in January, 1842.

The whole decade of the 1840s may be said, however, to have belonged to Burton. Managements came and went, and Burton himself shifted from this theatre to that, but he was the power, and the only manager to keep steadily afloat. In 1845 he controlled both the Chestnut and Arch, and moved his actors between the two theatres as he required them. He kept a stream of fresh talent flowing into Philadelphia, and he was always alert for new plays. It was therefore a severe loss to the city when at the end of 1849 he transferred his activities to New York. Burton was bright enough to realize where the theatre now centered.

BOSTON

In 1825 the Boston Theatre had little opposition. Its only rival was the City Theatre, which Joseph Cowell had created from the Amphitheatre in Washington Gardens, but which was now suffering from a succession of new managements, and was seldom impressive in personnel or policy.

The sensation of 1825 was the attempted appearance at the Boston Theatre of that stormy petrel, Edmund Kean, whose temerity in returning to the scene of his insulting behavior in 1821 was rewarded with ignominious failure. He had, it is true, succeeded eventually in gaining a hearing in New York, and this

perhaps emboldened him, but when he arrived at the Boston Theatre on the evening of December 21st, he found an angry audience inside the house and a turbulent mob outside. Before donning his costume (as Richard III) he attempted to address the audience from the stage, but was hooted and pelted with missiles. He retired. The manager failed also to quiet the uproar. Finally it was decided to start the play with another actor in Kean's role. The first act was played, but none of it was heard for the noise. Then the mob outside began breaking the windows and doors, and the audience broke into a riot. Kean, who was said to have been weeping in his dressing-room, escaped from the theatre, and caught a stage for Worcester. No lives were lost, but the theatre was severely damaged.

SANS FAÇADE

The 1826–27 season was a good one at the Boston Theatre, with Macready making his first appearance in the city, with Cooper following close upon his heels, and, in February, with the young Edwin Forrest in his first Boston engagement. But a somewhat ominous note was struck in July, 1827, when the cornerstone of a new theatre was laid in Tremont Street. The new playhouse was financed largely by friends of William Pelby, a former actor at the Boston, who had quarreled with the management of that theatre, and was intended to provide the supposedly mistreated actor with a tangible solace. Although the Tremont (as it was named) was not quite complete on the date set for its opening—September 24th—it was opened on schedule because of the eagerness of the public. All it lacked, really, was its granite façade. And Pelby, as manager, had assembled a very good company drawn from the New York and Philadelphia theatres. The opening bill comprised Mrs. Inchbald's popular comedy, *Wives As They Were, and Maids As They Are,* and a farce entitled *The Lady and the Devil.*

The new theatre was a success, and for the next two years there was a spirited rivalry between the Tremont and the Boston. Actually it was more than rivalry—it was cut-throat competition, with both houses bidding for the same stars, and both striving for a patronage which was insufficient to fill two theatres. The result was that by the end of the 1828–29 season both were exhausted

and in financial difficulty. The management of the Tremont finally took over control of the Boston, amalgamated the two acting companies, and ran the houses alternately.

BOOTH PROVIDES PATHOS

A pathetically dramatic incident occurred at the Tremont in November, 1829, during the guest engagement of the veteran Booth. The actor had recently been ill, and, as was proved, had not recovered as fully as was thought. During the performance of an heroic piece entitled *Evadne*, Booth's mind began to wander, and he frightened both his fellow-players and the audience by dropping into colloquial improvisations. Finally, in the third act, he broke off entirely from the play and addressed the audience as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen, I really don't know this part. I studied it only once before, much against my inclination. I will read the part, and the play shall go on. By your leave the play shall go on, and Mr. Wilson shall read the part for me." Exclamations and hisses rose from the audience, whereupon Booth stood and grinned stupidly at them. Presently the stage manager came out and led Booth into the wings, the latter exclaiming as he went, "I can't read—I am a charity boy—I can't read. Take me to the Lunatic Hospital." The curtain was then rung down. Booth was taken to his lodgings, where the next day he was examined, and a consultation held concerning the advisability of committing him to an asylum. But before any decision was reached the actor disappeared. He was later seen by a stage-coach driver walking along the road to Providence clad only in his underwear, and it was reported that he slept in the woods one night. But he arrived safely (if disreputably) in Providence, and there was cared for by friends. After a period of rest he recovered his mental powers, and before many weeks was back on the stage.

During the 1830s the Tremont remained the principal playhouse in the city, for the old Boston, when not dark, was housing chiefly concerts, lectures, and novelty entertainments. Yet there was competition from the vengeful Mr. Pelby, who did everything in his power to hurt business at the Tremont. In 1832 the American Amphitheatre was built for circus and equestrian spectacles, but in the same year this building was leased to Pelby, who immediately changed its name to the Warren Theatre, and

adapted it to stage plays. Four years later he remodeled it and named it the National. Although he seldom succeeded in engaging first-class talent, he did attract a considerable amount of business, and by bidding for the services of outstanding guest stars, he forced the Tremont to higher counterbids than it could afford. As a consequence, during the six years between 1834 and 1840, while the Tremont was under the management of Thomas Barry (former stage-manager at the Park in New York) the house suffered a net loss of $26,000, much of this, seemingly, a loss to Barry himself. Another factor in the situation, however, was the series of business depressions which were plaguing the entire country.

THE BOSTON MUSEUM

During the 1840s the theatrical picture became more complex. In 1841 the Boston Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts was opened by Moses Kimball, a successful merchant, and was operated along the lines of Barnum's Museum in New York, featuring exhibits of paintings, stuffed animals, wax figures, and other novelties, and with a lecture hall seating 1200. Although for a time the Boston Museum contented itself with exhibits, lectures and concerts, it soon succumbed to the dramatic impulse, and employing the same shrewd hypocrisy which Barnum found so effective, it began in 1843 to present standard plays with a stock company. These productions attracted such crowds that in 1846 a new Museum was built (on Tremont Street, between School and Court) with enlarged and improved facilities. The competent stage manager during these years was William H. Smith, who handled his company well, and augmented it frequently with guest stars such as Vandenhoff, Booth, Davenport, and Mrs. Barrett. The plays chosen covered the whole range of popular dramatic literature, with Shakespeare represented frequently, with melodramas by Sheridan Knowles, dramas by Bulwer-Lytton, comedies and sentimental pieces by Boucicault, and contemporary novelties such as *The Drunkard*. How frequently the bill was changed is illustrated by the fact that William Warren, who joined the company in 1847, appeared during his first season in seventy-six separate roles.

"CHASTE AND ELEGANT PRODUCTIONS"

One of the greatest factors in the success of the Museum theatrically was its emphasis on propriety. The Bostonians of the period were for the most part prejudiced against the theatre as an institution. They enjoyed plays, but they preferred having them camouflaged as education or "moral entertainment." And the Museum catered to this hypocrisy. It did not even call itself a theatre, and it emphasized not only its educational and moral purpose, but also the "correctness" of its atmosphere. In McGlinchee's careful record of the first decade of the Museum it is noted that its directors announced to the public at the outset of its dramatic career that "Gentlemen of high literary attainments" had been retained to translate "some of the most chaste and elegant productions of the French, Italian, and German drama." And it was "respectfully submitted that in all Pieces produced at this Establishment, all *profane expletives* and *indecent allusions*" would be "totally expunged." Furthermore, the management prided itself on the decorum of its audiences. No performances were given (nor were they in other Boston theatres) on Saturday nights, out of deference to the citizenry's insistence on a quiet "Sabbath eve." These were some of the reasons why the Museum became an established institution, and one which set an enviable record of continuous success for more than half a century.

In the same year (1843) that the Museum entered the dramatic field the Tremont failed utterly and was converted to a church, with portions of the building turned to use as offices and stores. Under the name of the Tremont Temple it stood until 1852, when it was destroyed by fire.

THE HOWARD ATHENAEUM

Two years later there was a reverse process. A group of theatrical men leased the Tabernacle on Howard Street, the home of a religious sect, the Millerites. This sect was now disintegrating for the very good reason that Miller, its founder, had predicted the second coming of Christ for the year 1843! The building was altered to suit the needs of play production, and was opened in 1845 as the Howard Athenaeum. Although it burned down the next year, it was immediately rebuilt, and took its place among Boston's first-class theatres.

In 1846, somewhat surprisingly, the old Boston Theatre in Tremont Street was renovated and re-opened. It started out boldly enough, and with fair success, with the usual resident stock company and a series of guest stars which included Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean. But its new lease on life was a short one, for within two years it had begun to house novelties and, after a variety of attractions which declined steadily in value, it closed finally in 1852, after more than half a century of use.

It will be apparent to the reader that Boston, in mid-century, was growing theatrically. It was growing in every way. Whereas the population in 1840 was 125,000, in 1850 it was 160,000. It was a thriving seaport, and industry was being added to commerce. Also, it was our chief center of formal education and of what we will take the liberty of calling culture. The fact that many of its leading citizens were stiff-necked with Puritan prejudice accounts for the slowness with which the theatre found acceptance (it is not unusual for the arts to encounter censorship in Boston even today), but by 1850 the number of theatres operating in the city indicated a growing tolerance of and interest in the stage.

CHARLESTON

Although Charleston played an important part in the early history of our theatre, by 1825 it had begun to play a decidedly minor role. It could no longer compete with the large and thriving cities to the north. Yet its inhabitants continued to show a lively enthusiasm for the drama.

The Charleston Theatre suffered a serious relapse after the resignation and departure of Charles Gilfert in the spring of 1825, and was quiescent until February, 1826, when the adventurous Joe Cowell arrived to take charge. Although his management covered only one season, and that a short one of approximately ten weeks, it was brightened by the guest engagement of Edmund Kean, who appeared in mid-March and remained for four weeks. Kean had been through harrowing experiences in the North (particularly in Boston), and there was a grave question as to his reception in Charleston. The actor himself was fearful, and begged Cowell not to let him play if the latter considered it too great a risk. But the manager took the chance. At Kean's first performance (the inevitable *Richard III*) the theatre was filled to capacity with approximately twelve hundred men and one

woman, the wife of the district attorney. According to Cowell's own account of this occasion, the men who made up the audience had come prepared to make a disturbance, but were deterred from doing so by the presence of "a lady." (Here we should enter a footnote on Southern chivalry!) At any rate, all went well, and Kean's popularity grew with his continued performances.

DRUGGIST TO THE RESCUE

Cowell, who was a restless character, closed his season toward the end of April and departed the city. Again the prospect for theatre-goers was bleak. But the citizens were not to be denied their entertainment, for one of their number, Dr. John Dyott, a druggist, took over the theatre and engaged Frederick Brown, an actor in the company, as stage manager. Brown had been a well-known actor in Montreal, and from that far-off center he brought a group of players. The season opened in January, 1827, and lasted till May, but it was a financial failure. Dyott returned to his drugs, and presently another public-spirited individual tried his hand at theatre management. When he failed, a group of citizens took charge. So it went from year to year, discouragingly, until 1833, when the theatre was sold for use as a Medical College of the State of South Carolina.

Immediately, however, the old theatre in Queen Street was opened and, for several years housed such attractions as were available. A stock company operated in it quite regularly, and there were a few guest stars, including "Jim Crow" Rice, "Yankee" Hill, and Tyrone Power. The latter referred to this playhouse as a "barn." It seems indeed to have been a crude wooden structure, and, according to Hoole, was better suited to the circus than to the production of standard plays.

THE NEW CHARLESTON

Charleston soon remedied this situation. The city was enjoying an era of great prosperity, and in 1837 money was raised without much effort for the construction of a first-class theatre. The New Charleston was completed in December, 1837, and was opened gaily on the 15th of that month under the management of William Abbott, formerly of the Haymarket Theatre, London. In addition to hiring a good resident company, Abbott succeeded in bringing a large number of distinguished guest stars to the new

theatre. In his first season, for instance, he presented Ellen Tree, Booth, Cooper, and Vandenhoff. The house was elegant, the talent first-rate, and Charleston was happy.

Although Abbott quit his post in 1841, the house continued to prosper, particularly from 1842 to 1847 under the management of William C. Forbes, who brought even more stars to Charleston than had Abbott, and who also brought opera companies for several highly successful engagements. After Forbes's departure the theatre declined a bit, and for several years suffered the ups and downs of changing (and less competent) managements. But on the whole the city was well entertained. And its continuing prosperity gave assurance that this condition would be improved rather than worsened.

WEST AND SOUTH

In the preceding chapter we gave some account of the pioneering activities of Noah M. Ludlow, James H. Caldwell, and the intrepid Drake family, who carried the theatre into the wilds west of the Alleghenies. In picking up the threads of their story in 1825 we find them joined by other characters no less vigorous and picturesque than themselves. First among these we must place Sol Smith, whose reminiscences of thirty years as actor and manager in the West and South form one of the most colorful books of adventure in our entire theatrical history.

Smith, like Ludlow, was stage-struck as a boy in Albany, New York, where John Bernard operated the theatre in Green Street. In 1817 (when he was sixteen years of age) he set out by himself, seeking a stage career, and for several years wandered from city to city in the West, earning his living in various ways, but only occasionally in the theatre. In 1824 he managed his first company, first in Cincinnati, then barnstorming through Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, much of the time staying only one step ahead of the sheriff. In 1826 he joined the Drakes, first as actor, then as manager, playing in Ohio, Tennessee and Kentucky. The next year he allied himself with Caldwell, first in St. Louis, where Caldwell opened his Salt House Theatre, and later in Nashville and New Orleans.

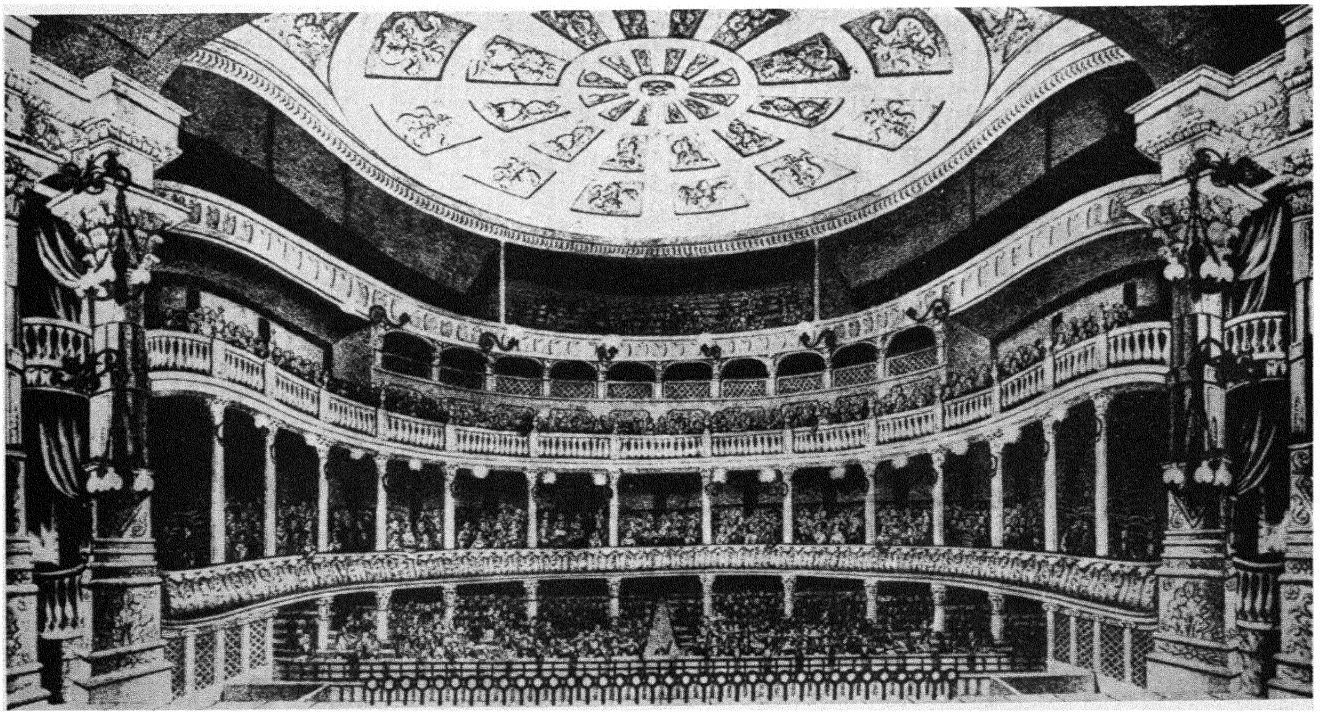
LEG-BONES AND SKULLS

Smith's recollections are so filled with colorful anecdotes that it is impossible to resist mentioning two or three. For example, his account of the theatre in Natchez, Mississippi, where his company played in 1828. The theatre, brand-new, had been built at the end of the main street, in a graveyard, and the street itself had been cut through the graveyard for a distance of two hundred yards. "Every day, in going to rehearsal, our sights were regaled with the view of leg-bones sticking horizontally out of the earth. . . ." The men's dressing-rooms were under the stage, and as the earth had been excavated to create them, "Human bones were strewn about in every direction. The first night, the lamplighter, being a little pushed for time to get all ready, seized upon a skull, sticking two tallow candles in the eye-sockets, and I found my dressing-room thus lighted. In digging the grave of Hamlet, I experienced no difficulty in finding bones and skulls to 'play at loggats with.' "

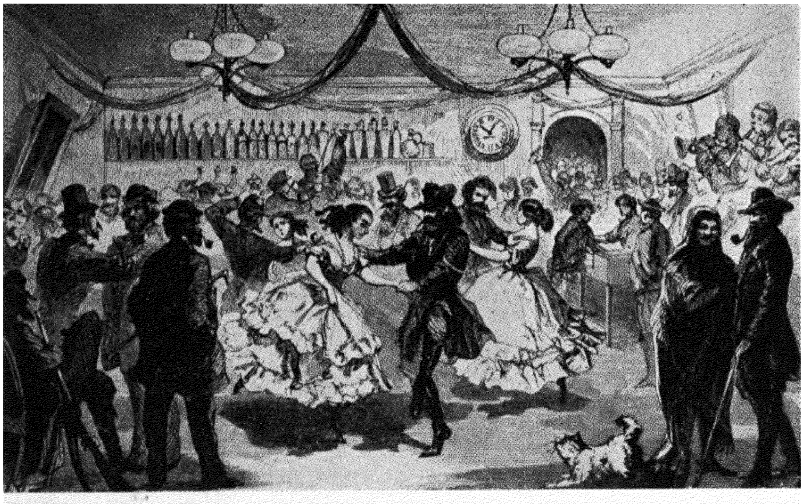
In 1832, on coming into Columbus, Georgia with his troupe, Smith noticed a number of gaily-dressed Creek Indians on the streets. Thinking they would add a spectacular note to his production that evening of *Pizarro,* he engaged a number of them at a salary of fifty cents and a glass of whiskey for each. Evidently, however, the one glass got multiplied, for when the mob scenes took place, the Indians, instead of subordinating themselves to the action of the play, took the center of the stage and executed a Creek war dance, drowning out all other sounds, and frightening the regular actors into fleeing for their lives.

CATFISH AND CUES

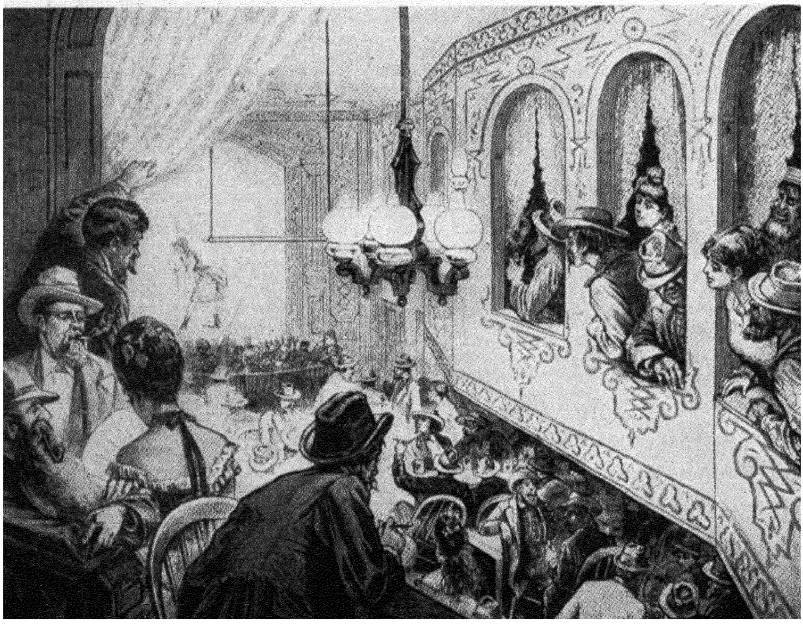
In 1833 Smith visited Cincinnati, and there made friends with the Chapman family, who were operating what was called the Floating Theatre (the proto-type of all our showboats). The family consisted of the elder Chapman, his three sons and two daughters—all of them actors. They had come to this country from England, and, after several of them had appeared in Philadelphia and New York theatres, they had moved West and opened a theatre in Louisville. In either 1831 or 1832 they had conceived the floating theatre, which for many years they operated on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. One of the motivating



Interior of St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans, *circa* 1840.
(From *The Pageant of America* ["The American Stage." Coad and Mims]. Copyright Yale University Press.)



The Hurdy-Gurdy House at Virginia City, Montana, 1867.



Cow-Town Vaudeville, 1877.

factors in this novelty, it seems, was the passion which all the Chapmans had for fishing, and it is said that even during a performance, those actors who were not required on stage were watching their lines hung over the stern. On one such occasion an actor missed his entrance cue, and when he finally appeared, the on-stage actor who had been kept waiting ad-libbed, "Why did you not come when I called?" Whereupon the tardy one replied, "Why, sir, I was just hauling in one of the damnedest big catfish you ever saw!" This brought down the house. And it must conclude our *divertissements*.

The history of the frontier theatre during the late 1820s and early 1830s is a confusing one because of the constantly shifting managerial alignments. Caldwell, Ludlow and Smith were the chief figures, though by no means the only ones, in this maze of activity. At times they operated separately, again two of the three would combine against the third. This fluid situation crystallized, however, in 1835, when Caldwell, who had wisely decided to concentrate his efforts on New Orleans, built his magnificent St. Charles Theatre. At this time New Orleans was forging rapidly ahead of all "Western" cities—not only in wealth but in population. And the new theatre was worthy of its setting. Ludlow and Smith, combining their talents and capital, responded by taking over the management of the theatre in Mobile, and by building a handsome playhouse in St. Louis. The St. Louis Theatre, financed by local subscriptions and leased to Ludlow and Smith, seated 1500 persons, and was somewhat pretentious for the frontier community which created it.

It was in the theatres of New Orleans and Mobile, however, that the rivalry of managers was fought. Both managements maintained excellent stock companies, and both bid for the services of the most notable stars of the East. The picture changed suddenly in 1840, when Ludlow and Smith's Mobile theatre burned, and Caldwell seized the opportunity to build a theatre of his own in Mobile. Ludlow and Smith struck back immediately by building the New American Theatre in New Orleans, to compete with the St. Charles. In 1842 the latter house burned, and shortly afterwards the same fate overtook the New American. Both were rebuilt, but the managements (because of an involved series of events) were reversed, so that Ludlow and Smith had the St. Charles, and Caldwell the New American. In 1843

Caldwell announced his bankruptcy and retired, leaving Ludlow and Smith to enjoy their triumph during the rest of the decade.

BELLES AND BEAUX

As we have already indicated, there was during the 1830s and 1840s a steady flow of stars into these far-flung outposts of the theatre. One was Tyrone Power, the famous Irish comedian, who made his debut at the Park in New York in 1833, and later toured the West. Power, who was noted for the excellence of his characterizations, and for his natural, unexaggerated style of acting, included in his *Impressions of America* several vivid descriptions of places he visited and the life that he observed. In Natchez, Mississippi, where he played in 1835, he was much struck by the picturesqueness of his audience, who rode in from their plantations on gaily-caparisoned horses, with "saddle-cloths of scarlet or light blue, bound with broad gold or silver lace," the men themselves wearing full regalia of tunics made of blanketing, with broad belts, wide Spanish hats of beaver, with high leggings or boots, and heavy spurs. The women, too, were prettily dressed. And the whole audience was surprisingly genteel and appreciative. Although Power had been warned that the theatre in New Orleans would be filled with "noisy planters" and "boisterous Mississippi boatmen," he found when he played at the St. Charles Theatre that the prophecy was most inaccurate. The parquette and dress boxes were filled with beautifully coiffured ladies, elegant in the French fashion, and the men were neatly dressed and well mannered. It was his opinion that this famous theatre, filled with New Orleans belles and beaux, presented "decidedly the most elegant-looking auditory of this country . . . a greater degree of repose and gentility of demeanour I never remember to have noticed in any mixed assembly of any place."

DANGEROUS NEW ORLEANS

Another star in the theatres of the Southwest was George Vandenhoff, who became something of a fixture in the region, and played for several years under the banners of Caldwell, Ludlow, and Smith. In his *Leaves from an Actor's Note-book*, as quoted by Coad, he emphasizes the romantic and exciting atmosphere of the region, and particularly that of New Orleans, where duels were fought frequently, sometimes in an "immense bar-

room, in which thousands assembled at a time," in which "high words would be heard at one end; a scuffle, perhaps; a general clearing took place for a moment, a pistol-shot or two were fired, a body was carried out, the lookers-on closed up again, and the matter was forgotten."

Other distinguished visiting players were J. B. Buckstone, the English playwright and comedian, and Mrs. Fanny Fitzwilliam, who, according to Sol Smith, in 1841 was "cramming the American [New Orleans] every night, and throwing from nine hundred to a thousand people into fits [of laughter] and causing them to forget the hard times, short crops, and everything else of a disagreeable nature." Then he added, with managerial pride, "Isn't she a darling of an actress?" Buckstone and Mrs. Fitzwilliam played together for a time, and this combination was tremendously successful.

Another pair which delighted the Southwest were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean—popular not only because of their excellence as performers and the extraordinary charm of Mrs. Kean (Ellen Tree), but also because of their modesty and graciousness. According to Smith, "They were so unassuming and kind in their demeanour, that, were it not for the immense receipts they attracted, you would not have supposed to see them, that they were anything but the humblest members of the stock company."

The same could not be said, however, of William Charles Macready, who left behind him an unfortunate reputation for snobbishness and fault-finding.

Besides such already established stars as we have mentioned, there were a number of actors connected with the frontier theatre who later achieved fame. One of these was Mrs. George P. Farren, who, with her husband, was for years one of the most popular performers on the stages of St. Louis, Mobile, and New Orleans. Another was Julia Dean, daughter of Julia Drake, and grand-daughter of Samuel Drake, the theatrical pioneer. A true daughter of the West, she played for some time in Ludlow's company, then with Joseph Jefferson, and in 1846 made her debut at the Park in New York, where she became an immediate success.

"STUFFED SEATS" IN CHICAGO

Joseph Jefferson II also moved across the frontier scene. In the early thirties Jefferson had managed a theatre in Washington,

D.C., but not too successfully. From 1835 to 1837 he was employed as a scenic artist in New York, at the Franklin Theatre and at Niblo's Garden. Then he had been invited by his uncle, Alexander MacKenzie, to join him in Chicago, where a theatre was under construction. Jefferson (who was then thirty-three years old) accepted the invitation, and took with him his actress wife, the former Cornelia Burke, and their two children. Chicago at this time was a raw town of only two thousand inhabitants, but it was booming, and new enterprises were rapidly springing up. A few theatrical performances had been given shortly before this in the dining-room of the Sauganash Hotel, but there had been no playhouse. Now there was one—of limited capacity, and occupying only the upper floor of a wooden building, but with "stuffed seats in the dress circle" and with two private boxes, decorated in white, gold and red. There was also a pale blue dome with pink-and-white clouds, "on which reposed four ungraceful ballet girls representing the seasons, and apparently dropping flowers, snow, and grapes into the pit." These details are gleaned from the reminiscences of Joseph Jefferson III, who recorded them many years later. In the spring of 1838, when the theatre was opened, he was a lad of nine.

JEFFERSON AND A SPRINGFIELD LAWYER

After a short and not too successful season in Chicago the Jeffersons, with a few other actors, started a barnstorming tour under the banner of MacKenzie and Jefferson. In Springfield their performances were held up temporarily by an injunction brought by a religious sect, and from this difficulty they were extricated by a good-humored young lawyer who volunteered his services and refused a fee. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

It was not long before the partnership of MacKenzie and Jefferson was dissolved. The Jefferson family then toured with various groups of actors through the Southwest, enduring the severest hardships and earning the scantiest of livings, traveling even in winter in open wagons, on barges, and in the steerage of steamboats. In the autumn of 1842 Jefferson contracted yellow fever and died in Mobile, leaving his courageous widow to fight the battle of survival for herself and the children. For a time she operated a boarding-house for actors in Mobile, but ere long she was acting again, as were both her son and daughter. In 1843

young Jo (aged fourteen) was playing at the St. Charles in New Orleans. The family trouped with various companies through Mississippi and Texas, and in 1846 were playing on the Mexican border for the entertainment of American soldiers. Following our army into Mexico, they spent some time at the town of Matamoros, where they augmented their income by starting a restaurant in a Spanish saloon, and in this manner earned enough money to take them back to the East. Joseph III then obtained a series of engagements in the theatres of Philadelphia, and in November, 1849 joined the company of the National Theatre, New York. There he began his steady climb to stardom.

The Chicago Theatre (or the Rialto) which Jefferson described for us was abandoned in 1842 for a new playhouse established in the Chapin building. The first actual theatre building to be erected in Chicago, however, was the one erected in 1847 on Randolph Street, near Dearborn, by John B. Rice, the town's first successful theatre manager, and later its mayor. In 1848 Rice added to his company a comedian named John H. McVicker, who was to become an important figure in the subsequent development of Chicago theatricals. Rice's theatre burned in 1850, and was replaced by one of brick. Meanwhile the town was growing by leaps and bounds. Between 1837 and 1847 its population increased from two thousand to seventeen thousand, and it was assuming a position of importance in the growth of the West.

A NEW FRONTIER

But now a new and distant frontier was firing the imaginations of Americans. Our victories in the Mexican War had freed California from the domination of the Spanish, and in 1847 our soldiers took over the various Spanish posts in both Northern and Southern California. Until this time the only dramatic performances in the region had been the Roman Catholic miracle plays presented at religious festivals and in the missions and cathedrals. The American soldiers, however, amused themselves by staging plays and minstrel shows. The first standard English play to be presented on California soil was Benjamin Webster's domestic drama, *The Golden Farmer*, given at Sonoma in an improvised theatre. Shows of one sort or another—chiefly of the minstrel type—were given by other soldier groups at San Francisco, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles.

THE GOLD RUSH

Then came the discovery of gold in 1848, followed by the historic Gold Rush of 1849, and the professional theatre came into being on the West Coast. According to the best authorities, "the first building erected expressly for dramatic purposes in California" was the Eagle Theatre in Sacramento, which was opened on October 18th, 1849, with a performance of *The Bandit Chief; or, the Forest Spectre.* It was a very crude frame structure, with canvas sides and a roof of sheet iron and tin. Although it is reported to have cost at least seventy-five thousand dollars to build, this exorbitant figure can be explained by the "boom" prices of labor and material then prevalent in Sacramento. According to MacMinn, the price of lumber was six or seven hundred dollars per thousand feet, and carpenters were paid sixteen dollars a day. The house held approximately four hundred persons; the ventilation was horrible; and when it rained, water flooded the floor. The Sacramento River frequently flooded the whole town, and drove the Eagle Theatre audience onto the tops of the benches. In two and a half months the house was closed, never to reopen. But it had secured for itself a little niche in history. It had offered the first professional, English-language dramatic performances in California.

It was a matter of only a few months until other theatres arose —in Sacramento, San Francisco, Stockton, and elsewhere—but those months carry us into the second half of the century, and thus into another chapter.

Chapter VI

The Theatre in New York: 1850–1870

THE third quarter of the nineteenth century was an era of great theatrical expansion, despite four years of bitter civil war and two severe financial panics. Chief factor in this expansion was the rapid building of railroads, particularly those leading into the West. By 1854 several lines had crossed the Mississippi, and in 1869 the first transcontinental line linked the East with the Pacific Coast. These tremendous strides in transportation contributed not only to an increase in trade and the exploitation of natural resources, but also to the decentralization of theatrical talent. Individual stars and, a bit later, entire companies, found it possible by means of the railways to move quickly and with reasonable comfort between cities hundreds of miles apart. And this opportunity was taken full advantage of by most of the leading performers. Indeed, when one checks their movements one is amazed at the territory covered. A star who seemed well established in Boston will suddenly appear in New Orleans, then in San Francisco, and presently in New York. And this mobility was a godsend to the healthy growth of the theatre in all parts of the country, for it permitted provincial cities to share in the glamor of the metropolis. It was a godsend also to the actor, for it multiplied his following and tended to prevent the possible staling of his popularity in a single city.

Then, however, as always, the theatre had a headquarters, a center from which sprang plays, stars and standards of production. This center in 1850, as today, was New York City. Boston and Philadelphia had by mid-century fallen definitely behind in the race for supremacy, though each could boast of several excellent theatres. Such cities as Providence, Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah and Washington provided good audiences for visiting attractions, but were unimportant otherwise. Chicago was barely

beginning its theatrical career; New Orleans was colorful but limited; and San Francisco was a wild-west pandemonium of tents and wooden saloons. It is New York that we must study primarily and most fully.

CITY OF HALF A MILLION

In 1850 the population of Manhattan was, in round figures, 515,000. As for the adjoining areas, the Bronx had 8,000; Brooklyn, 138,000; Richmond, 15,000; Queens, 18,000. Although during the quarter century we are discussing these other sections, particularly Brooklyn, did develop theatres of their own, such theatres were scarcely more than adjuncts to the theatres of Manhattan. We shall, therefore, limit ourselves to a survey of the situation on that island.

Manhattan then had six legitimate theatres—that is, houses in which standard plays were the normal attraction. They were the Broadway, Burton's, the Bowery, the National, Brougham's Lyceum, and the Olympic. If we place Barnum's American Museum in that category, and it would not be illogical to do so, for it regularly presented plays, then the number is seven. In addition, there was the Astor Place Opera House, which offered opera when it could, and almost anything else when it couldn't; there were Niblo's Garden and Castle Garden, both of which housed operas, ballets, concerts, variety shows, and plays; there was, after October, 1850, Tripler's large new music hall for opera and concerts; and, finally, there were several halls occupied by minstrel troupes.

It was still customary in this period for a standard theatre to maintain a complete company on a more or less permanent basis, but to engage a succession of guest stars, some for a single week, others for several weeks. The stars moved from one theatre to another in Manhattan, and from time to time journeyed to other cities.

"THE HAVEN OF STARS"

The Broadway was probably the leading house in 1850. It was the well-established home of classic plays, both tragic and comic, and it was, in Odell's phrase, "the haven of stars." During the 1850–51 season its most distinguished offering was a three-week engagement of Charlotte Cushman, during which that eminent

actress appeared in a variety of classics, Shakespearian and otherwise, playing Rosalind, Viola, Lady Macbeth, and, surprisingly to us, but probably not to the audience of her time, Romeo.

Burton's Theatre was notably the home of comedy, old and new. And it was presided over by Burton himself, one of the best-loved comedians of the era, who frequently played leading roles. His big hit of this season was a dramatization of Dickens' *David Copperfield,* in which he, naturally, was Micawber.

The Bowery, under the management of T. S. Hamblin, who frequently acted in his own productions, alternated between classics and contemporary melodramas, with a strong emphasis on Shakespeare. Notable during the season under discussion was the first New York showing of *The Count of Monte Cristo,* which was presented on April 21st, 1851, and which ran uninterruptedly until May 9th.

At the National one would have found similar fare, but a stronger personnel. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Jefferson played an extended engagement at this theatre, as did F. C. Wemyss. And another guest star was J. B. Booth, who, incidentally, was supported on September 27th in *The Iron Chest* by his son Edwin. This occasion was the latter's first appearance on a New York stage, although his actual debut had occurred in Boston twelve months earlier. The following April, when the elder Booth was playing a return engagement at the National, Edwin substituted for him one night in *Richard III.* One story has it that this event was brought about by the illness of J. B. Booth; another would have us believe that the illness was feigned so that the father might test the stageworthiness of his young son. There appears to be no way of testing the validity of the stories.

MOSE THE FIREBOY

Among other outstanding guest-stars during the season at the National was Francis F. Chanfrau, who had achieved sudden fame in 1848 at Mitchell's Olympic Theatre with his characterization of Mose the Fireboy in *A Glance at New York.* This popular contemporary melodrama was based on the rivalry of volunteer fire companies, which were at that time, according to Professor Quinn, "well known institutions. They were not only fire fighters, they were also rude social and political forces, and their methods of dealing with fires were appalling, to say the

least. Rivalry was keen between the companies and the first one to reach the scene had to spend time in intrenching its position for a siege before it turned its attention to the fire." As a tough fireboy, Chanfrau is said to have "looked and acted the part to perfection with his plug hat, red shirt, turned up trousers, 'soap locks,' and impudence." In New York, for several seasons, at various theatres, he was the delight of audiences. A whole series of plays followed the first one, *Mose in California, Mose in a Muss, Mose's Visit to Philadelphia,* and even *Mose in China.* Later he carried his popular characterization to cities throughout the nation.

John Brougham, the popular actor-manager and playwright, had a theatre built for him in 1850. It arose at the corner of Broadway and Broome St. and opened December 23d under the name of Brougham's Lyceum. The house was intended to fill the vacancy caused by the demise of Mitchell's Olympic, where original farces and all sorts of amusing novelties had been the rule. But in spite of Brougham's long experience in this field, he was unable to establish his new theatre, and in less than two years gave it up. A significant item in the record of his first season was the first New York appearance of John E. Owens, a recruit from the Philadelphia stage, who played in the farce, *Crimson Crimes.* Owens did not at the time cause any sensation, but some fourteen years later he was to create the role of Solon Shingle, the Yankee, in *The People's Lawyer,* and thereby rise to national fame as the greatest delineator of the Yankee type.

GERMAN-LANGUAGE PLAYS

The Olympic Theatre had an extremely varied career during the 1850–51 season. At the beginning it was occupied by Fellows's Minstrels; then it was taken over by Burton (as a "branch" of his other theatre) and operated on a policy of comedy and burlesque. This program failing, the house reverted for a time to minstrelsy, and in February was rented to a group of German players who adopted the imposing title of the German National Theatre.

This venture was by no means the first attempt to perform plays in the German language in New York City. The earliest record of such a performance is dated 1840. And during the following ten years there were sporadic but fairly frequent repetitions of the idea. It was natural that such efforts should be made, for German

immigration to this country was extremely heavy during the mid-century years. According to Dr. F. A. H. Leuchs, out of a total of sixty thousand immigrants arriving on our shores in the year 1840, approximately twenty thousand were Germans. In the year 1850, out of a total of two hundred and twenty-one thousand, forty-five thousand were Germans. And a large percentage of them settled in New York. From 1850 on, there was never a time when plays were not being presented to the German population in their own language—German classics, Shakespeare, contemporary German pieces, and translations of popular current English pieces. Some of the actors in these early German companies had had professional experience in the old country—others appear to have been amateurs trained in America. Of the former type the outstanding figures are Otto Hoym and his wife, Elise Hoym-Hehl; of the latter, Daniel Bandmann, who attained distinction on both the German and English-language stages.

PLAYS IN FRENCH

The Astor Place Opera House, with Max Maretzek as impresario, managed to keep standard operas and ballets before the public during most of the season. As usual, these attractions varied in popularity (particularly because of changing personnel in the company of singers) and there were the inevitable financial ups and downs. Occasionally a non-operatic attraction used the house —for example, on April 5th, 1851, a group of French actors presented a bill of two plays in their own language. Although the French inhabitants of New York were not as numerous or as active as the German, it should be mentioned that they quite frequently gave dramatic performances. Only two months before their showing at the Astor Place they had appeared at Niblo's. And during the summer of 1851 they were found operating at Brougham's Lyceum.

Niblo's Garden was a catch-all for nearly every sort of theatrical enterprise. Frequently it housed opera and ballet, occasionally a circus or variety show, and quite frequently a series of standard plays. Among the standbys of this popular house was the Ravel Family, with their company of acrobatic ballet performers, comedians and musicians. Their spectacular productions were revived over and over, season after season.

Barnum's American Museum boasted, as the reader will remem-

ber, "a moral lecture room," as an adjunct to the display of animals, monstrosities and rarities. And this "room" was, as has been explained previously, nothing more nor less than a theatre. In the autumn of 1850 we find the moral melodrama, *The Drunkard*, still the chief attraction on Barnum's stage, although its performances were sometimes alternated with other plays. We may note that on October 7th *The Drunkard* attained its 150th performance.

"THE SWEDISH NIGHTINGALE"

Barnum's successes, however, were at this time not limited to the four walls of his Museum. It was in September, 1850, that he staged what has been called the most thrilling musical event in American history. This was the presentation of Jenny Lind, "The Swedish Nightingale," in a series of concerts, first in New York City, and later in most of the principal cities of the country. Barnum had lured the singer across the Atlantic by the offer of 150 concerts with a minimum guarantee to her of $1000 per concert, plus 50% of all takings over $5500 on any concert. On many occasions this percentage amounted to a large sum.

Barnum had displayed fully his extraordinary promotional ability in publicizing the arrival of his star, with the result that when she landed in New York she was escorted from the docks to her hotel, the Irving House, in a manner suited to royalty, and within ten minutes after her entering the hotel, there were twenty thousand persons gathered in front of it. Tickets for the opening concert on September 11th were sold well in advance by Barnum at auction on the grounds of Castle Garden, and three thousand patrons paid a shilling each merely to gain admittance to the auction. A thousand tickets were sold the first day for a total of more than ten thousand dollars.

Long before the arrival of Jenny Lind, Barnum had agitated for the erection of a new concert hall in New York in which to present her. And Tripler Hall actually was begun for that purpose. But it was not finished in time, and her first six concerts were given at Castle Garden. Late in October, however, the "Nightingale" was installed in the new hall, where she began a series of fifteen concerts, spread over approximately a month. Although there were a few critical reservations concerning Jenny Lind's greatness as a singer, the popular reaction to her artistry was

ecstatic, and even the critics permitted themselves such phrases as "astonishing virtuosity," "delicious and melodious trills," and "great musical phenomenon." All admitted the beauty of her upper register, and her extraordinary skill in the "execution of . . . difficult chromatic passages." She touched, reported the *Herald*, "the highest note ever touched by the human voice, with firmness and precision."

A NATION THRILLED

The whole American theatrical world was colored during 1850–51 by the presence of Jenny Lind. Other attractions struggled for attention, and singers in particular felt their lustre dimmed. Cities—137 of them—waited in breathless expectancy for her arrival, thrilled to her high notes, and grieved when she departed. When she failed to get as far as San Francisco, the chief theatrical promoter of that uncouth boom-town built a theatre and named it for her. It was next best to having her.

The next season, that of 1851–52, was a more normal one, though it was not entirely free from the Jenny Lind spell, for the fabulous singer, returning to New York from her tours, and now bearing the legal name of Mme. Otto Goldschmidt (she had married a pianist), appeared in a farewell series of concerts in May, 1852.

The real highlights of the season, however, were Edwin Forrest and Lola Montez.

The veteran Forrest achieved at the Broadway Theatre, beginning in February, 1852, a guest engagement of sixty-nine nights, which Odell characterizes as "the most remarkable engagement ever up to that time carried through in an American theatre by a tragedian." Forrest appeared in most of his famous roles, including Damon, Richelieu, Macbeth, Jack Cade, Spartacus, Othello, King Lear, Richard III, Hamlet, Virginius, and William Tell. Because of his previous international feud with Macready, and because of his own emphatic patriotism, Forrest had become something of a symbol of Americanism. His unprecedented success at the Broadway was, therefore, hailed by his loyal admirers as a kind of national triumph, and during the last week of his engagement the playbills at the Broadway were decorated with the American flag.

NOTORIOUS LOLA

There were, on the other hand, neither classic nor patriotic implications in the success of Lola Montez. This sensational character, whose true name was Eliza Gilbert, had been born in Ireland of a British father and an Irish mother, the latter claiming descent from a Spanish grandee. She eloped at the age of nineteen, went to London, where she became a theatrical dancer, and acquired a very unsavory reputation because of her many love affairs. She then spent several years in various countries of Europe, was involved in a liaison with Franz Liszt, the famous composer, and, as a climax to a series of amatory adventures, became the mistress and adviser to Ludwig, King of Bavaria. Finally, because of political pressure, Ludwig got rid of her, but only after bestowing on her the title of Countess of Lansfeldt, as well as an annuity. After further European escapades she crossed the Atlantic, and made her first New York stage appearance at the Broadway on December 29th, 1851. Although she is said to have had only mediocre talent as a dancer, she was, because of her notoriety, a great box-office attraction. Her audiences, however, were composed almost exclusively of men. This engagement lasted until January 9th. The following May she returned to the Broadway in what she called "a new historical drama," that had been written for her and about her, and which she "blandly and shamelessly" called *Lola Montez in Bavaria.* The piece was composed of episodes adapted from her own experiences, colored appropriately for theatrical display. She later toured the country, and became one of the lurid, legendary figures of our theatre history.

"A MUSICAL WONDER"

Perhaps we should mention, before going into the next season, that on November 22d, 1851, at Tripler Hall, a musical program was given, on which was featured a singer only seven years of age, introduced as "a musical wonder." No sensation resulted, but we are surely interested in noting that the child was Adelina Patti, who was to become one of the great singers of all time.

The season of 1852–53 was marked at its outset by an event of undisputed magnitude, for on September 8th occurred the opening of Wallack's Theatre. The house itself was not new; it was

Brougham's Lyceum refurbished. But the regime established at this time, and which continued for nearly thirty years, gave New York what was probably the most consistently excellent series of dramatic productions ever offered in one of its theatres. "Nothing like Wallack's Theatre," says Odell, "had existed in New York previously to 1852; nothing quite like it existed after 1880." He explains that, "care for minutest details distinguished the management, a finish of acting glorified every play, and the best the English dramatist had done was presented on that stage, night after night, for years." The opening play was *The Way to Get Married*, and the stars were Laura Keene and Lester Wallack (the latter billed as Mr. Lester). J. W. Wallack, the manager, did not appear on his own stage until the middle of October, when he played Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, opposite Miss Keene.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST HIT

The year 1852 is known to theatrical historians, however, not solely for the launching of Wallack's Theatre. It is equally famous as the year which brought to light the play which has been given more performances than any play in the world. That is, of course, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Shortly after the publication of the novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, a dramatization of it by C. W. Taylor was shown on the stage of the National Theatre, beginning August 23d. But the production ran for only two weeks. The following month another version, by George L. Aiken, was produced by G. C. Howard in Troy, New York at the Troy Museum, a theatre of which he was manager. Howard himself played St. Clair, Mrs. Howard was Topsy, and their daughter Cordelia was little Eva. The piece was such a hit that in spite of the comparatively small city in which it was produced, it ran for one hundred nights. The company then took it to Albany, where it continued its success. Finally manager Purdy of the National Theatre, New York City, was persuaded to present the play—he was cautious because of the failure of the other version which he had produced—and on July 18th, 1853, began the historic run, continuing well into the year 1854, and totaling more than two hundred performances. Toward its close the company was playing eighteen performances a week, and the actors were eating their meals in the theatre. The Howard family was included in

the cast at the National, and played their original roles during most of the run. Later they toured the play through the West and South, (great resentment being aroused by it in the latter region), and afterwards to England.

In less than four months after the opening of the play at the National, Barnum opened a rival production at his Museum, using a dramatization of the novel by H. J. Conway. And by the middle of January, 1854, the Bowery had succumbed to the *Uncle Tom* craze, and entered the lists with still another version, starring the renowned T. D. Rice as Tom. Although the play's vogue diminished in New York during 1854, after the city had been completely saturated with it, it was revived at frequent intervals, and eventually became a standard vehicle for touring companies. Later in the century it became a tent show, and was carried by almost innumerable troupes, season after season, to every town and hamlet of the country. As late as 1902, fifty years after its first production, there were sixteen *Uncle Tom* tent shows in operation.

Before taking leave of this historic season let us note, for the sake of color rather than importance, that the well established home of circus attractions, the Amphitheatre in the Bowery, acquired a serious competitor on May 2d, 1853, with the opening of Franconi's Hippodrome, a large building erected at Broadway and 23d St., which devoted itself to novel and spectacular equestrian exhibitions. The premiere program included *La Course des Singes* (a comic race by ponies ridden by monkeys in jockey costume); a desert scene with ostriches in harness, attached to chariots, being chased by horses; and a Grand Tournament of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, with two hundred horses and performers, and with a representation of such characters as Henry VIII, Queen Katharine, Cardinal Wolsey, Francis I, and the Queen of France.

RIVALRY OVER "THE DREAM"

During the 1853–54 season the Broadway maintained its strong position by presenting a succession of guest-stars in standard plays. It also engaged in an expensive flurry of rivalry with Burton's in February, when both theatres produced spectacular versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The sudden interest in this piece, which had been seen only twice before in New York (at the

Park in 1826 and 1841) appears to have been the result of its sensationally successful production a few months earlier at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London. Neither of the New York presentations achieved a long run, but each was declared a *succès d'estime*, with Burton's emphasizing the poetic values in a rather scholarly manner, and the Broadway aiming chiefly at richness of spectacle.

So pleased was Burton with his venture into Shakespearian fantasy that in April he presented *The Tempest*, with himself as Caliban. A contemporary critic commented that in this production the play was given "more nearly as Shakespeare wrote it than it has been since his day." In other words, the alterations which had been introduced during the Restoration by Dryden and Davenant were at last discarded. The chief difficulty at Burton's appears to have lain in the smallness of the stage, for Burton in a curtain speech admitted that "to give the Tempest" in that theatre amounted to "raising a tempest in a teapot."

THE BOUCICAULTS ARRIVE

Still another feature at Burton's this season was the American debut of Agnes Robertson, a charming young Scotswoman who had played successfully in London and Montreal, and whose career was managed by her husband, the brilliant Irish-French playwright, Dion Boucicault. Miss Robertson opened her engagement for Burton late in October, 1853, and continued until early January, appearing with outstanding success in several of her husband's plays. Boucicault himself did no acting at Burton's during this his first year in America, but in later seasons he and Miss Robertson often appeared in the same cast. There is no playwright of the second half of the nineteenth century who contributed so prolifically or so successfully to the American stage as did Boucicault. Between 1841, when his comedy hit, *London Assurance*, was produced at Covent Garden, London, and his death in 1890 he is said to have written or adapted a hundred and twenty-four plays. Although many of his successes were based on foreign originals, chiefly French, he was a master at adapting them, and also at the invention of stage business and effects.

The season was not a startling one at Wallack's, though it was by no means a failure. Its happiest feature was, strangely enough, a dramatization of Dickens' *Bleak House*, which enjoyed a full month's run. Its most unfortunate event was the sudden, unan-

nounced departure of Laura Keene, who left for Baltimore to manage her own theatre, and for reasons which are not apparent, did not bother to warn the management of Wallack's until just before curtain time on November 25th. No calamity resulted, however, for the piece to be performed was the familiar *The Rivals*, and Mrs. Conway, another member of the regular company, was able on this short notice to step into the vacated role of Lydia Languish.

"ONKEL TOM'S HÜTTE"

As for the other theatres, we have noted previously that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* held the stage of the National, and that rival productions of the piece were featured during the season at the Bowery and at Barnum's. We may now add that in October, 1853, the organization known as the German National Theatre adapted the play to its own language and presented it under the accurate title of *Onkel Tom's Hütte*. This production, incidentally, was shown at a house newly called the St. Charles Theatre, which previously had been known as White's Varieties, and which was located on the Bowery near Chatham Square. After several months of German-language pieces—including *Faust*—the St. Charles was taken over briefly by a French group, and Voltaire replaced Goethe. Then the Germans resumed, and after them the French. An international see-saw.

At Niblo's Garden there was much opera, for the Astor Place Opera House had given up finally in April, 1853, and had advertised its furniture, scenery and properties for sale. Also at Niblo's, in May and June, 1854, occurred the farewell performances of the renowned Mrs. Mowatt, who had announced her imminent marriage and retirement from the stage. Although not a great actress, she nevertheless was a distinguished figure and a talented playwright. Odell remarks that her exit removed from our theatre "one of its brightest ornaments."

One finds few items of major interest in the season of 1854–55. To the Broadway returned the eminent tragedian, E. L. Davenport, after seven years in England; Wallack's built steadily upon its solid foundation of a good company and good plays; the Bowery wavered, and for a time housed a circus. Tripler Hall burned down and was immediately rebuilt and opened in September, 1854, as the Metropolitan Theatre. The new, large and

handsomely furnished building was opened with great éclat, and during its first few months tried desperately to win an audience for legitimate drama. But after a series of classics, melodramas, and novelties, it failed in the attempt, and ruefully gave itself over (in January) to a circus. In two weeks even the circus failed. Poor and unimaginative management was no doubt a part of the trouble, but Odell thinks the main trouble was that New York had enough theatres without the Metropolitan. The city needed it, he says, "as much as man needs three feet."

THE STADT-THEATER

The season was, on the other hand, a notable one for the Germans, for early in September, 1854, they celebrated the opening of their first permanent playhouse. This was the old Amphitheatre in the Bowery, which had now been remodeled, and rechristened the Stadt-Theater. Here for a period of ten years the German language resounded steadily, in the sonorous tones of classics and on the lighter notes of contemporary pieces. The theatre was indeed a reflection, and probably a very good one, of the current stage in Germany. From time to time it had short seasons of competition from other German groups (who played at the St. Charles and elsewhere), but it was the standard, and it seldom suffered from its rivals.

The following season, 1855–56, offers us almost at its outset an event of considerable literary importance—the production at the Broadway for the first time on any stage of George Henry Boker's romantic tragedy, *Francesca da Rimini*. This piece is considered not only the best of its type ever written by an American, but is also considered to be the climax of a tradition. The romantic tragedy at this time began its decline, and in a few years was virtually defunct. It could not flourish in competition with the new realism as exemplified in the plays of Boucicault, Tom Taylor, and Robertson. But in 1855 *Francesca da Rimini* attracted admiring attention, not only in New York, but shortly afterwards in Philadelphia. E. L. Davenport was starred in the play in both cities, with Mme. Ponisi appearing as Francesca in New York, and Mrs. John Drew in Philadelphia.

At Burton's the hit of the early season was Tom Taylor's popular comedy, *Still Waters Run Deep*, and in the following May the house was brightened by the guest-engagement of Boucicault and

Miss Robertson, whose *chef d'oeuvre* was a colorful drama by Boucicault entitled *Violet, or, the Life of an Actress*, based on events in the early life of Rachel, the leading French actress of the day. It is not difficult to perceive Boucicault's motivation in preparing this piece, for Rachel had played a sensationally successful season in New York during the previous autumn.

"FIRST ACTRESS OF THE WORLD"

Elizabeth Rachel Felix, known on the stage as Rachel, the daughter of poor Jewish peddlers, had made her debut in Paris at the Théâtre Français in 1838, and by 1855 was considered not only the queen of French tragedy, but was also called "the first actress of the world." Persuaded by her brother to cross the Atlantic (he had heard that Jenny Lind had netted nearly two hundred thousand dollars from fewer than a hundred concerts in 1850), Mlle. Rachel arrived in New York with several members of her family in her supporting company, and opened an engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre on September 3d, 1855. Her first performance included two plays: *Les Droits de l'Homme*, by Prémary, and Corneille's tragedy, *Horace*. Although, as we have seen, plays had theretofore been presented in New York in the French language, Rachel was the first foreign-language star to make an American tour.

Most members of her audience could not understand French, but they were tremendously impressed by the brilliance and power of the acting. Although she did not play every night, her repertoire carried her along for seven weeks, and included several French classics as well as *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, a play written especially for her by Scribe and Legouvé. It was in Racine's *Phèdre* that she scored her greatest triumph. A contemporary critic called one of her scenes in this play "intolerably exciting." Much was made also, of her "statuesque grace." It was said that she summoned up "a vision of the polychromatic statues of Greece," and that she seemed "a goddess chiselled by Phidias in ivory and gold."

For various reasons, however, the tour was not a financial success. Prices of admission were too high at the start, and had to be reduced. Costs of production were excessive. And there simply were not enough theatregoers in New York who could enjoy

plays in French. Certainly not enough to fill the large Metropolitan.

RACHEL'S LAST PERFORMANCE

To cap misfortune with disaster, during Rachel's subsequent engagement in Philadelphia, her brother Raphael, manager of the company, neglected (allegedly in the interests of economy) to heat the Walnut Street Theatre properly, with the result that Rachel contracted pneumonia. In spite of her illness the company sailed to Charleston, where they gave one performance of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (on December 17th), and then returned to France. The Charleston performance was Rachel's last on any stage. Her illness persisted, and she died in Cannes on December 5th, 1858.

By contrast, the happiest note struck in New York during 1855–56 was the production at Wallack's of a burlesque by John Brougham entitled *Pocahontas, or, the Gentle Savage*. Brougham, who was a regular member of the Wallack company, teamed with Walcot, the other chief comedian, in the roles of Pow-Ha-Tan I and Captain John Smith, and for several weeks the two convulsed their audiences with a spoofing of the out-moded Indian plays.

Finally we must hail the opening of Laura Keene's Varieties, which was nothing more nor less than the Metropolitan Theatre remodeled and renamed. Miss Keene, who in November, 1853 had so unceremoniously departed from Wallack's, had during the two intervening years managed her own theatre in Baltimore, then embarked on an adventurous tour of California and Australia. Now, in December, 1855, she had her own house in New York. During the rest of the season she brought out a great many old favorites and a few novelties. In March she combined the two types when she offered a new version of *Camille* in which the whole pathetic story of the courtesan is only a dream. As a manager she was waging an uphill fight against strong competition, but it seemed at the end of the season that she was succeeding. Nevertheless, through a legal technicality, she lost control of the house in June, and Burton took it over. The plucky Miss Keene immediately laid plans for the building of a new theatre.

And one actually was built for her by John Trimble, a veteran

in that field. It was a splendid playhouse, decorated in white and gold, and with a capacity of 2500. Called simply Laura Keene's Theatre, it opened November 18th, 1856, with a performance of *As You Like It*, with Miss Keene, of course, as Rosalind, and a supporting cast of considerable distinction. Her first season in this theatre was not a too happy one, for she was playing against a succession of star engagements at both Burton's and Wallack's, and the managements of these houses fought her with every available weapon. Yet she weathered the season without calamity.

"ARDENT SPIRITS AND LAUGHING WATERS"

At Wallack's there were several hits during 1856–57, and of widely different character. One was an hilarious burlesque by Charles Walcot (a member of the acting company) entitled *Hiawatha, or, Ardent Spirits and Laughing Waters*. This piece, a follow-up of the immensely successful *Pocahontas*, included, besides the standard characters of Minnehaha, Gitchi-Manito, etc., such preposterous fictions as Poohpoohmammi, Nukkleundah, and Hianakite. The sensation of a serious sort was a new version of *Camille* presented by and with Matilda Heron, who promptly eclipsed all previous Camilles, and stamped her name and style on this play for future generations. The *Tribune* indulged in sheer rapture as it contemplated Miss Heron's performance. It found her outside and above ordinary rules of acting. "She filled the stage . . ." and "She exuded the electricity of genius."

The actor who appeared opposite Miss Heron as Armand was Edward Askew Sothern, who had been a member of Wallack's company for some time, but who had until the present season played under the name of Douglas Stuart. Sothern had started his career in his native England, had made his American debut in Boston in 1852, and later had filled engagements (without much success) at Barnum's Museum in New York. In 1856 he was no more than a stock actor. Two years later, however, he was to fall into a role which would elevate him to stardom. This was Lord Dundreary in *Our American Cousin*.

EDWIN BOOTH BECOMES A STAR

The same season at Burton's occurred the historic debut as a star of Edwin Booth. He had, it will be recalled, appeared at the National in 1850 in support of his father, but at that time he was

a lad of sixteen. He was now twenty-three, and was seasoned by several years of barnstorming in California and Australia. He opened at Burton's (formerly the Metropolitan) on May 4th, 1857, in the traditional opener for tragedians, *Richard III*. With him in the production was Lawrence Barrett, his life-long friend and colleague. The critics were kind, though not ecstatic. They thought he lacked the "electric touches which enrich the rendering of older actors," but they agreed that he rose to points of "great power and grandeur," and they stressed his "fine personal endowments." In appearance they found him "strangely like great leaders of tragedy—Kemble, Garrick, etc.," and he was described as being "slight, handsome, nervous and active." The young star followed his Richard with a whole portrait gallery of heroes: Richelieu, Shylock, King Lear, Romeo, Hamlet, Iago, Sir Giles Overreach, and Claude Melnotte. On the whole his engagement, which concluded on May 28th, was a huge success.

Although our emphasis in this narrative has been and must continue to be on events and personalities connected with the standard or legitimate drama, the reader should bear in mind that other forms of stage entertainment were flourishing also. These forms included the circus, the minstrel show, and variety. The circus had been with us a long time, and frequently had proved a thorn in the flesh of dramatic managers; minstrelsy had flourished for fewer years, but had enjoyed a terrific vogue. In 1856, although its novelty was tarnished, it still was represented in New York by at least five companies, each inhabiting its own playhouse. But variety was now the rising type of amusement. And, as Odell remarks, it "was to grow formidably with the years." Almost innumerable "concert halls" offered a program of variety acts—music, dancing, burlesque skits, and character monologues. Some of the halls charged a low admission price, but in many cases admittance was free, and the proprietors counted on the sale of food, drink and tobacco for profits. Typical of such nocturnal resorts was the Melodeon, at 257 Bowery, where for an admission price of six cents the customer was promised the "prettiest female attendants, best wines and segars and liquors" in addition to "miscellaneous" amusements. Thus much for high life in 1856–57.

A YEAR OF PANIC

The year 1857 was a year of financial panic, and this crisis was inevitably reflected at the box-office. On the evening of November 2d, for example, with fourteen theatres offering attractions (including opera, minstrel shows, and German-language productions), there were 15,847 paid admissions, but gross receipts of only $5810.! An average of approximately twenty-seven cents per person.

The Broadway was a heavy sufferer during 1857–58, not only because of the panic, but also because it was in its declining years. It opened in September with somewhat of a flourish, for its first attraction was an engagement of Charles Mathews, the English comedian, who had not been seen in New York for nearly twenty years. In 1838–39 he had appeared there in association with Mme. Vestris; now he was alone. He ran through a series of his famous roles, and, considering the times, was an outstanding success. The *Tribune* reported him as being "the very artistic incarnation of elegance and refinement." But he could not save the whole season, and by December the Broadway was housing a circus. Then followed some equestrian spectacles and novelties, a few more standard plays, poorly received, and the house closed on May 1st.

Burton's found the going hard, but stayed solvent with the help of a succession of brilliant stars, including Edwin Booth, James E. Murdoch, Charlotte Cushman, John Brougham, and Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Davenport. Miss Cushman was the greatest attraction of them all, and played the classics to capacity audiences. In considering this season one is bound to be struck by a reminder of how frequently in history Shakespeare has saved a theatre from ruin. And one also is amazed at the frequency with which the principal tragedies of that playwright were presented to the American public. Typical theatregoers of the mid-century must have seen *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, and such pieces several times each season. New York certainly was not populous enough to provide fresh audiences for these plays as often as they were repeated. Yet it was the largest of our cities.

"THE POOR OF NEW YORK"

There were two offerings during this difficult season which did remarkably well. The first, which came early in December,

was *The Poor of New York*, by Dion Boucicault, a melodrama founded on a play entitled *Fraud and Its Victims*, by Sterling Coyne, which had been shown earlier in the season at the Bowery. This piece capitalized on the financial panics of 1837 and 1857, and was one of the first of its type, presenting rich villains, and poor but honest victims, and scenically displaying such contrasts and spectacles as a rich home in Madison Square, a tenement house in Cross Street, with a fire, a bank in Nassau Street, and a snow storm in Union Square. It ran till the end of January.

The other hit was also the product of Boucicault's master hand, a hair-raising military drama entitled *Jessie Brown, or, the Relief of Lucknow*, and dealing with the Sepoy Rebellion, with a Scotch girl (Jessie, played with outstanding effectiveness by Agnes Robertson) keeping a small European garrison from surrendering to an overwhelming force of natives by maintaining that she heard the bagpipes of a Scotch regiment coming to their relief. For this production the theatre is said to have been given over to "tom-toms, Klutmutgars, sowars, spleuchans, pipes, tartans, and all the mingled paraphernalia of an East Indian spectacle." The villain of the piece was so reprehensible a character that no regular member of Wallack's company cared to assume the role, for fear of losing favor with the audience. Boucicault solved this problem by playing Nena Sahib himself, and he is said to have proved so impressive "with his carcanet of brilliants, his rustling tunic, his walnut physiognomy, and a pair of magnificent moustachios," that the gallery "held its breath in awe and threw nothing at him." The play opened on February 22, 1858, and ran without interruption until April 3d.

Laura Keene made a brave effort this season to establish her new theatre on a firm basis. She assembled a really excellent company, including Joseph Jefferson, who had returned from several years of wandering among provincial theatres; and she announced a policy of presenting not only imported successes, but also the finest available native plays. But for the most part her pronouncements were more impressive than her productions. Good native plays proved scarce, and her importations were not sensational. Finally she was driven to rely on melodramatic spectacles such as *The Sea of Ice* and *Blanche of Brandywine*. The latter piece achieved considerable popularity, and saved the final part of her season from ruin. Some idea of its nature may be gained from a

synopsis of the scenes, which included: a fire in an American farmyard, an old church and graveyard by moonlight, a grand tableau representing Trumbull's picture of the Battle of Bunker Hill, Washington's prayer in the grove, Black Riders of the Santee, a terrific storm on the Delaware, and the battleground of Trenton. Miss Keene, it appears, was chagrined at having to descend to such lurid material, but there seemed no other way for her theatre to survive.

"TEN NIGHTS IN A BAR ROOM"

At the very end of the season the National, which a few years earlier had introduced *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to New York presented a new play which was to become almost as famous—*Ten Nights in a Bar Room.* At this time the "lugubrious melodrama," as Odell calls it, had only a short run, but in a few years it became a standby of stock and touring companies throughout the country, and served as the heavy artillery of the forces of prohibition.

As a footnote to the season of 1857–58 let us mention that amateur dramatic societies were flourishing in New York. While new ones were springing up, older ones were quarreling over seniority. The Thespian Society, seeking new members, referred to itself as the oldest in the United States, although it dated back only to 1845. The Shakespeare Dramatic Association promptly informed the public, through the columns of the *Herald*, that its own history began in 1832. But whether old or new, these groups met regularly and from time to time gave performances of plays. Their activity was, says Odell, the "precursor of the tremendous and serious efforts of college students in the 1920's."

One finds little that is remarkable in the record for 1858–59. We should, however, note the passing of the Broadway. This house, which had been going from bad to worse, closed its doors finally on April 2d, 1859. Its swan song, curiously enough, was an elaborate production of *Antony and Cleopatra,* the text being a mixture of Shakespeare's play and Dryden's *All for Love.* Mme. Ponisi as Cleopatra was, according to the *Herald,* "not quite fascinating enough to make one throw away an empire." She was stout, and lacked a profile. Still, the play ran three weeks. Then the Broadway was torn down to make way for business buildings.

"OUR AMERICAN COUSIN"

By far the outstanding success of the season was the production at Laura Keene's of Tom Taylor's comedy, *Our American Cousin*. Wallack's had turned down the play, and it was with some misgivings that Miss Keene's company accepted it. It was Jefferson who, seeing possibilities for himself in the role of Asa Trenchard, urged its production. And it was this role which actually elevated him to stardom. He himself said later, "The success of the play proved the turning-point in the career of three persons—Laura Keene, Sothern, and myself." At the first reading Sothern was greatly dejected by his assignment—the role of Lord Dundreary—and during the first few performances, according to Jefferson, "began to introduce extravagant business . . . skipping about the stage, stammering and sneezing, and, in short, doing all he could to attract and distract the audience. To the surprise of everyone, himself included, these antics, intended by him to injure the character, were received by the audience with delight." Before the end of the run he had all but stolen the play from the leading characters.

Jefferson also recalls the effect on the actress-manager. "As the treasury began to fill, Miss Keene began to twinkle with little brilliants; gradually her splendour increased, until at the end of three months she was ablaze with diamonds. Whether these were new additions to her impoverished stock of jewelry, or the return of old friends that had been parted with in adversity . . . I cannot say, but possibly the latter."

Opening on October 18th, 1858, the play ran continuously until March 25th, 1859—the longest run in any first-class New York theatre up to that time.

AN AMOROUS ADVENTURESS

Our third and last item this season: the New York debut of Adah Isaacs Menken, from New Orleans, and soon to achieve international notoriety as an amorous adventuress, with a list of admirers which included the English poet Swinburne, the French novelist Dumas the elder, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain. Although in 1862 Miss Menken attracted a lot of attention in New York with her performances, particularly in *Mazeppa*, at

her debut in March, 1859, she was dismissed as lacking finish, and she appeared for only three nights.

It has been pointed out by Odell that at the end of the 1850s several changes were apparent in the New York theatre picture. One was that afterpieces (which had usually been short farces or extravaganzas) were gradually going out of fashion; another was that openings of the fall season were becoming later because of increasing summer travel to distant holiday resorts on this continent and in Europe, with the natural result of delayed returns to the city.

As for the season of 1859–60, it may be said to have belonged to Boucicault. On September 14th this indefatigable playwright-actor-manager, in association with W. Stuart, opened the Winter Garden, which they had created by remodeling and refurnishing Burton's Theatre. The opening play was Boucicault's *Dot*, a dramatization of Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth*. It was followed by other of his pieces, notably by *The Octoroon*, a strong treatment of the inflammatory subject of slavery. Zoe, the beautiful heroine, has only a trace of Negro blood, but because of this she is bought and sold like any black. When the play had run only a little more than a week, Boucicault and his wife (Agnes Robertson, who played Zoe) withdrew from the production because their demands for more salary were not met, although they were said to have received $1363. for the previous week. They then moved to Laura Keene's, where they settled down for the remainder of the season, and scored a tremendous success (fifty-four performances) with Boucicault's stage version of Scott's popular novel, *The Heart of Midlothian*, which he called *Jeanie Deans*.

THE WORKING BOY'S ELYSIUM

The other event of the season was the opening of the New Bowery Theatre (the old Bowery was still operating), a huge playhouse, seating over four thousand, with a fifty-foot proscenium and a stage nearly a hundred feet deep. Odell's comment on this event is to the effect that, "New York, having already a superfluity of theatres, built another." It was a theatre for the masses, where, in the words of the *Herald*, the working boy could find Elysium. There, for a shilling, he could get "four hours of knights, heroes, distressed maidens, funny servants, a terrible plot . . ."

There was little that was new or exciting theatrically in the season of 1860–61. There was, however, an impressive succession of stars at the Winter Garden: Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman, Joseph Jefferson, Mr. and Mrs. Florence, Chanfrau, and many others. It was the last season for Wallack at his Broome St. Theatre; he was now building a new house at Broadway and 13th St. The old Bowery was renovated and reopened with *The Lady of Lyons*, which was followed by a series of spectacular melodramas. Laura Keene made a ten-strike with an extravaganza entitled *The Seven Sisters*, which was based on a familiar German piece, *The Seven Daughters of Satan*. It was filled with "extravagantly splendid" stage effects, and was described as an "operatic, spectacular, diabolical, musical, terpsichorean, farcical burletta." Opening November 26th, 1860, it broke New York's continuous-run record by playing for two hundred and fifty-three nights.

But the biggest drama of the season was not played in any theatre; it was the first act of the Civil War. By April, 1861, all the New York theatres were reacting to the War in one way or another. Some were turning to patriotic plays, others were hastening their seasons to a close. Actors were joining the colors.

THE NEW WALLACK'S

Yet the War was not disastrous to the theatre; it merely kept the managers working harder for patronage. On September 25th, 1861, Wallack opened his handsome new playhouse in its then uptown location, and thus launched an enterprise which delighted theatregoers for twenty years. His was the finest company in the city—or in the entire country, for that matter—and now in the most modern and best-equipped playhouse, this company presented the finest stage entertainment of the period. The feature of its 1861–62 season was a series of revivals of old comedies which began on December 30th and lasted until June 9th. The first of these was *She Stoops to Conquer*, the second was Brougham's *Playing with Fire*, and the third was *The School for Scandal*. Succeeding pieces included *The Lady of Lyons*, *Speed the Plough*, *The Irish Heiress*, *Love and Money*, *The Rivals*, and many other favorites. Odell says this series is "the most impressive phenomenon I have discovered in my study of stage history in New York; nothing else so protractedly dignified, elegant and desirable has come under my notice."

In March, 1862, an undistinguished actress named Mary Provost, who had lately returned from five years of touring in California, Australia and elsewhere, took control of Wallack's old theatre in Broome St. and presented John Wilkes Booth in a repertoire of classics. The opener was, naturally, *Richard III*, and the critics found him very impressive. As was inevitable, a good deal of the critical comment consisted in comparisons between this Booth, his brother and his father. The *Herald*, for example, found that "as Edwin in face, form, voice and style resembles the elder Booth, so the *debutant* last evening is almost a fac simile of Edwin, and in the first three acts of the play these brothers could no more be distinguished than the two Dromios. But in the fourth and fifth acts J. Wilkes Booth is more like his father than his brother." He was liked better as Richard than as Hamlet or Macbeth.

MENKEN ON HORSEBACK

The sensation of the season, however, came toward its close, when "the beautiful, mysterious, daring, and not altogether shrinking" Adah Isaacs Menken filled an engagement—from June 9th to 28th, 1862—at the New Bowery. Her opening piece was entitled *Three Fast Women*, and during its performance the star played nine distinct roles. The hit of her engagement was, as histories have so often recorded, *Mazeppa*, the popular melodrama based on Byron's poem, "in which she made the ascents and descents of the perilous scaffoldings of the scenery, on the bare back of the steed, and, one might say delicately, almost on her own bare back." The delicacy is Odell's. The management advertised this thrilling activity as "a feat never before attempted by any woman." They were not referring to her lack of raiment, but to her willingness to be strapped to the horse's back. Ordinarily a dummy was used for this purpose. Incidentally, we may put it on record that Miss Menken wore tights.

During the 1862–63 season Wallack's continued to distinguish itself, particularly in the field of comedy, and its company was strengthened by the addition of John Gilbert, one of the most brilliant comedians of his era. Gilbert was a pillar of the organization from 1862 until its dissolution in 1888, and was most famous for his portrayal of Sir Peter Teazle in *The School for Scandal*. At Laura Keene's Theatre things went from bad to worse. The

valiant actress-manager had tried and failed to find permanent footing in New York, and in May, 1863, she gave up her theatre and left for Philadelphia. At Niblo's Garden appeared in January the first produced play by Augustin Daly, a man who later was to attain a commanding position in our theatre as playwright and manager. This play was *Leah, the Forsaken*, an adaptation of a current German success entitled *Deborah*, by Mosenthal. The role of the pathetic heroine, a Jewish maiden who loves a faithless Christian, was taken by Kate Bateman, who was such a hit that she revived the piece frequently for many years.

LAUNCHING OF "EAST LYNNE"

Of even greater historical importance (if not artistic) was the launching of the sentimental drama, *East Lynne*, at the Winter Garden in March, 1863, with Lucille Western, a second-rate actress, as the star. The play was, of course, a dramatization of the sensationally popular novel of the same title, and was made by Clifton W. Tayleure. A contemporary critic referred to the piece as "trash" and "sickly nonsense," and then went on to say of Miss Western "she plays with earnestness and abandon; but she exhibits profound and general ignorance of the art of acting, and also a cheerful indifference to the laws of English grammar." But the production was a hit, and Miss Western prospered, for (and this has been held against her) she had paid the author a flat sum of one hundred dollars for the rights to the play, and her own percentage of the receipts averaged above three hundred and fifty dollars per night.

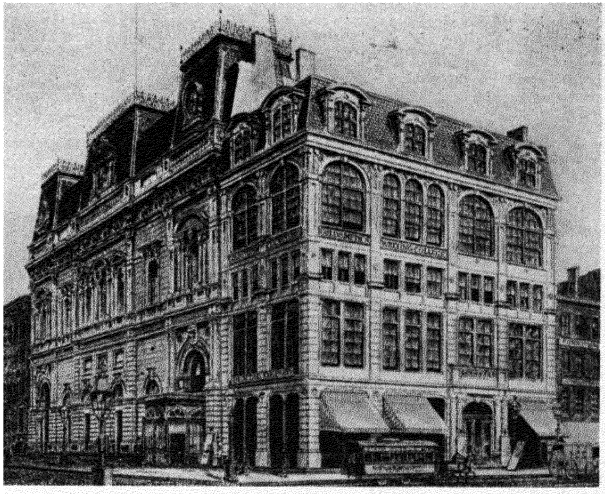
This was a strong season for foreign-language plays. The Germans held forth not only at their well-established Stadt-Theater, but also in a new house, the Deutsches Volks-Theater, at 45 Bowery. And there were other sporadic productions, particularly in summer, when beer-gardens combined conviviality with drama. The French, though not as impressive as the Germans, were nevertheless extremely active. The organization known as the Théâtre Français gave performances regularly on Tuesday and Saturday evenings during the winter and spring, using Niblo's Saloon for this purpose, and during the spring made two trips to Boston. Their repertoire included the best of contemporary French plays —by playwrights such as Scribe, Sardou, de Musset, Dumas fils, and Feuillet. Their success this season led the management to

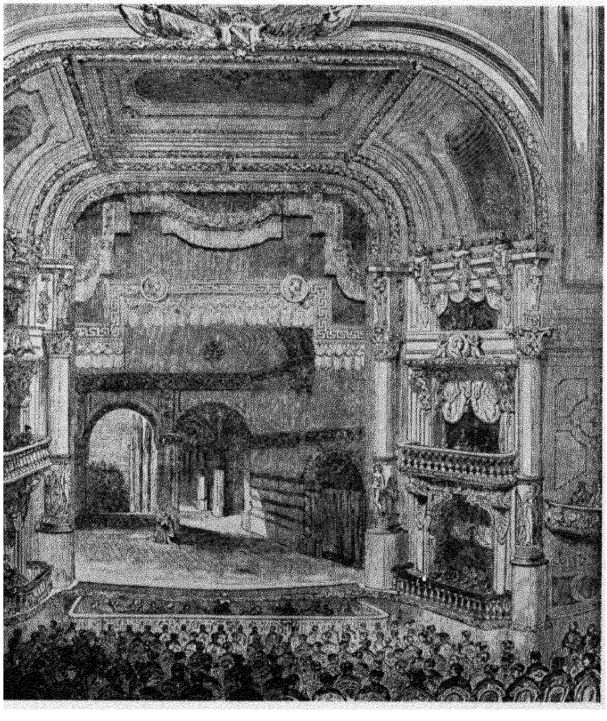
recruit for the following year a number of new players direct from France—not from Paris, one notes, but from the stages of Brussels, Lyons and Strasbourg.

ENTER HAWKSHAW

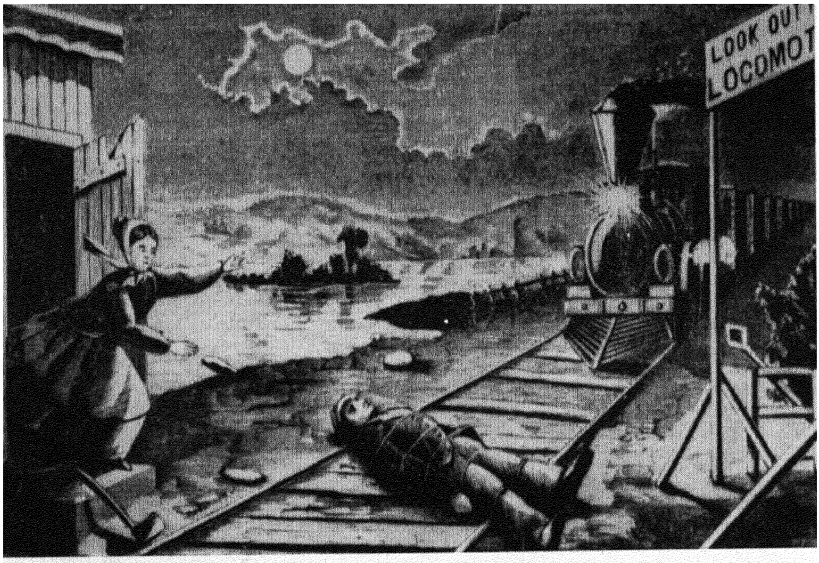
The season of 1863–64 may be reduced to four items. First, the premiere at Wallack's on September 30th of *Rosedale*, a sentimental melodrama based on an English novel entitled *Lady Lee's Widowhood*, which had 125 performances, and then passed into the permanent repertoire of this theatre. Second, Mrs. John Wood, a popular comedienne, took control of the Olympic Theatre and managed to survive the season as manager. Third, in the course of their engagement at the Winter Garden, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence, who had for long been associated with Irish farces, appeared in Tom Taylor's new play, *The Ticket of Leave Man*, and immediately found themselves involved in a hit. The piece ran all winter, and through it the Florences were elevated to a higher plane of comedy than the one to which they were accustomed. It was this play, incidentally, which introduced the character of Hawkshaw, the detective, to our national consciousness and idiom. Fourth, on June 1st at Niblo's Saloon occurred the New York debut of Lotta, the pride of California. This young woman, born Charlotte Crabtree, had begun her career as an entertainer at a very tender age in the mining camps of the Golden West, and, after several years of hard work under the tutelage of her mother, had managed to get a hearing in the theatres of San Francisco. Her popularity grew steadily, and she became the toast of the town. Her first appearances in New York brought a mixed reaction. A small group of admirers were vociferous in their praise, but the general public was not strongly impressed. The critic on the *Herald* admitted that Lotta played the banjo "with great spirit," and could dance a breakdown superbly, but felt that as a comic actress she had much to learn. He also commented that she possessed "beyond all we ever saw . . . any amount of *aplomb*—a graceful French word for the more vulgar English word, brass." Within a few years, however, Lotta was to win all hearts in the theatres of the East, as she had in those of the West.

Significant events of the 1864–65 season were somewhat more numerous. The first was the opening of a new Stadt-Theater, at



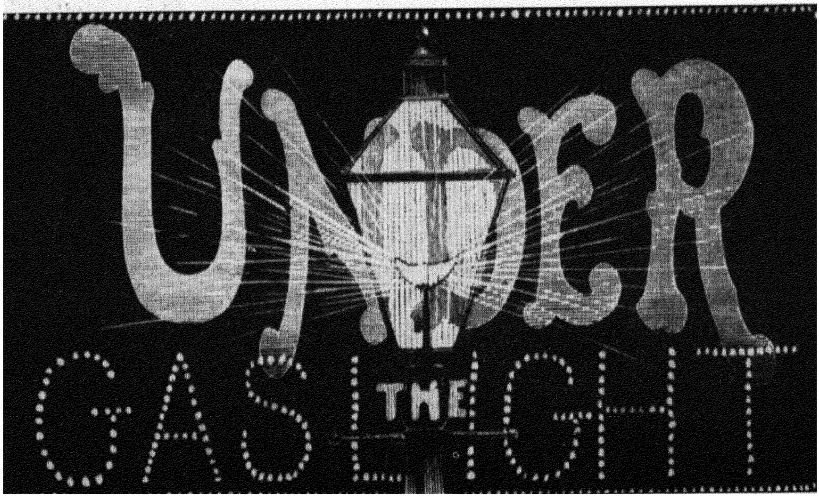


Booth's Theatre, New York. Opening night.



Daly's *Under the Gaslight*. The Rescue Scene.

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.)



Under the Gaslight, advertising streamer.

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.)

45–47 Bowery, a large and handsome house seating thirty-five hundred, and the first theatre built in New York especially for the performance of German drama. It opened on September 6, 1864, with a piece entitled *Heinrich von Schwerin, oder Deutschland und Dancmark*. The second offering was a German stage version of the English novel, *Jane Eyre*. Later came plays by Schiller, Shakespeare, and many lesser writers.

JOHN E. OWENS AND SOLON SHINGLE

At the beginning of this season also occurred the reopening of Wallack's old house in Broome St., now under the management of George Wood, and renamed the Broadway. The most interesting aspect of the event for us, however, is that among the actors engaged for the theatre was a comedian named John E. Owens. Although he had appeared on the New York stage as early as 1850, Owens had failed to make much of an impression. But in this autumn of 1864, as the Yankee character, Solon Shingle, in an undistinguished piece called *The People's Lawyer*, which was used as a kind of "second feature" on a two-play bill, he created a real sensation. The *Herald*, in commenting on his phenomenal success, described his Solon Shingle as "an old Yankee farmer, such as everyone who has been in that vague place, 'the country,' must remember. He dresses shabbily, but carries fifty-dollar bills in his pocket; he makes absurd and ridiculous remarks, but yet has a fund of shrewd sense; he seems very simple, and yet is not to be easily outwitted. . . ." The same article tells us that the character had become the talk of the town, and that half the young men greeted each other on the street with imitations of Solon's "Why, how do you do?", and injected into their conversation such familiar expressions of his as "jes so." The following year Owens took his Yankee roles to London, and for many years thereafter exhibited them to delighted audiences in this country.

THREE BOOTHS ON ONE STAGE

November witnessed two historic events at the Winter Garden. On the 25th occurred a benefit performance of *Julius Caesar* in which all three Booths appeared—the only time the three ever played together. Junius Brutus Booth was seen as Cassius, Edwin as Brutus, and John Wilkes as Marc Antony. The purpose of the benefit was to raise funds for the erection of a statue to Shake-

speare in Central Park, the year 1864 being the tercentenary of his birth. The second event, which began the following evening, was Edwin Booth's hundred-night run as Hamlet, the longest continuous run of the play on record at that time. If there had been critical reservations concerning Booth's adequacy in the role on previous occasions, there were none now. The performance was called by the *Herald* "one of the noblest pieces of dramatic art ever seen in any land or any age," while the *Times* declared it was "a part in which he has no living equal," and the *Albion* was so overcome as to say that "In the presence of genius so thrilling and art so potent and delicate, one feels the pen of criticism should rest." On the hundredth night (March 22, 1865) a committee of admirers hung a gold medal around the actor's neck. Sad sequel to this glorious climax was the tragedy that fell a few weeks later (on April 14th) when John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln in a box at Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C. Edwin by then was playing Hamlet in Boston. On learning of his brother's crime he went into immediate retirement, and was not seen on the stage again until January 4, 1866. By agreement among the managers, all New York theatres closed for a period of mourning from April 14th to 26th.

SAN FRANCISCO MINSTRELS

In contrast to tragedy, we find that on May 8th the San Francisco Minstrels opened their New York career in the hall at 585 Broadway. This troupe, which had achieved great popularity in the West Coast city under the aegis of the famous Tom Maguire, was headed by its four founders, the black-face stars, "Billy" Birch, "Dave" Wambold, W. H. ("Billy") Bernard, and Charley Backus. These men and their company soon became fixtures in the New York world of minstrelsy, and maintained their following for years. And, while we are dealing with lighter matters, we may mention the ever-increasing vogue for variety which was so apparent by 1865. The principal variety house at this time was called officially the American Theatre, but its common name was "444 Broadway." Prior to 1861 variety shows (which later came to be known as vaudeville) had tended to be so vulgar that their patrons were almost exclusively men. By 1865, however, they had been cleaned up to such an extent that they were considered suit-

able for "family trade." And most of the credit for the change must be given to Tony Pastor, who had begun his career as a circus clown, but who joined the company at "444" in 1861, and soon became one of its standbys. He, if anyone, deserves to be called the father of American vaudeville.

A curtain of fire closed this eventful season. On July 13 Barnum's Museum at Broadway and Ann St. burned to the ground, destroying along with the theatre and its equipment nearly the whole collection of curiosities and animals. As one might imagine, however, the energetic Barnum laid plans immediately for the construction of a bigger and better Museum.

The season of 1865–66 is a difficult one for historians to follow because of a quarrel which arose near the beginning of the season between certain theatre managers and the elder James Gordon Bennett, proprietor of the *Herald*. There are conflicting explanations of the quarrel's cause—one has Barnum instigating it in retaliation for Bennett's alleged attempt to double-cross him in the matter of a lease on the site of Barnum's recently destroyed Museum; another credits the impresario, Maretzek, who was smarting under unfavorable operatic criticisms in the *Herald*. But the net result was that beginning about the 1st of October, nearly all the managers withdrew their advertisements from the paper, and continued to withhold them during most of the season. As the *Herald* was at that time the principal theatrical advertising medium, and is therefore the historian's chief source of exact information, one can sympathize with Odell, whose labors in recording the season were, as he says "trebled, almost quadrupled."

The first important event in the record is the series of farewell performances given at the Broadway beginning on August 28th by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean. They continued until late in September, playing chiefly Shakespearian and other classic tragedies, and were splendidly eulogized by the critics. Odell himself refers to them as the "last representatives of the magnificent old school of English tragedy."

On September 6th (after an almost incredibly short period of construction) Barnum opened his new Museum at 539–541 Broadway, with an Oriental spectacle drama entitled *The Children of Cyprus*.

RETURN OF EDWIN BOOTH

In January Edwin Booth returned to the stage of the Winter Garden, appearing first in *Hamlet*, next in *Ruy Blas*, and then in a lavish production of *Richelieu*, which achieved forty-two performances. On his opening night (after his long bereaved retirement) he played to a capacity house of admirers who made clear their affection and admiration for him.

On February 15th the famous variety house, "444 Broadway" was completely destroyed by fire. Tony Pastor, however, was unaffected by the calamity, for several months earlier he had acquired his own hall and opened it under his name.

On February 22d at Wallack's was produced the first of Tom Robertson's "modern and natural" comedies, *Society*. Although the piece was a failure, it served to introduce to New York the work of this English playwright who was later to prove extremely popular at Wallack's, and was to exert a profound influence on the course of modern drama.

As a matter of fact, the outstanding event of the following season, that of 1866–67, was the production at Wallack's of Robertson's play *Ours*. The piece opened on December 11th and continued with enthusiastic support for forty nights. Lester Wallack appeared in the role of Hugh Chalcote, John Gilbert played Col. Shendryn, and Mary Gannon was the Mary Netley. The *Times* reported that "The new play at Wallack's has taken the town. . . . The admirable dialogue, the equal acting, the completeness of the *mise-en-scène* combine to make *Ours* the most acceptable production of the season." Thus was the so-called "cup and saucer" drama popularized in New York—the drama of cozy, charming interior settings, of quiet, natural dialogue and action. The play was added to the permanent repertoire at Wallack's, and was revived frequently for many years.

The outstanding month of this season, however, was September, 1866. On the 3d of that month Joseph Jefferson III made his first appearance in the title role of *Rip Van Winkle*, in a new stage version by Boucicault. Although the production, which was brought out at the Olympic Theatre, was not at the time a great hit, (it played only five weeks) it was later to become a national tradition, and was to establish Jefferson indisputably as the leading American comedian.

"THE BLACK CROOK"

September 12th was the opening date of the spectacular melodrama, *The Black Crook*, the sensation of the decade, and one of the most familiar legends of our theatre. The production came into being somewhat accidentally. In the previous spring, Jarrett and Palmer, a pair of producers, had imported from Europe "a number of artists and a great amount of trick scenery" for a production of the ballet, *La Biche au Bois*, which they intended presenting at the Academy of Music. But the Academy burned down (May 22d, 1866) and, being left without a proper stage, they sold the ingredients of their production to William Wheatley, manager of Niblo's Garden, who with considerable ingenuity worked them into a melodrama by Charles M. Barras. To make full use of his imported effects, Wheatley found it necessary to remodel his stage. The result, according to the *Times*, was that "Such a stage was never seen in this country before. Every board slides on grooves and can be taken up, pushed down or slid out at will. The entire stage may be taken away; traps can be introduced at any part at any time, and the great depth of the cellar below renders the sinking of entire scenes a matter of simple machinery."

The same newspaper informed the public that the production had cost the management the then appalling sum of $25,400 before it opened. This outlay covered the extensive stage alterations, including the labor of fifty men; purchase of the imported machinery, properties, and costumes; transportation of these items; and salary advances to the imported artists. One inevitably is reminded of the preliminary cost of such an elaborate production today, when a musical show's expenses frequently run above a quarter of a million dollars.

There were many thrills in *The Black Crook*, but the greatest of them was the *corps de ballet*, composed of a hundred pretty dancers clad in costumes that for their period were daring. After the premiere, which lasted from 7:45 p.m. till 1:15 a.m., the *Tribune* reported that "The scenery is magnificent; the ballet is beautiful; the drama is—rubbish. . . . The last scene in the play, however, will dazzle and impress to even a greater degree, by its lavish richness and barbaric splendor. All that gold, and silver, and gems, and light, and woman's beauty can contribute to fasci-

nate the eye and charm the senses is gathered up in this gorgeous spectacle." More than fifty years later Odell commented that the production remained "in popular consciousness as the first attempt to put on the stage the wild delirious joy of a sensualist's fancy."

The Black Crook broke all existing long-run records, playing 475 performances in sixteen months, with a gross income of more than $1,100,000.

THE GREAT RISTORI

September 20th brought the New York debut of the distinguished Italian Actress, Adelaide Ristori, at the new French Theatre on Fourteenth St. Over a period of several weeks this classic actress presented a repertoire (in the Italian language) which included *Medea*, *Macbeth*, *Mary Stuart*, *Phedra*, and—most popular of all—an Italian piece by Giacometti entitled *Elizabeth, Queen of England*. She was a triumphant success, and returned to New York (after touring other cities) for additional engagements during the winter and spring. From her 170 performances in this country she is said to have realized a net income of more than $200,000.

The major calamities of the season were two, and both were fires. The New Bowery burned down on December 18th, and the Winter Garden met the same fate on March 23d. These losses were, however, at least partially balanced by the opening at the end of February of the newly rebuilt Academy of Music.

A lively note on which to end our brief summary of the season is the success achieved by California's petite Lotta at Wallack's in July, August, and September, 1867. The critics were rather reluctant to praise her, but they were more than ready to admit her sudden rise in popularity. The *Tribune* referred to her as "a little lady who has the face of a beautiful doll and the ways of a kitten." It then went on to say that "Miss Lotta was eminently successful. Her drafts upon impulse seem to be honored at all times—but it is impulse at times, without reason and against the nature of the situation. Lotta, to be brief, is the same rough diamond she was four or five years ago . . . she is the same spirit of mischief . . . but there is not the slightest attempt to represent a phase of life. She conveniently forgets her brogue to sing a southern song, and her sex to imitate a very far gone state of tipsiness. But all this is amusing, and whatever is amusing is popular. The audience last

night shrieked with laughter at the tipsy scene, and redemanded the banjo solo three times."

Her real triumph came, however, when on August 14th she dropped her jigs and musical numbers to appear in the double role of Little Nell and the Marchioness in a play of that title based on Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*. This piece became her favorite, and she kept it in her repertoire the rest of her theatrical life.

"UNDER THE GASLIGHT"

Almost simultaneously with this late-summer hit at Wallack's, an historic production of the new season was launched by Augustin Daly at a playhouse then known as the Worrell Sisters' Theatre, but which in 1868 became the New York Theatre. The production was Daly's melodrama, *Under the Gaslight*, the first of many plays to use the situation of a hero or heroine being tied to the railway tracks just as an express train is due. Odell says, "Despite the fact that, on the first night, the machinery of the great railroad scene failed to work properly, the audience was held in tense excitement, and the play from the outset was a success." It ran for 110 performances. The mechanical effects involved are said to have been patented by Daly.

An event of considerably greater artistic importance occurred in October, at the Academy of Music, when the leading tragedienne of the German stage made her American debut, supported by a company she had brought with her across the Atlantic. This was Fanny Janauschek, who remained in America for years, and became a part of our theatre. Coming so soon after Ristori, she was at rather a disadvantage, for Ristori's success had been immense. Also, German language and literature were then not highly esteemed. Perhaps not by accident, Janauschek's first performance was in *Medea*, as Ristori's had been, although the versions of the play were quite different, Ristori's having been an Italian adaptation of Legouvé's French work, and Janauschek's the work of Grillparzer. The German star's chief merit appears to have lain in her naturalness, and in her avoidance of playing for "points." The critic of the *Times* recognized the admirable features of this technique, but felt compelled to admit that it sometimes resulted in monotony.

DICKENS THE READER

The most interesting item of mid-season concerns an event not in the strictest sense theatrical, yet in a larger sense decidedly so. This was the series of dramatic readings offered at Steinway Hall in December and January by the great English novelist, Charles Dickens. As most readers know, Dickens was an excellent amateur actor, and his interpretations of scenes from his own novels are said to have been superb. The *Tribune* reported that he entered into every character that he portrayed in his recitals, and completely extinguished his own personality. "Now he is Scrooge, presently he is Mr. Fezziwig, anon he is Bob Cratchit, and by and by he passes, with extraordinary versatility of mood, through the guises of Sergeant Buzfuzz, the Little Judge, Mrs. Clippins, Winkle the renowned sportsman, and Samuel Weller. . . . The chief feature in his method is simplicity. . . . The next feature is delicacy. In the mellow and musical voice, in the tranquil manner, in the easy suiting of the word to the action—in all that the man is and all that he does, this gentle refinement is conspicuous." He appeared for a total of seventeen recitals, and the series was not only the artistic sensation of the winter, but it was a financial success for the author-performer, who at this period of his life was obsessed by a fear that he might die poor and leave his family destitute.

LOTTA AS TOPSY

In January New York acquired a grandiose new theatre, named Pike's Opera House after its builder, Samuel N. Pike of Cincinnati. Although it seated less than two thousand, it had a huge stage, and cost nearly a million dollars. Intended to run in competition with the Academy of Music, it opened with the standard opera, *Il Trovatore*, and continued with operatic attractions until March, when steadily diminishing patronage forced a change. Lotta then inhabited the house for a week, offering several plays, one of which was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She, of course, was Topsy. Odds and ends of dramatic novelties followed her, and the pretentious new house ended its first season as a failure. It had not been needed, and furthermore it was handicapped by its unfashionable location at Eighth Ave. and 23d St. Odell calls it "about the finest white elephant that had ever come into the

theatrical ring of New York. . . ." In 1869 it was renamed the Grand Opera House.

On March 3d the new Barnum's Museum burned down—only two and a half years after the burning of its predecessor. Instead of rebuilding, the great showman joined forces with George Wood a few months later in the management of Wood's (formerly Banvard's) Museum. At the time of the fire the dramatic attraction at Barnum's was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with Mrs. Howard, the original and perennial Topsy, in her historic role.

OPENING OF BOOTH'S THEATRE

By far the most momentous event of the following season was the opening on February 3d, 1869, of Booth's Theatre. Located at Sixth Ave. and 23d St., this house was built by Edwin Booth in partnership with Richard A. Robertson, a Boston businessman, and was not only architecturally impressive, but was also the last word in mechanical perfection. Hydraulic rams made possible the use of elevators, on which entire settings were lifted into place on the stage from the space below, while the unusually high and commodious stage building permitted the flying of drop scenes "complete, taut and unwrinkled."

This theatre was designed as "a great national temple of art," and was dedicated to the highest drama. That it failed after a time to fulfill its promise is another story. At least it began bravely, with a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Edwin Booth appeared as Romeo and Mary McVicker as Juliet. Seats for the opening night were sold at auction, and prices ran as high as $125. The production was sumptuous and continued for ten weeks—despite the fact that Booth was not at his best in this role, and that Miss McVicker was by common consent inadequate in hers. Her choice for the role is easily explained by pointing out that a few months later she became Mrs. Edwin Booth.

An interesting financial summary of the New York theatre world for the year 1868 was published in the *Times* of January 27th, 1869, and is quoted by Odell. This tells us that during the year twenty-one theatres were in operation—of which four were situated in Brooklyn—and that the gross income of the lot amounted to a bit less than $3,000,000 for twelve months. Of this amount the government took two percent.

Most of the excitement of the next season, 1869–70, was pro-

vided by Augustin Daly, who now was manager of his own theatre, Daly's Fifth Avenue. Known up to this time as a producer of lurid melodrama (such as *Under the Gaslight*) Daly swiftly proved himself the most versatile and refreshingly venturesome personality in the managerial field. At the opening of his theatre on August 16th he stated as his policy, "the production of whatever is novel, entertaining and unobjectionable, and . . . the revival of whatever is rare and worthy in the legitimate drama." His acting company, also, struck a balance between old and new. On the one hand he engaged such sterling veterans as E. L. Davenport, Mrs. F. S. Chanfrau, George Holland, and Mrs. G. H. Gilbert; on the other he discovered talented but little-known young actors, and pushed them to success. As Odell says, "He discovered more geniuses than all the other managers of his time put together."

DALY'S YOUNG STARS

During the first few months of the season Daly rushed a great variety of plays into production—with comedies by Shakespeare and Tom Robertson predominating—but found the going rather difficult. Then, suddenly, he found himself with a hit, his own adaptation of a popular new French piece, *Frou-Frou,* by Meilhac and Halevy. And in the role of Gilberte one of his young and inexperienced actresses, Agnes Ethel, rose to immediate stardom. The play had a run of one hundred and three performances. Miss Ethel, however, was not the only flower of femininity to bloom under Daly's care. Another was the strikingly beautiful Fanny Davenport, daughter of E. L. Davenport, who had had more stage experience than Miss Ethel, but was by no means established. Early in the season Daly boldly cast her as Lady Gay Spanker in *London Assurance* (a move which a critic sarcastically labeled "New York Assurance") and surprised everyone with the rightness of his judgement. Miss Davenport, indeed, was declared to be the best actress yet seen in that famous role.

While we are on the subject of rising stars, let us turn for a moment to Wallack's, which was still the leading theatre in the city. In September, 1869, its opening production was *The School for Scandal,* and in the role of Charles Surface appeared Wallack's new leading man, Charles Wyndham. Wyndham, an Englishman, had tried his fortunes in New York several years earlier, but had

failed to create an impression. He had then served in our Civil War, had afterwards returned to England for more stage experience, and now was engaged by Wallack. Although even now he did not attract extraordinary attention, he was eventually to achieve great fame. On Wallack's stage also, in July, 1870, in the cast of an unimportant piece entitled *Fritz, Our German Cousin*, appeared a child actress named Minnie Maddern, who later, of course, as Mrs. Fiske, became the first lady of our theatre.

Why not let Minnie's bow as Little Fritz serve as a curtain cue to close not only the season, but this chapter as well?

Chapter VII

Outside New York: 1850–1870

In the previous chapter we emphasized the theatrical leadership that New York had assumed by the middle of the century. But we also called attention to the expansion of the theatre throughout the West during the fifth and sixth decades of the century. The discovery of gold in California was, of course, a vital factor in this expansion, and so, too, was the development of railroads. As a matter of fact, the theatrical influence of the railroads was not limited to Western expansion. It was felt in Eastern cities also, with results that were far-reaching. During the fourth and fifth decades of the century there was nothing revolutionary in the effect of railway transportation on the theatre—easy transit between distant cities merely provided a convenience which permitted stars to visit more frequently and with greater comfort the scattered stock companies which offered them engagements. But in 1860, when the country had acquired a network of railways totaling more than thirty thousand miles, these new facilities suggested to the fertile mind of Dion Boucicault an idea which he put into effect, and which profoundly affected the American theatre.

Boucicault, as we have previously discovered, was a versatile and ingenious fellow who concerned himself with every aspect of theatrical production. But first and foremost he was a playwright, and therefore his chief energies were directed toward the advancement of the play itself. In 1856, for example, he had succeeded in getting Congress to enact our first copyright law, which gave the author of a play, "along with the sole right to print and publish the same composition, the sole right also to act, perform, or represent the same."

Actually this law did not protect the dramatic author very efficiently, partly because it required only the filing of the title

instead of the complete text, with the consequence of a considerable amount of pirating; but it did improve the author's standing by raising his profession legally to a plane of respectability.

BOUCICAULT'S "COMBINATION" SYSTEM

The piratical use of his own plays outside New York was probably one of the motivations of Boucicault's experimental project in 1860, which was the so-called "combination" system—that is, the touring of a single play with its complete cast. Nowadays we are so accustomed to such touring productions that we are apt not to realize what a recent innovation they represent, and how drastic were the changes brought about by this innovation. In 1860 there were strong resident stock companies in every important American city. These companies were strengthened frequently by guest-stars, but they were competent with their own personnel to present a large number of plays. A regular actor in such a company played a variety of roles, and consequently developed his talents to their fullest extent. The guest star was, therefore, supported by a versatile and seasoned group of players, who on short notice could meet the demands of his repertoire, which sometimes was very extensive.

The "combination" system changed all that. It took advantage of the drawing power of the star, but it surrounded him with a company of low-salaried, and usually inferior actors, and it laid great emphasis on a single play. It even made possible dispensing altogether with a star and presenting a popular new play on the strength of its popularity. Generally, however, star and play have been combined for box-office appeal. Inevitably it resulted in type-casting of both star and supporting players, and the consequent narrowing and confining of their talents.

WEAKENING OF STOCK COMPANIES

The system was not actually applied to the American theatre until the late '60s, but Boucicault evolved it in 1860 and tried it out in England the same year. By 1870 it had greatly weakened most of the stock companies in this country. It is impossible, of course, to evaluate the several factors in Boucicault's motivation, but it is generally agreed that an important one was the desire to thwart the piracy of his immensely popular plays. By moving a New York production intact swiftly from city to city he could

forestall its presentation by stock companies. Because of the evils of this system (which is still with us, and which is constantly being condemned) Boucicault's memory has taken on some of the hue of villainy. Perhaps, however, we should not be too severe on him. As Dr. Quinn says, "the changes in methods of transportation which made Boucicault's scheme possible would probably have suggested the plan to some other manager if he had not adopted it." And, considering the ingenuity and commercial astuteness of Americans in general (one need not add, and of American theatre managers in particular) this philosophical view seems entirely justified.

It is impractical and unnecessary for us to consider separately all the cities which supported stock companies between 1850 and 1870. It seems proper, however, to sketch quickly the outstanding features of theatre life in a few of the most important centers, including the picturesque new ones of the West, but beginning with the long-established ones of the East.

PHILADELPHIA

In the spring of 1850 Philadelphia had three standard theatres and a circus. The theatres were the Chestnut Street, the Arch Street, and the Walnut Street. In August of that year a fourth theatre was added to the picture by P. T. Barnum, who began presenting plays at his Museum in Philadelphia, as he had already done successfully at his Museum in New York. In other words, Philadelphians were then privileged to see *The Drunkard* and other famous "moral melodramas." Although Barnum remained in the dramatic field for only a year and a half, he was a lively competitor while he lasted. On one occasion he scored a distinct triumph (a technical one, to be sure) over the regular theatres. This was on the evening of September 3d, 1850, when, because of a flood in the Schuylkill Valley, the city gas works went out of commission, and most of the city (including the theatres) was plunged into darkness. Barnum, however, had equipped his Museum with some patent lamps which burned camphene, and as a result it was "an oasis of brilliance." Besides the Museum, only the Arch Street attempted a performance that evening, and it had to struggle along with the feeble light of candles.

END OF THE CHESTNUT STREET THEATRE

Barnum quit the presentation of plays in December, 1851, but within a short time there were four theatres again in operation, for in May, 1852 Welch's National Circus and Theatre began offering plays in addition to circus acts. It continued to do so (though later under the simpler name of the National Theatre) until it burned down in the summer of 1854. Still, the city was destined to be served a while longer by four theatres (at least one too many, if we are to consider the frequent dark periods which overtook each of them) for in September, 1854 a new house opened its doors, the City Museum, which adopted melodrama as its specialty. It was the venerable Chestnut which dropped out of the race finally. After sixty-two years of service, during which time its stage had been trod by virtually every great actor before the American public, it was closed by the management with formal and appropriate exercises on May 1st, 1855. "Old Drury of Philadelphia" was the endearing name by which it was known, and one which it deserved. Shortly after its closing it was demolished, and its place taken by "clothing bazaars, billiard saloons, and, in the basement, negro concerts."

But if there was sadness in the hearts of Philadelphians during May over the loss of the Chestnut, there was pride and rejoicing the following October, when George Henry Boker's masterpiece, *Francesca da Rimini*, was produced at the Walnut with E. L. Davenport and Mrs. John Drew in the leading roles. This romantic drama in verse (considered the best of its type ever written by an American) had been first produced the previous month at the Broadway Theatre, New York (with Davenport and Mme. Ponisi) but to Philadelphians the production at the Walnut was the real premiere, for Boker was a Philadelphian. And he was much more than a playwright. According to Struthers Burt, "he labored under almost crushing handicaps. He was known as 'the handsomest man in America.' He belonged to a fashionable Philadelphia family. He was a diplomat, at one time minister to Turkey, at another, minister to Russia. And he was one of the founders of the Union League." Considering all this, it is surprising that *Francesca da Rimini* lasted for only three performances.

MR. AND MRS. JOHN DREW

There can be no question as to who was the outstanding personality of the Philadelphia stage during the 1850s and 1860s: it was Mrs. John Drew, who was already a well-established actress, and who now became the most successful actress-manager in America. Mr. and Mrs. John Drew joined the regular company at the Chestnut in 1852, moved the following season to the Arch Street, where Mr. Drew became co-manager with William Wheatley. Later the Drews moved to the Walnut, where they filled a long engagement. It was during these years that Mrs. Drew bore three children (Louisa, John and Georgiana), and thus founded the most distinguished theatre-family (Drew-Barrymore) in modern America.

In 1860 John Drew embarked on a tour which carried him to England, to California, and to Australia. During his absence Mrs. Drew was offered the managership of the Arch Street Theatre, a position which she accepted and retained for thirty years, although after 1880 she spent most of her time touring with Joseph Jefferson. John Drew died in May, 1862, shortly after his return from abroad. During the eight-year period of 1861–69 Mrs. Drew managed the Arch Street with a brilliance that has rarely been matched, and probably never by a woman. She had an eye for talent, and she knew how to develop it. Several of her younger players went on to stardom in New York, among these being Fanny Davenport, Louis James, and Stuart Robson. Her stock company was not only talented—it was extraordinarily well disciplined. And her theatre was more than a theatre—it was a school of good manners.

But, following the custom of the times, she did not depend entirely on her regular personnel; she frequently engaged guest stars. These included Wallack, E. L. Davenport, Joseph Jefferson, Edwin Booth, and Lotta. In her too-brief *Autobiographical Sketch* she makes interesting comments on these stars. "Mr. Davenport," she says, "surpassed even the elder Booth, and to those who remember that great actor nothing can be said beyond that." She refers to Lotta (somewhat surprisingly) as a "great little actress," and recalls that Lotta's long engagements with her "were never enough for the public's satisfaction or my own."

At the end of the decade Mrs. Drew found it necessary to alter her policy. "About this time," she says, "I concluded to follow the example of all the other theatres in the city, and ceased to have a stock company, and called the theatre a 'combination theatre'; but it never did so well as before. The public seemed to miss the old favorites and not to care for the new ones."

That, in brief, is the Philadelphia story for the period with which we are concerned.

BOSTON

During the fifth and sixth decades of the century there were five theatres operating in Boston. These were the Adelphi, the National, the Howard Athenaeum, the Boston Museum, and the Boston Theatre. And the Selwyn (later the Globe) was added in 1867. Of these the two outstanding houses were the Boston Museum and the Boston Theatre. Inasmuch as we have dealt with the former in the preceding chapter, we need only note here that from 1850 to 1870 this famous establishment maintained the excellence of its company and the standard of its productions, in which William Warren was so important a factor.

The Boston Theatre, on the other hand, requires special attention, for it experienced a rebirth. The old house of that name in Federal Street burned down in 1852, and shortly afterwards a group of influential citizens incorporated themselves, with a capitalization of $200,000., for the purpose of building a new theatre. In due course their plan was carried out, and a very handsome, modern playhouse arose on a new site in Washington Street. During its construction Thomas Barry, who had been appointed manager, was dispatched to Europe in the interest of the theatre, and while there he engaged some new actors (among them, Mr. and Mrs. John Wood), a costumer, and a considerable assortment of theatrical equipment. In a letter to a friend at home he wrote, "in Paris I was offered the wardrobe belonging to the Strasburg Theatre at a very low price, and purchased it. Many of the costumes are of silk velvet, scarcely worn, and made by the great costumer of Paris, Nounon. I likewise bought a fine lot of stage jewelry, foil stones, chain armor, etc. I found a theatrical library in London of bound and marked books which I will send to Boston." In a later letter he speaks of engaging in London a whole family—father, mother, and six children ranging in age

from five to nineteen—all of whom he expects to be useful in his company, though he admits that his chief interest lay in the two eldest daughters, aged seventeen and nineteen, both of whom were pretty and talented. This was the Biddles family. And the incident is worth mentioning because the seventeen-year-old girl (Clara) shortly after her arrival in Boston became Mrs. Barry. Later she became and remained for years the leading lady of the stock company at the Boston Theatre.

THE NEW BOSTON THEATRE

The new theatre, which opened grandly on September 11th, 1854, was one of the most attractive in the country. It seated 3000, it boasted unusually spacious lobbies, impressive staircases, comfortable smoking-room and rest-rooms, and a commodious and modernly-equipped stage. As a final touch of grandeur, its auditorium was ornamented (and illuminated) by a huge cut-glass chandelier, "which had cost thousands of dollars," and which "when lighted, had the appearance of a great glowing jewel." This "was the admiration and delight of generations of theatre-goers," until 1890, when, in the interests of safety, it was taken down.

The opening bill consisted of *The Rivals*, and Planché's musical farce, *Loan of a Lover*. The stock company, a very able one, headed by Mr. and Mrs. John Gilbert, then settled down to a series of popular standard plays. In the course of the first season four guest stars were also presented for successful engagements. These were Julia Dean, Edwin Forrest, E. L. Davenport, and James H. Hackett. A similar policy prevailed during this decade and the next. Rachel appeared in 1855, Edwin Booth in 1857 and frequently thereafter, Charles Mathews, Dion Boucicault and Agnes Robertson also in 1857, Adah Isaacs Menken in 1862, William Warren in 1864, Fanny Davenport and Laura Keene in 1865, John E. Owens and Adelaide Ristori in 1866, Lotta in 1868, and also in 1868 a sensational combination of Fanny Janauschek and Edwin Booth appearing together in *Macbeth*, the former playing in German, the latter in English.

This, of course, is by no means a complete list of the guest stars—it is merely a selective sampling. But it indicates the attractiveness of the Boston Theatre's offerings during the early years of its operation. And we may add that this attractiveness

was maintained throughout the rest of the century. Eugene Tompkins, who was its manager from 1871 to 1901, says with some assurance in his historical account of the playhouse, (published in 1908) that "No other theatre in the world has presented so many notabilities to the public, from tragedians and grand opera singers to negro minstrels and variety performers, from orators and clergymen to ballet dancers and athletes. Scarcely any world-famous artist in the last fifty years has missed making his or her appearance at the Boston Theatre, and myriads of words of praise have fallen from their lips for its beauty, its comfort, and its unparalleled acoustics." An even more impressive statement is made later by Mr. Tompkins, to the effect that, from 1864 to 1901 "every season was profitable, and most seasons extremely so." One wonders if that is not a unique record among American theatres.

PROVIDENCE AND CHARLESTON

One is tempted, before turning to the West, to linger for a time in other cities of the Eastern seaboard, where certainly in these two decades there was no lack of interesting stage activity. It would be pleasant, for example, to follow the fortunes of the Providence Museum, which had been opened in 1848, and whose regular company in 1850 included the first John Drew. After the destruction of this house by fire in 1853 we would then be able to chronicle the lively career of Forbes's Theatre, which opened in 1854, and not only supported an excellent stock company, but also was hospitable to most of the stars of the period. It was here that Edwin Forrest, in 1855, drew audiences of 1700, when the seating capacity was 200 less than that. And it was here, the same year, that, during an engagement of the Pyne and Harrison English opera troupe, "The college authorities relaxed their rigorous rules, and gave the students permission to visit the theatre so long as nothing but opera was played; and many of them who would have been promptly expelled had they been detected at the representations of *Hamlet*, *Ion*, or *Comus*, were present unprohibited at the performance of *The Beggar's Opera*," which, says Willard in his *History of the Providence Stage*, is "the most immoral, perhaps the only immoral play that was ever produced —one in which all the *dramatis personae* were thieves and prostitutes, and through the representation of which, were it given

without the music, no decent person would sit." The college referred to is obviously Brown University, which was founded by the Baptists.

One feels a pang of conscience, also, at the willful neglect of Charleston, so old and warm a friend of theatricals. But with the progress of the century this city had fallen far behind the great cities of the north in matters of population and general importance. A city with one playhouse could no longer be considered a theatre center. In the fifth decade Charleston had only 23,000 white inhabitants, and it had one theatre. Yet it did have a cultivated taste and an enthusiasm for the arts. It frequently was visited by theatrical stars, and in 1859, when Edwin Booth came there for an engagement of four nights, his reception was so tumultuous that he extended his stay to eighteen nights. By 1861, however, Charleston was cut off by the Civil War from contact with theatrical centers. And on December 11th of that year the proud old Charleston Theatre was destroyed by a fire which consumed a third of the city—a fire, incidentally, not caused by the war.

ST. LOUIS AND NEW ORLEANS

One regrets the necessity of casting only a cursory glance at the two pioneer theatre centers of the Mid-West and South—St. Louis and New Orleans; but the call of the Far West is more urgent. In St. Louis a new theatre was opened in January, 1851, by John Bates, who gave the house his own name, and operated it on the approved stock-and-star policy. In 1856 he sold it to Ben de Bar, an English-born equestrian actor who for many years had been associated with Caldwell and with Ludlow and Smith in St. Louis and New Orleans, and he rechristened it the St. Louis Theatre. In 1852 a second theatre was built and opened under the name of the St. Louis Varieties. This was operated with an excellent stock company for many years.

New Orleans, too, had its Varieties Theatre, opened in 1850, and managed by Thomas Placide (son of our old Charleston friend, Alexander Placide), who established so superior a stock company in the house that he was able to dispense altogether with visiting stars. The Varieties, however, was a short-lived venture, for it burned down in 1854, and was replaced the next year by the Gaieties, which during its first year was under the management of no less a figure than Dion Boucicault.

CHICAGO

Chicago was growing up, theatrically and otherwise. And the dominant personality in its theatre life was John H. McVicker, who had come west from New York at the age of fifteen (in 1837), had worked as a printer in St. Louis, and had there become stage-struck as a result of seeing performances by Smith and Ludlow's company. After beginning with this company as call-boy he became an actor, and after experience in St. Louis and New Orleans he joined, in 1848, the company of J. B. Rice at the latter's theatre on Randolph St. in Chicago. Here he proved himself a versatile comedian, who could sing and dance as well as act. When the theatre burned in 1850 he went on tour, first in this country, then in England, playing Yankee roles. But in 1857 he returned to Chicago, where he built the finest playhouse in the West.

McVicker's Theatre was not, however, without competition. Rice had rebuilt his house after its destruction in 1850, and was an energetic manager. Then there was North's National Amphitheatre, opened in 1855, and devoted to equestrian shows; there was the Metropolitan Hall Theatre, opened in 1854; and during the 1860s there were added Wood's Museum (which started as only a museum, but soon, following Barnum's pattern, added stage attractions), Crosby's Opera House, Smith and Nixon's Hall, the Academy of Music, the Staats Theatre, and Hooley's Theatre. But McVicker was the shrewdest of Chicago's managers, and by 1870 he was undisputed leader in his field. A succession of theatres bearing his name has carried his renown into the present century.

SALT LAKE CITY

The birth of the theatre in Salt Lake City is a unique event in our history, for it is the earliest instance of an American theatre being founded by a religious organization. The Mormon Church (more properly, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) was founded in western New York state in 1830 by Joseph Smith, but its congregation started moving westward the same year. From 1830 to 1839 the Mormons were established in Ohio, then they moved to Illinois, where they founded Nauvoo on the banks of the Mississippi. Driven from there by persecution in 1846, they

crossed the great plains, and finally, in 1848, came to permanent rest at Salt Lake City, Utah.

From the beginning of their community life the Mormons evinced a healthy interest in recreation and the arts, taking their cue in this from Founder Smith himself. Among their communal buildings in Nauvoo had been a hall used for concerts and plays, and shortly after their arrival at Salt Lake they fitted up a rude building for the same purpose. Known as the Old Bowery, this place was used as early as 1850 for the presentation of plays by Mormon amateurs who called themselves the Deseret Dramatic Association.

In 1859 a small playhouse known as Bowring's Theatre (named for the owner of the building) was created, and here a number of standard dramas were enacted—among them being *Othello*, *The Gamester*, and *Pizarro*. Stimulated by the success of these productions, the Mormon President, Brigham Young (who had succeeded to the leadership on the death of Smith in 1844), determined to construct a first-class theatre. Work was begun on the project in July, 1861, and it was formally opened as the Salt Lake Theatre in March, 1862. Of classic architectural style, the theatre seated 1500, and was the most imposing building erected up to that time by the Mormons.

TEN DAUGHTERS OF BRIGHAM YOUNG

During the first few seasons most of the actors were local amateurs, and performances averaged only two a week, but gradually professionals were added to the company, both as regular members and as guest stars, and the frequency of performances increased. The first professionals appeared here in the fall of 1863, a Mr. and Mrs. Solden Irwin, who had been playing in Denver, and from there had been lured to Salt Lake by the manager of the new theatre. The guests proved so popular that they stayed for the whole season, imparting their knowledge of acting to the rest of the company. On one occasion they were supported, in a fairy play entitled *The Mountain Sylph*, by a ballet consisting of ten daughters of Brigham Young. These ten girls, said to have been both pretty and popular, were known as the Big Ten—not, it seems, because "they were very large, but simply to contrast them with the next eight, for the President's family was numerous."

The star of 1865 was Julia Dean, who had been playing in San Francisco, and who arrived at Salt Lake in July with an entire supporting company, which included George B. Waldron as leading man. They made the trip from California by stage-coach, for Salt Lake was still unreached by the railroad. Opening in *Camille*, Miss Dean made a great hit, with the result that she and Waldron were engaged for the whole season. The remainder of the visiting troupe, incensed at being robbed of their stars, fitted up a make-shift theatre and for a time ran opposition to the Salt Lake Theatre. But Miss Dean's popularity was unaffected, and she ran through an extensive repertoire of classic and modern plays, staying until the end of June, 1866.

RAW BEEF AND REALISM

Guest stars of the 1868–69 season included Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Davenport, John McCullough, and, as co-stars, James A. Herne and Lucille Western. It was during the engagement of the latter pair that an amusing incident occurred in connection with the production of *Oliver Twist*. In the interest of realism Miss Western, who played Nancy Sikes, glued a thin slice of raw beef to one side of her face, and, when Bill Sikes (Herne) dragged her across the stage by her hair, she turned this gory feature toward the audience. It is reported by George B. Pyper in his history of the Salt Lake Theatre that the effect of the trick was to cause women to faint, and to impel Brigham Young to inveigh against tragedy. "If I had my way," he declared, "I would never have a tragedy played on these boards. There is enough of tragedy in every-day life, and we ought to have amusement when we come here." He seems, however, to have been confusing tragedy with pathetic melodrama.

On January 10th, 1870, the last spike was driven in the railroad which connected Salt Lake City with East and West, and a new era began for the theatre which was described in later years by Henry Miller as "a Cathedral in the Desert." During the next fifty years practically every notable actor of the American stage was to appear at the Salt Lake, and to many of them it was a favorite "stand," not only because of the enthusiasm of its audiences, but also because of the atmosphere and character of the house. Notable among its features was its acoustical perfection,

which permitted even a slight whisper to be heard clearly in the top (third) balcony.

One of the stars whose appearance in Salt Lake in later years was hailed with special delight was Maude Adams, for it was her birthplace. Her mother, Annie Adams Kiskadden, was a member of the stock company there as early as 1865, and she continued with it for many years. When Maude was less than a year old she was carried on stage by her mother—a debut similar to that of many another star.

SAN FRANCISCO

The reader will remember that in an earlier chapter we noted the birth of theatricals in California during the Gold Rush of 1849—plays presented by soldiers at their various posts (Sonoma, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Monterey), and by civilians at the Eagle Theatre in Sacramento. No theatre other than the Eagle had been built in California in 1849, although a number of buildings intended for other uses had been adapted to theatrical purpose. Quaintest of these, perhaps, was the long adobe house in Monterey which our soldiers fitted up with a stage, and with a front curtain made of wood, which was suspended by hinges, so that it could be swung up against the ceiling of the auditorium, then lowered like a garage-door to conceal the stage.

In San Francisco there was no theatre, but there were shows—given in crude halls and in saloons. There were minstrel shows, circus acts, and variety performers. There was, for example, Dr. Robinson (also known as Yankee Robinson), a native of Maine, a character actor, playwright, astute manager, and former associate of P. T. Barnum. Shortly after his arrival in San Francisco on January 1st, 1849, Dr. Robinson had begun to entertain the miners with shows of his own devising, given in makeshift quarters. But after the fire of May, 1850, which nearly destroyed the town, he built a little playhouse seating about two hundred, and called it Robinson and Evrard's Dramatic Museum. Here, with the help of amateurs, whom he trained, he presented farces and novelties born of his ingenious brain. Before long, as they arrived in town, he was able to hire professionals for his company. He prospered, and his prosperity inspired another imaginative character to launch a theatrical career.

MAGUIRE AND THE JENNY LIND

This character was Thomas Maguire, an ex-cab driver from New York, whose basic activity in San Francisco was the operation of gambling saloons. Maguire knew nothing of the theatre, but his ignorance in this respect was more than compensated for by his fundamental shrewdness, financial daring, and knowledge of human nature. Although inspired by the little Dramatic Museum, Maguire was in no way limited by its physical image. Above the Parker House, his gambling saloon on Portsmouth Square, he built (in 1850) a theatre which seated 2000, which boasted a large stage, a painted drop-curtain, and gilded proscenium boxes. For no reason except that her name was on everyone's lips—she never visited California—he called his house the Jenny Lind.

He knew nothing of plays or play production, but he found a man who did—a James Stark, lately arrived on the Coast, and to him he entrusted the management of his theatre. So, presently, the stage of the Jenny Lind held in quick succession productions of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Richelieu*, *The Rivals*, and many other classic comedies and tragedies. And the theatre was crowded. As Constance Rourke says in her *Troupers of the Gold Coast*, "Miners . . . swarmed from the gambling saloons and cheap fandango houses to see *Hamlet* and *Lear*. Apparently craving elegance, in a raw little town where there were still few women, where men were bitterly uncomfortable in makeshift lodgings, where horses were sometimes drowned in mud, this audience received suave comedies of manners with unbounded enthusiasm."

In May, 1851 San Francisco was swept by another fire, and the Jenny Lind was destroyed, as were the Dramatic Museum and the little Adelphi (where the first operatic performances heard in the town were being offered). With the speed which characterized construction in those days, explained partly, of course, by the flimsiness of the construction, Maguire rebuilt the Jenny Lind in a matter of weeks, only to have the new house burn down nine days after its opening. Exasperated, but not undaunted, he immediately built his third house—this time of brick and cut stone, and with a magnificence which was unmatched in the Far West. And, if we are to believe the records, even this substantial structure was completed and opened in October of the same year. Its first offering was *All That Glitters Is Not Gold*, a piece

which had had its premiere in New York six months earlier, and which was to prove a great favorite in California. Maguire at the same time acquired the services of Junius Brutus Booth, who served him both as actor and manager, and was successful in both capacities.

Actors were now pouring into San Francisco. And there was employment for most of them. The Adelphi was rebuilt, and an entirely new theatre, the American, was added to the scene. There were also various halls where minstrel shows, variety acts, and concerts could be given. It is amazing to discover how many classic plays were performed in this crude, if cosmopolitan, town. Shakespeare was everywhere. In a space of little more than three years (October, 1851 to December, 1854) fifteen of his plays were given for an aggregate of two hundred and eighteen performances. *Katherine and Petruchio* (*The Taming of the Shrew*) had the most showings, with *Hamlet* and *Richard III* the runners-up.

BOOTHS AND CHAPMANS

In 1852 J. B. Booth, the aging veteran, arrived to try his fortunes, bringing with him his son Edwin, a lad of nineteen, who had done a little acting in the East, but not enough to impress either his father or the public. It was said of Edwin, however, that he played the banjo very well.

Members of another famous theatrical family arrived about the same time. These were Caroline Chapman and her brother William—of the numerous and wandering Chapman family, who had originated the showboat, and had for years floated up and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Maguire engaged them for the Jenny Lind, and there the Chapmans and the Booths played together in the summer of 1852.

It was a closing chapter, and a sombre one, for the elder Booth. Although he held the miners enthralled with his tragic repertoire, he played at this time as though under a premonitory shadow. In the autumn he and Edwin moved to Sacramento, where he was coldly received, and shortly after this he set out alone for New Orleans. There has been much speculation as to why Edwin did not accompany him; they had been close companions. The romantic explanation is that the old man knew his days were over,

and preferred to leave his son free to make his own life in the new world of the West.

FORLORN LAD WITH A BANJO

Edwin, a forlorn, hungry lad, wandered from one mining camp to another during the winter, acting when he could, and at other times playing his banjo. In Nevada City word came to him that his father had died alone on a Mississippi river-boat. Sadly he found his way back to San Francisco, and presently joined the company at San Francisco Hall, a new, small theatre that Maguire had just built. This house was devoted to lively comedy, and the future Hamlet was thrust into an atmosphere and a line of work which undoubtedly gave him valuable experience, but which must surely have shocked his sensibilities. One of his first appearances there was as a "negro dandy in a blackface version of *Box and Cox*."

We are told by Constance Rourke that whereas most of the actors lived in a cluster of houses on Telegraph Hill, where they carried on a lively, bohemian existence, young Booth lived off by himself in a little house near the Mission Dolores, "out a winding way among sand hills and chaparral." Here, we may assume, were born those dreams which later were so magnificently realized.

LOLA VS. CAROLINE

During the summer of 1853 Lola Montez arrived with a fanfare in San Francisco, and proceeded to excite the populace with her flamboyant personality. There were mixed reactions to her dancing and her acting, yet the consensus was that she was unique. Her lack of art was generally forgiven because of the colorful appeal of her character. She might, indeed, have continued indefinitely to hold the attention of this color-worshipping audience had it not been for Caroline Chapman. Firmly entrenched by now in the hearts of San Franciscans, who called her "our Caroline," Miss Chapman, with very real skill as an actress, and with a deadly wit, began, at the height of Lola's popularity, to travesty her performances. Whatever Lola did at the American Theatre, Miss Chapman burlesqued at the little San Francisco Theatre. According to Miss Rourke, "When Lola gave *Maritana*, taking three

parts, Caroline produced a hardy little burlesque called *The Actress of All Work*, and took seven." When the former presented her silly romantic play, *Lola Montez in Bavaria*, the latter presented an extravaganza under the same title. Caroline even parodied Lola's famous spider dance, and with hilarious effect. Gradually the public began to laugh at Lola, and to applaud Caroline. Finally, reduced to a figure of fun, the Bavarian Countess gave up and moved to Sacramento—not, however, without a final dramatic gesture. Just before leaving San Francisco she married Patrick Hull, a local politician.

The next exciting theatrical event in town was the opening of a new theatre, the Metropolitan, on Christmas Eve, 1853. It was a sumptuous house, boasting more red velvet than its predecessors, was "more opulently decorated in gold, with a velvet drop curtain, tiers of boxes in a horseshoe, and the new extravagance of lighting by coal gas." It had as actress-manager the shrewd and cultivated Catherine Sinclair, who at the time was very much in the public consciousness because of her recent and bitterly-contested divorce from the prominent tragedian, Edwin Forrest. Miss Sinclair assembled an excellent company for the new theatre—including Edwin Booth—and soon began presenting bright stars from the New York stage. Among the latter were Matilda Heron and Laura Keene. Her regime at the Metropolitan is one of the earliest instances in our annals of the successful management of a theatre by a woman.

Meanwhile Lola Montez was flaunting her international charms before the eyes of grizzled miners in the mountain camps. In this she was not too successful, for the miners seemed to prefer sentiment to sensation. And it is said that at Marysville Lola's cold reception—despite the spider dance—was the natural result of her having followed too close on the heels of a modest young woman entertainer who had reduced the miners to tears with her singing of sad ballads.

LOLA AND LOTTA

Suddenly, and certainly unexpectedly, Lola bought a small house in Grass Valley, a mining-town of three or four thousand population, about fifty miles from Sacramento. Here she remained for nearly two years, occasionally giving a public performance, but living most of the time in retirement. A short time after she

arrived, a local paper reported that she was "seemingly enjoying herself, and can occasionally be seen riding out, puffing her cigar with as much gusto as a Broadway dandy."

Historically one of the most interesting aspects of this rustic interlude in the life of the adventuress is the acquaintance she made with a tiny, red-haired girl who eventually was to achieve a fame as great as Lola's—and much more respectable. The girl's name was Charlotte Crabtree, and the world came to know her as Lotta.

Lotta was not the first talented child to be pushed into a stage career by an ambitious mother, but she is a perfect example of the type. So devoted were Lotta and Mrs. Crabtree that the two were inseparable, not only during the actress's long career, but also for many years after her retirement, until the mother's death in 1905. Obviously it was because of this devotion that Lotta never married.

John Crabtree, a tall, easy-going, impractical fellow, had given up his little bookshop in New York in 1852 and joined the adventurous parade to the Golden West. His young wife and six-year-old Lotta had followed the next year, had spent some time in San Francisco trying to locate the casual Crabtree, and finally had joined him at Grass Valley. In San Francisco Mrs. Crabtree had observed the bustling theatrical activity, and had begun to look upon little Lotta as a potential star. It was an era of child entertainers—including prodigies. This doting and scheming mother could not but have been conscious of the vogue, and certainly was familiar with the great popularity of the Bateman Sisters, Kate and Ellen, who had proved a sensation first in New York, then in London, and were soon to invade California. Mrs. Crabtree may or may not have envisioned her child as an impersonator of Shylock, Lady Macbeth, and Hamlet, as was Ellen Bateman at the age of nine, but she did at least see her as a dancer, a singer, and some kind of actress.

THE CRABTREES AT RABBIT CREEK

And Lotta was quick to learn. In Grass Valley she attracted the attention of Lola Montez, and the result was that Lola taught her some of her own dances. When, in the spring of 1855, Lola grew restless and planned a tour of Australia, she wanted to take Lotta with her. Mrs. Crabtree, however, would not hear of it.

Meanwhile John Crabtree had moved farther into the mountains, to Rabbit Creek, and his family had followed. There Mrs. Crabtree ran a boarding-house in order to support herself and her two children (a boy named Ashworth was born in the summer of 1854). Mr. Crabtree was usually discussing grandiose and get-rich-quick schemes at one of the saloons.

In Rabbit Creek was an Italian saloon-keeper bearing the unlikely name of Mart Taylor. He was also a musician, a dancer, and a composer of ballads. Lotta became his protegée. Finally he presented her as an attraction at the little log theatre which he ran in connection with his saloon, and the bright-eyed, laughing midget (she had a trick of laughing while she danced) captivated the miners with her Irish jig (danced in a long-tailed green coat, knee breeches and tall green hat concocted by her mother) and also with her sentimental ballads, sung in a white dress with puffed sleeves.

LOTTA TAKES TO THE ROAD

Flushed with success (and with the nuggets and Mexican dollars thrown onto the stage at the feet of her daughter), Mrs. Crabtree laid plans for wider conquest. Mart Taylor was accomplice in this. So it came about that on a day in the spring of 1855 Mrs. Crabtree sallied forth in a wagon with Taylor, a violinist friend of Taylor's, Lotta, and the infant Ashworth. Before she left her cabin she set out some fresh loaves of bread, a pot of beans, and a note of farewell for her husband. It was to be a surprise for him.

It was a rough Odyssey they had embarked upon, this tour of the mining camps. It carried them over steep trails, often on the backs of mules, and offered them every hardship that wild, mountainous country can hold. And matters were made worse by the fact that shortly after the journey began, Mrs. Crabtree discovered she was to have another child. But she was indomitable. Before leaving Rabbit Creek she had learned, under the tutelage of Taylor, to play the triangle. Thus, in addition to her maternal duties, she contributed her share of entertainment. After a year of performing in saloons and the crudest halls imaginable, she and her children made their way to San Francisco.

There she tried desperately to place Lotta on the stage. But she had no luck. The rage now was for standard plays, and not for

child novelty acts. Maguire was adamant, and he was the czar. Mr. Crabtree appeared on the scene, not only forgiving his truant family, but quite definitely hoping for Lotta's success as a breadwinner. One day, enraged at Maguire's indifference to his offspring's talent, he took a shot at him with a revolver. Maguire, only slightly nicked by the bullet, is said to have ignored the incident and walked calmly away.

The Crabtrees were forced to return to the road. For several seasons they played through Northern California, now with a small dramatic company, again with variety acts. At intervals they would return to San Francisco and try for an opening. On a few occasions Lotta was able to perform, although these early appearances were in poor theatres, and under unfavorable circumstances. But the theatrical picture was changing, and in Lotta's favor, for by 1859 variety was becoming the vogue. Variety halls sprang into life all over the city (the Bella Union, the Willows, Gilbert's, the Apollo), and Lotta suddenly had more engagements than she could fill. By this time her repertoire was extensive, and so was her experience in handling audiences. Shortly she was the toast of San Francisco. Maguire, overlooking the pistol episode, not only engaged her for his theatres, but even made her a gift of a piano. After five years of ever-increasing popularity, Lotta and her mother set out for New York. Lotta was seventeen. She had plenty of time to conquer other worlds.

THE NEW CALIFORNIA THEATRE

A new era in San Francisco theatricals began in January, 1869, with the opening of the beautiful and spacious California Theatre, built by William C. Ralston, which not only provided a luxurious atmosphere for the presentation of standard plays, but which also set up a new and impressive standard of excellence in acting and staging. A first-class stock company was assembled—Lawrence Barrett and John McCullough were two of its members—and its brilliance was augmented by a steady stream of guest stars from New York. It was hardly a coincidence that this era should begin with the completion of the transcontinental railway.

And what a sentimental triumph there was in the return of Lotta during the first season of the California Theatre! After five years in New York, where she had acquired a repertoire of popular plays, she held the stage of the grand new playhouse for six

capacity weeks, with the seasoned (and in some cases stellar) players of the regular company in her support. Opening with *Little Nell and the Marchioness*, she went on to such pieces as *The Irish Diamond*, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, *Firefly*, and *The Little Detective*. She was an unorthodox, impish little actress, full of tricks learned in variety and minstrelsy. But she was at last an actress. And the audience loved her. At the close of her engagement she was presented with a golden wreath for her hair, set with diamonds. She had come a long way from the Irish jig in the log hut at Rabbit Creek.

San Francisco had come a long way, too, from the saloon shows of 1850 to the California Theatre productions of 1869. It was no longer a shack-town; it was a city.

OTHER TOWNS OF THE FAR WEST

San Francisco was the first Far Western community to become a professional theatre center; and in its vast region it remained the only production center for legitimate drama throughout the nineteenth century. But there were many other towns which became good "stands" for touring companies, and a few which supported resident companies. Following the discovery of gold in California, the mining fever drove prospectors into all the mountain ranges of the Far West, and many rich "strikes" were made. Towns sprang up overnight in Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and Colorado. And as soon as the population warranted it, actors arrived to relieve the miners of their earnings.

Most colorful of these towns was Virginia City, Nevada, where the Comstock Lode was discovered in 1859. At that time the population of the entire state was only one thousand. Shortly afterwards there were thirty thousand inhabitants in Virginia City alone. In 1863 it acquired its famous Opera House, built by Thomas Maguire, the San Francisco promoter, and within a few years it had five legitimate theatres and six variety houses operating simultaneously. It was in the Opera House (by then called Piper's Opera House after its owner) that David Belasco worked as an actor between 1872 and 1874. This picturesque playhouse still stands, though it has long been in disuse. There was good reason for the existence of numerous theatres in Virginia City; it was the richest silver mining center in the world. Between 1860 and 1880 the Comstock Lode produced $300,000,000 worth of

ore. It was natural, too, that the town should be enlivened by more than a hundred saloons, many of them lavishly decorated, and by innumerable gambling establishments. Mark Twain, who spent some time there as a reporter, called it "the liveliest town, for its age and population, that America had ever produced."

The story of Virginia City was duplicated (though usually on a less grandiose scale) in many a mining town, many a cow-town, many a lumber town. Intrepid actors from San Francisco trekked north to Portland and Seattle, east to Butte, Cheyenne, and Denver. New towns meant free money. Miners, cowboys, and lumberjacks were given everything from Shakespeare to minstrel shows. In a gaudy, reckless, gun-toting world, the theatre played a lusty role.

Chapter VIII

Managers and Old Stars: 1870–1900

THE development of the American theatre between 1870 and 1900 was extraordinary. Many factors were involved, chief among them being the extension of railways throughout the West, the tremendous growth in population, and the application of American big-business methods to all forms of public entertainment.

In 1870 the population of this country was 38,500,000; by 1900 it was 76,000,000. In other words, it had practically doubled in thirty years. And in New York City the rate was even faster; its 1,500,000 of 1870 became 3,500,000 in 1900. Philadelphia had passed the million mark by 1890, and, more surprisingly, so had Chicago. Cities of such size could support many theatres. And paralleling the growth of the metropolis was that of the town. By the end of the century there were over 500 communities with a population of more than 8000. And in those days even a village of 1000 boasted its "opera house," which often enough was only a crude hall, but which at least served the simple needs of the smaller touring productions.

The road show first made itself felt in the large cities about 1870. But very few companies were involved. By 1880 smaller cities were being included in the bookings, and the number of touring companies had increased to perhaps fifty. Then came the big boom. Every sort of show took to the road; every hamlet provided itself with a theatre. By 1900 there were over 500 touring attractions. Phenomenal as this seems at first glance, it is not too hard to understand when one visualizes several thousand towns without radio or movies.

A GREAT SHOW ERA

It was a great era for entertainment—perhaps the most interesting in our history. It was the era of great personalities in the

legitimate field—producing managers, actors, and playwrights; it was the era which turned the minstrel show into a national institution; which took variety and transformed it into chain-store vaudeville; which created the modern burlesque show, standardized it, and exploited it from coast to coast; which gave birth to the mammoth, mobile circus; which discovered the universal and perennial appeal of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and therefore promptly blanketed the continent with "Tom shows," with or without their own tents; which, in order to reach that segment of the population which resisted the frankly theatrical, invented the innocuous, culturally-pretentious institutions of the Lyceum and the Chautauqua; and which, finally, conceived a form of mechanical entertainment consisting of the exhibition of a series of photographic images presented in such rapid sequence that the effect of natural motion was achieved.

PRODUCING MANAGERS

LESTER WALLACK

Lester Wallack, born John Johnstone Wallack (1820–88), had, upon the death of his father, James W. Wallack, in 1864, assumed control of Wallack's Theatre, at the corner of Broadway and 13th St. Here, and after 1882 at his new theatre at 30th St., he followed for more than two decades his father's admirable policy of maintaining a strong stock company virtually independent of guest stars. This company laid particular emphasis upon and was especially brilliant in the performance of comedy, either of the artificial type, such as *The School for Scandal*, or the sentimental, romantic type, such as *Rosedale; or, The Rifle Ball*, and *The Shaughraun*. The latter piece, by Dion Boucicault, was produced by Wallack in 1874 with such success that, according to Hornblow, it "broke the record up to that time as a theatrical money-maker." Wallack himself was a tremendous favorite in comedy roles, and he played frequently until 1887, the year before his death.

Veteran performer of the company, apart from Wallack, was John Gilbert, who joined the troupe in 1871, and remained with it until its dissolution in 1888. Gilbert's chief fame rests on his delineation of old men characters. Another pillar of the company was Mme. Ponisi, an English actress, who came to Wallack's in

1872. A list of other distinguished players who at one time or another were regular members of the organization includes E. L. Davenport, Charles and Rose Coghlan, Maurice Barrymore, John Brougham, Dion Boucicault, Rose Eytinge, Steele MacKaye, Mrs. John Hoey, George Holland, and H. J. Montague.

Lester Wallack inspired unusual warmth of admiration in both theatre folk and the public. Shortly after his retirement a benefit in his behalf was arranged by Augustin Daly, A. M. Palmer, and others of the profession. This took the form of a performance of *Hamlet* at the Metropolitan Opera House on May 21st, 1888. Edwin Booth played Hamlet; Modjeska, Ophelia; Lawrence Barrett, the Ghost; Joseph Jefferson and W. J. Florence, the Gravediggers; Frank Mayo, Claudius; John Gilbert, Polonius; and Rose Coghlan, the Player Queen. Many other famous actors, unable to obtain important roles, walked on as supers. From this extraordinary performance, with a cast which for all-round excellence has seldom if ever been matched in our history, the sum of $21,000 was realized. But, according to Freedley, Wallack declined to accept the money, "though his wife was willing."

AUGUSTIN DALY

It is doubtful that any producing manager in American theatre history occupies a more distinguished niche than does Augustin Daly (1838–99), who for thirty years operated one or more theatres in New York, and for several years a theatre in London as well.

As has been noted previously, Daly was also a playwright, and many of his successful productions were of his own authorship. Like the earlier Dunlap, however, he chose usually to adapt the plays or novels of others rather than to create original pieces, and these adaptations—chiefly from German and French sources—numbered more than ninety. Of his entirely original plays, the most famous, of course, was *Under the Gaslight*, originally presented in 1867. Outstanding among his adaptations were *Pique*, *Frou-Frou* and *Article 47*. He was an ardent devotee of Shakespearian comedy, and his productions of such pieces as *Twelfth Night* and *The Taming of the Shrew* were not only brilliantly staged, but were also notable for their intelligent treatment of the original texts, involving a restoration of important passages deleted by common usage since the time of Garrick.

Daly's first few years as a producer were difficult ones, and the struggle to establish himself, beginning with his opening of the old Fifth Avenue Theatre in 1869, reached an unhappy climax on New Year's day, 1873, when this theatre burned down. Undaunted, Daly within a matter of hours obtained a lease on the New York Theatre, a run-down playhouse, remodeled it in three weeks, and opened it immediately as Daly's Broadway Theatre. A short time previous to this he had, in a flush of managerial enthusiasm, taken over the Grand Opera House ("the white elephant"); and here he presented a number of spectacular attractions—operettas, burlesques and melodramas, several of them directed by the erratic Charles Fechter. Meanwhile he laid plans for a new Fifth Avenue Theatre, to be built at Broadway and 28th St. These plans were pushed to completion, and the house was opened on December 3d, 1873. But the financial panic of that year was at its height, and the new theatre was launched into a sea of troubles. Yet Daly persisted, setting forth plays of every type, new and old, and maintaining a brilliant company which included many rising young stars. In 1874 he rid himself of the Grand Opera House and thereafter devoted himself exclusively to his new theatre. But in 1877 his long series of losing ventures caused him to relinquish the management of the Fifth Avenue, and with his company he took to the road. Returning to New York in 1879, he leased Wood's Museum, remodeled it, and opened it as Daly's Theatre. Here he settled down to twenty years of steady and deserved success.

"THE AUTOCRAT OF THE STAGE"

Daly has been called "The Autocrat of the Stage," and the title seems appropriate, for he was a strict disciplinarian. His own standards were extremely high, and he permitted no deviation from these standards on the part of those associated with him. Yet combined with his autocratic attitude was a strong devotion to democratic principles, and he was unalterably opposed to the star system. No producer of his time was more astute in the discernment of talent, and none was more skillful in its cultivation; yet he insisted that even the most talented of his actors subordinate himself to the production as a whole. A roster of Daly's acting company includes a large percentage of the most brilliant performers of the late nineteenth century, and many of these were

with him for a long period. Notable among Daly "regulars" were James Lewis, Louis James, W. J. Lemoyne, Mrs. Gilbert, Clara Morris, Fanny Davenport, Ada Rehan, and John Drew. It was Rehan and Drew who, during the 1880s, formed one of the most brilliant comedy teams our stage has ever known.

In 1884 Daly took his company abroad, and presented them not only in England, but also in Paris and Berlin. This was the first instance of a complete American company touring Europe with standard plays. The appearances on the Continent were not very successful, but the London engagement created such a favorable reaction that Daly was emboldened to return several times within the next few years, and, in 1893, to establish his own theatre there.

Critics, in retrospect, have offered various estimates of Daly's managerial talents. All of them agree, however, that he was remarkably enterprising and courageous, that he possessed artistic taste, and that he was eccentric. William Winter, who had followed Daly's career step by step, said that above all, "he made the Theatre important, and he kept it worthy of the sympathy and support of the most refined taste and the best intellect of his time." Another famous critic of the Daly era, J. Ranken Towse, protests, however, that "Daly's actual achievement has been vastly overrated." He grants the man's taste, courage, and ingenuity, as well as his competence in assembling a brilliant company, but he accuses him of "resorting to some of the most mischievous practices of the purely commercial and speculative managers," and he asserts that "some of the pieces he produced were unmitigated trash, flagrant melodramatic absurdities, with no other possible object than to catch the mob."

Mixed in with the trash, however, was a good deal of Shakespeare, and a good many modern plays of merit also. Among the latter must be mentioned the plays of Bronson Howard, America's first distinguished playwright of authentic native character. It was Daly who brought Howard's work to the stage, and that sponsorship alone would justify his importance historically.

A. M. PALMER

Theatrical management was not the ambition of Albert Marshall Palmer (1838–1905) but it was his destiny. A graduate of the New York University Law School, Palmer found himself

uninterested in the practice of law, and, after several years of dabbling in politics, he became librarian of the New York Mercantile Library. From this position he was thrust suddenly, in 1872, into the managership of the Union Square Theatre by its owner, the capitalist Sheridan Shook, who discerned in Palmer certain qualities which he thought might well prove effective in lifting his theatre out of an unsatisfactory financial condition. His judgement was verified. Without any training for or experience in the theatre, Palmer nevertheless exhibited unusual ability in his new profession, and during the eleven years of his management the Union Square became one of the leading playhouses in New York.

Palmer, being neither actor, director, nor playwright, was not equipped, as was Daly, for example, to develop talent in others. But he possessed a natural discrimination, and by employing this, he was able to assemble an excellent company and staff. He made life difficult for rival managers by weaning away many of their most gifted actors, and because of the shrewdness of his literary advisers his choice of plays was often extremely fortunate. According to Steele MacKaye, who was associated with him at intervals, three of Palmer's biggest hits, *The Two Orphans*, *Jim the Penman*, and *Alabama*, were "urged upon him against his own will and judgement."

Palmer's first production, in the autumn of 1872, was a hit. It was a new play by the French dramatist, Victorien Sardou, entitled *Agnes*, and the star was Agnes Ethel, the lovely young actress whom Daly had discovered and made suddenly popular. Miss Ethel deserted Daly for Palmer, but after a year she deserted Palmer (and the stage) for marriage. *Agnes*, which is said to have been written expressly for this actress, ran for a hundred nights, and established Palmer immediately as a manager to be respected.

"THE TWO ORPHANS" MAKES HISTORY

The play which is most frequently associated in memory with Palmer and the Union Square Theatre, however, is *The Two Orphans*. This pathetic melodrama, the work of two French playwrights, d'Ennery and Cormon, had achieved success in Paris, and was adapted for production at the Union Square in 1874. Opening on December 21st of that year, it proved a sensation, and ran continuously for 180 nights. It made Palmer rich, and it

made Kate Claxton (who played the blind Louise) a star. Following its New York success Miss Claxton bought the rights to the play, and toured with it for twenty years. She was playing in it at the Brooklyn Theatre on December 5th, 1876, when that theatre caught fire and burned down with a loss of nearly three hundred lives. This was the greatest theatre disaster America had experienced, and so frightened the public that box-offices throughout the entire nation suffered severely for a solid year.

The Two Orphans lent lustre to many others besides Kate Claxton. The career of every important member of its cast was brightened by its success. Among these players were Charles Thorne, Jr., McKee Rankin, F. F. Mackay, Marie Wilkins, Kitty Blanchard, Fanny Morant, Stuart Robson, Rose Eytinge, and Ida Vernon.

In succeeding years at the Union Square, Palmer scored numerous hits. A notable one was *Rose Michel*, which Steele MacKaye adapted from the French, and which at the end of 1875 came near to repeating the success of *The Two Orphans*. Running for 120 nights, it starred the famous James H. Stoddart as Pierre, the old miser, Rose Eytinge and Charles R. Thorne, Jr. as the lovers. Later hits included *The Danicheffs*, with James O'Neill and Marie Wilkins; *A Celebrated Case*, starring Charles Coghlan (a brilliant actor whom Palmer stole from Daly) and Agnes Booth; and Bronson Howard's *The Banker's Daughter*. Each of these productions achieved runs exceeding 100 performances.

In 1883 Palmer retired from management and spent some time traveling abroad. In the fall of 1884 he assumed control of the Madison Square Theatre, and remained at that house until 1891. During this period he enjoyed many managerial triumphs, including the immensely successful presentation of Sir Charles Young's melodrama, *Jim the Penman*, which Hornblow calls "the most noteworthy of all the Madison Square Theatre productions." Other commentators, however, are inclined to give greater prominence to two plays by rising American dramatists—both of whom owed their start toward fame to A. M. Palmer. The playwrights were Clyde Fitch and Augustus Thomas; the plays were *Beau Brummel* (1890) and *Alabama* (1891). The former, a bravura piece, was written for, and partly by, the brilliant actor, Richard Mansfield; the second was one of the first native plays to deal seriously with sectional (in this case Southern) life.

In 1891 Palmer gave up the Madison Square and moved into Wallack's old theatre, to which he gave his own name. But his luck was running out, and in the final period of his career we find few successes. Chief among the few is *Trilby*, a dramatization by Paul M. Potter of the famous Du Maurier novel, which Palmer presented in 1895 with Virginia Harned and Wilton Lackaye in the principal roles. Although this hit permitted the veteran manager to recoup some of the losses he had recently taken, he did not trust his luck much longer, but retired permanently in 1896.

STEELE MACKAYE

Steele MacKaye (1842–94) is a unique figure in our theatre history—an eccentric, versatile, individualistic character who at times achieved brilliant success, but who on the whole was a failure. As actor, manager, playwright, teacher, and inventor, he served the theatre in more capacities than any man of his time. And few received less in return for their services.

As a young man he studied art in Paris, and developed some skill in drawing and painting. Back in America, he served in the Civil War, then found an interest in acting. Returning to Paris, he met François Delsarte, who had formulated a system of so-called natural acting, and MacKaye was so excited by this "philosophy of facial and vocal expression" that he became an ardent disciple. In New York, during the season of 1872–73, he managed the St. James Theatre, and there, both as actor and director, he applied the Delsartian principles. The season, however, was a financial failure, and he returned to Paris, where (Delsarte having died) he continued his studies under Regnier, the celebrated director of the Comedie Française. At the close of this period of instruction he appeared as Hamlet at the Conservatoire, playing the part in French. He then went to England, where he played the same role at the Crystal Palace.

In 1874 MacKaye was again in America, where he lectured on Delsarte, wrote plays, did some acting, some stage-managing, and some inventing. In 1875 he adapted *Rose Michel* from the French for A. M. Palmer, and this piece proved one of the greatest hits at the Union Square Theatre. In 1879 he gained control of the Madison Square Theatre, and presently remodeled it according to his advanced ideas of technical equipment. He installed an

elevator stage, overhead lighting (installed personally by Thomas A. Edison), folding seats (to which he later added attached hat- and coat-racks), and a modern system of ventilation.

THE RECORD OF "HAZEL KIRKE"

After his remodeling of the house in 1880, MacKaye reopened it with a production of his own play, *Hazel Kirke*, a domestic drama which was startling because of its naturalness and simplicity. The production was a phenomenal success, and achieved a long-run record of 486 performances—a record which remained unbroken until 1921, when Frank Bacon's *Lightnin'* set a new mark. *Hazel Kirke* was also the first play to be performed simultaneously in various parts of the country—the idea of duplicate road companies having originated with MacKaye. The piece was played steadily for many years, and (with the possible exception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) has had more performances than any play ever written. Yet of the fortune which it reaped, the author received nothing. He lost all his rights in the play because of a disastrous contract he had made previously with the Mallorys, the financial backers of the Madison Square Theatre. He soon quit this theatre and took to barnstorming, but in 1885 he joined with the Frohmans to open the new Lyceum, to the equipment of which he applied his technical inventiveness. It was in connection with the Lyceum Theatre that MacKaye founded his school of acting—the first of its kind in America—which later became the American Academy of Dramatic Art, and was for many years presided over by Franklin Sargent, a pupil of MacKaye's.

The climax of MacKaye's career was a tragic one. For the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 he planned a mammoth theatre to seat 10,000 persons, and which he hoped would embody all his artistic and technical accomplishments and aspirations. In this structure, which he called a Spectatorium, he planned to present elaborate musico-spectacle-dramas on a huge stage whose proscenium measured 150 by 70 feet, and which was encircled by a sky dome measuring 400 by 120 feet. The latter feature anticipated the Germans and their *kuppel-horizont*. Scene changes were to be accomplished by sliding stages with electric motor power, and the curtain was to be of light. For the opening production he composed a pageant entitled *The World Finder*, in which Columbus was the central figure. Work on the Spectatorium was begun, but

in the midst of its construction a financial panic swept the country, and money could not be raised for its completion. Eventually the incomplete structure was razed.

The collapse of this dream was disastrous to MacKaye. His health broke under the strain and disappointment. The next year, in spite of his condition, he managed to build a small theatre which he called a Scenitorium, and which exhibited many of the features he had planned for the Spectatorium, but three weeks after its completion he died. As a restless dreamer and indefatigable worker, MacKaye exemplified the popular conception of genius.

THE FROHMANS

Daniel and Charles Frohman, sons of a German-Jewish immigrant, had independent careers as producing managers. Each left a lasting imprint on the American theatre. Each was an example of the modern type of theatrical magnate who combines outstanding business ability with a sense of theatrical appeal. Neither was trained for the theatre; they adopted it as an enterprise. Both achieved success and fame, though Charles, "the star-maker," outdistanced his brother.

Daniel Frohman (1851–1940) got his theatrical start with Steele MacKaye at the Madison Square Theatre, where he was employed as business manager. Later he was associated with MacKaye in the opening of the Lyceum Theatre, and shortly after MacKaye's departure from that house, he became (in May, 1886) its sole manager. Here he gradually built up a strong stock company, which he maintained for many years, and which at various times included such able performers as Frank Mayo, E. H. Sothern, Mrs. Thomas Whiffen, Effie Shannon, Henry Miller, William Faversham, Henrietta Crosman, May Robson, and James K. Hackett. In 1887 he employed as stage manager and general assistant, a brilliant young man from San Francisco, David Belasco, who later was to become an independent producer and chief rival of the Frohmans.

Daniel Frohman continued at the old Lyceum until the spring of 1902. The following year he opened the New Lyceum on 45th St., near Broadway. In 1915, upon the death of his brother Charles, he assumed a large share of the management of the latter's extensive theatrical enterprises.

Charles Frohman (1854–1915) began his theatrical career as

manager of one of the road companies of Steele MacKaye's *Hazel Kirke*. He then became a booking agent, and by one of those curious semi-accidental events which punctuate theatrical history, he suddenly found himself a successful producer. In 1889 a new play by Bronson Howard entitled *Shenandoah* was tried out in Boston. It looked like a failure, and its managers (one of whom was A. M. Palmer) were willing to drop it. Charles Frohman came to the conclusion it was a potential hit, and after persuading Al Hayman, a San Francisco theatrical promoter, to take a half interest in it, he hurried to Boston and acquired the rights to the production. The piece was opened in New York at the Star Theatre on September 9th, and proved an immediate success. After a run of many months it returned a net profit of $200,000 to its backers.

CHARLES FROHMAN ON HIS OWN

The younger Frohman was now established as a Broadway producer. In September, 1890, he leased Proctor's Twenty-third St. Theatre, and opened it with a new play (a lively farce) by William Gillette entitled *All the Comforts of Home*, which proved a hit, and which also brought to prominence a gifted young actress named Maude Adams. Miss Adams remained with Frohman for many years, and under his management she became one of the most luminous stars ever to adorn the American stage. During the year 1890 Frohman assembled a first-class stock company, and to this group he continually made additions of potential stars. At the same time he commissioned plays from such talented and theatre-wise playwrights as David Belasco, Henry C. DeMille, and Clyde Fitch. By 1893 he was able, because of his extraordinary success, to find the backing for a handsome new playhouse, The Empire Theatre, which was built for him at the corner of Broadway and Fortieth St. This house was opened with a production of *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, a melodrama of Indian rebellion and army life by David Belasco and Franklin Fyles, which had a remarkably successful run of over 200 performances.

During the remainder of the decade Frohman's successes were phenomenal. Although he designated his acting group as a stock company, it was so only in name. His policy actually was based upon the star system, and individuals were promoted in the most thorough manner imaginable. Among the actors whose careers

were established under the Frohman banner were Maude Adams, Robert Edeson, Ethel Barrymore, May Robson, Arthur Byron, Margaret Anglin, Henry Miller, John Drew, William Gillette, Julia Marlowe, Blanche Bates, and William Faversham. Each of these became a star.

Although Charles Frohman has been vilified as the chief practitioner of the pernicious star system, he was always ready to defend his policy. It was his contention that the American public preferred personalities to plays. "Over here," he said, "we regard the workman first and the work second. Our imaginations are fired not nearly so much by great deeds as by great doers. There are stars in every walk of American life. It has always been so with democracies." On another occasion he compared a play with a dinner, and a star with the *pièce de resistance*. "To be a success," he averred, "no matter how splendidly served, the menu should always have one unique and striking dish that, despite its elaborate gastronomic surroundings, must long be remembered."

PAYROLLS AND PULLMANS

Right or wrong, the star system paid off for Charles Frohman. At the height of his career (in the early years of the twentieth century) he operated five theatres in New York City, one in London, and he controlled the bookings in several hundred others scattered throughout the United States. His stupendous organization included 10,000 employees, and his payroll amounted to $35,000,000 a year. He traveled in a luxurious Pullman car built especially for him, and it is said that the railroads accorded his coach "the same precedence of schedule that they did to the President's Special."

Yet this theatrical tycoon, the first of his kind, was reported to be excessively modest, even shy. In the words of those reputable historians, Coad and Mims, "He shunned publicity and abhorred photographers." The theatre provided him with a fascinating game, and he played it with all his heart. What he did not do was to contribute to its artistic advancement.

The last of Charles Frohman's frequent trips to Europe was made in 1915 aboard the *Lusitania*. He went down with this ship, which was sunk by the Germans.

DAVID BELASCO

David Belasco (1854–1931) was born in San Francisco of English-Portuguese-Jewish stock. He came by his theatrical inclinations naturally, for his father had been a clown in London. Strangely enough young David received his education in a monastery, and it is assumed that this fact explains the semi-clerical attire (including the reversed collar) which he affected all his life.

Belasco was a playwright at the age of twelve, when his first play, *Jim Black; or, The Regulator's Revenge*, was acted on the road; and he became an actor at about the same time, although his first recorded performance occurred in Victoria, British Columbia, where he had been sent for schooling, and where, at the age of fourteen he acted the Duke of York in Charles Kean's production of *Richard III*. Shortly after this he was appearing on the stage of the California Theatre in San Francisco, and then with road shows playing the mining camps of California and Nevada. During the 1870s he came into contact with all the important theatrical figures of the West, and served in practically every capacity involved in theatrical production. For a time he acted as secretary and assistant to Dion Boucicault, from whom he learned many fundamentals of playwriting and stage management.

In 1882 Belasco made the acquaintance of Charles Frohman (he had been associated in a production at Baldwin's Academy with Gustave Frohman, third and least important of the Frohman brothers), and as a result of this acquaintance he was persuaded to move to New York. He was well equipped for theatrical employment in the metropolis, for by this time (at the age of twenty-eight) he had, according to Coad and Mims, "acted one hundred and seventy parts, ranging from super to lead; he had altered, adapted, rewritten or written more than one hundred plays, and had directed over three hundred."

HIS FIRST STAR

In New York his first job was with Daniel Frohman at the Madison Square Theatre. Then he was for a short time associated with Steele MacKaye and with Lester Wallack. But soon he settled down at the Lyceum, as stage manager and staff playwright for Daniel Frohman, and he remained at this post until

1890, collaborating meanwhile on several highly successful plays with Henry C. DeMille—*The Wife*, 1887; *Lord Chumley*, 1888; *The Charity Ball*, 1889; and *Men and Women*, 1890. He then severed his connection with the Lyceum Theatre and became an independent producer. Like Charles Frohman, Belasco believed in the star. And his first promotional efforts were expended on the colorful Mrs. Leslie Carter, a Chicago society woman who had received extensive publicity because of her recent divorce. It required several years for Belasco to succeed in establishing Mrs. Carter in public favor, but he worked with boundless patience in the development of her acting technique, and in 1895 his ambition was realized with the production of his own melodrama, *The Heart of Maryland*, which was tailor-made for the Chicago redhead. Four years later this first Belasco star was even more sensationally a hit in *Zaza*.

By 1900 Belasco had risen to a position in New York which fixed him as the chief rival of Charles Frohman. During the first three decades of the twentieth century (in the course of which he built his own beautifully equipped theatre) he developed a number of stars, and was responsible for many outstanding productions. He was an indefatigable and meticulous workman in the theatre, devoted not only to exactness in the art of acting and over-all stage direction, but also to the purely technical aspects of production. He personally supervised every detail, and made many contributions to the improvement of scene construction and stage lighting. He was almost fanatical in his pursuit of realistic effects, and consequently many of his productions depended upon superficial appeal. But even those who decried his meretricious tendencies were forced to admit the shrewdness of his showmanship and the solid workmanship exhibited in his productions. No Belasco setting ever was shoddy; no Belasco actor ever was careless. And when naturalism invaded the theatre, and many actors became inaudible to all but the first ten rows of the orchestra, Belasco actors could still be heard in the last row of the balcony—not because they shouted, but because "the master" demanded perfect diction. He believed, as so many modern directors evidently do not, that the first duty of the actor is to be understood.

OLD STARS

There were, naturally, a number of actors whose fame was established before 1870, but whose careers extended beyond that date. Most of these have been mentioned—some of them frequently—in previous chapters, but it seems proper at this point to summarize their careers. They will be considered in alphabetical order.

LAWRENCE BARRETT (1838–91) was born in New Jersey of poor Irish parents. He made his debut in Detroit (whither his parents had moved) in 1853; he then played stock in Pittsburgh for two years, and in 1856 obtained an engagement at Burton's Theatre, New York, where he acted with Edwin Booth and Charlotte Cushman. Two years later he joined the Boston Museum company. During the Civil War he served as captain of infantry. Then for a time he was with Booth at the Winter Garden, New York. Presently he ventured to California, where, from 1867 to 1870 he was associated with John McCullough in the management of the California Theatre in San Francisco. On his return to New York he staged a brilliant revival of Boker's *Francesca da Rimini.* He continued his career in the East, punctuating it with professional visits to London, until 1887, when he assumed the management of Edwin Booth's touring repertory company, at the same time performing as Booth's co-star. At the height of this successful project he died suddenly in 1891. He was universally eulogized as an actor of extraordinary nobility of character, of impressive intellectual stature, of beautiful voice and diction.

EDWIN BOOTH (1833–93) was born in Maryland, the son of the talented and erratic Junius Brutus Booth. He made his debut in a minor role in *Richard III* at the Boston Museum in 1849, and during the next two years played small parts with his father. He accompanied the latter to California in 1852, and remained there for several years, gaining experience of a varied sort in the theatres of San Francisco and the mining towns. This was followed by a tour of Australia. He made his first starring appearance in New York at Burton's Metropolitan Theatre in 1857 as Richard III, and later performed in London. His first great triumph, however, came in 1864, when he opened in Hamlet at the Winter Garden in New York, and continued for one hundred consecutive nights

—a record run at that time for a Shakespearian production. In April, 1865, following the assassination of President Lincoln by his brother, John Wilkes Booth, he retired from the stage, but returned to it by popular demand in January, 1866. In 1869 he opened a million-dollar theatre of his own (Booth's Theatre) in New York, which he dedicated to the highest ideals of dramatic art. Here he mounted a series of lavish productions, and after four years found himself bankrupt. Thereafter he contented himself with starring under the management of others. After the death of his co-star, Lawrence Barrett, in 1891, Booth retired, and in 1893 he died, leaving a considerable fortune, besides his New York home, which he bequeathed to The Players, a theatrical club. This club still occupies the premises at 16 Gramercy Park. Booth was an actor of great sensitivity, of unusual elocutionary skill, and of technical polish. He was at his best in Shakespeare, and best of all as Hamlet. In the latter role he was, according to Towse, "graceful, refined, melancholy, philosophical, drily humorous and satirical." The same critic found him an outstanding Iago—"rarely equalled, never excelled." He seems to have been less impressive in roles such as Macbeth, Othello, and Lear, where grand passion and fury are required more than subtle intellect.

Dion Boucicault (1822–90) was born in Dublin of a French father and an Irish mother. With the possible exception of Steele MacKaye, no one connected with our theatre in the nineteenth century exhibited as great a versatility as did Boucicault. And the latter was much the more practical of the two. As playwright, actor, director, and manager, Boucicault left a lasting imprint on the American theatre. He had his first success as a playwright in 1841, when his *London Assurance* was produced at Covent Garden. In 1853 he came to America, and except for short trips abroad, the rest of his life was spent in this country. During his career he wrote or adapted one hundred and twenty-four plays, many of them taken from French sources. Most notable among these were *The Poor of New York* (1857); *The Octoroon* (1859); *The Colleen Bawn* (1860); and *The Shaughraun* (1874). Boucicault was a veritable bundle of energy and enterprise, and the exciting expansion of our theatre during the 1860s and 1870s challenged his imagination. He seemed to be everywhere at once —New York, San Francisco, New Orleans. He was responsible for the first complete touring production (*The Colleen Bawn,*

in 1860)—which established a method widely employed by theatrical managers ever since. As an actor his most successful role was that of Conn, "the lovable, irresponsible wanderer" in his own play, *The Shaughraun*. His acting was, according to William Winter, "all intellect . . . but he knew the emotions by sight, and he mingled them as a chemist mingles chemicals; generally, with success." He is said to have made a fortune in the theatre, but to have spent it in extravagant living.

JOHN BROUGHAM (1814–80) was an Irishman who achieved some success as actor and manager in London before coming to this country in 1842, the year in which he made his debut at the Park Theatre, New York. In 1850 he opened his own theatre (Brougham's Lyceum) on Broadway, but this venture failed, and he became an actor in Wallack's company. In 1856 he served for a short time as manager of the Bowery, and in 1869 he tried to establish a second theatre under his own name, but failed in the attempt. As a comedian, however, he was an outstanding success, particularly in Irish roles, his masterpiece being Sir Lucius O'Trigger in *The Rivals*. His last performance was at Booth's Theatre in 1879. He was also a highly talented playwright in the field of melodrama and burlesque. His two parodies, *Pocahontas* and *Columbus*, achieved tremendous popularity when they were first brought out, and are still considered classics of their type.

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN (1816–76) was born in Boston, a descendant of early Puritans. She made her debut at the Tremont Theatre in 1835 as a singer, and shortly afterwards became prima donna at the New Orleans Theatre. But by misusing her voice she ruined her future in opera, and in 1836 made her debut as a tragic actress at the Bowery Theatre, New York in the role of Lady Macbeth. The following year she was engaged for leading roles with the stock company at the Park Theatre. Her first sensational success was as Nancy Sykes in *Oliver Twist* in 1839. In 1842–43 she was actress-manager at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and in 1844 she went to England, where she became a great favorite during her five-year stay. On her return to this country in 1849 she was hailed as a star of the first magnitude, and from that time until her retirement in 1875 she maintained a dominant position among American tragediennes. According to William Winter, she was "a tall woman, of large person and of commanding aspect," and no one could "escape

the spell of her imperial power." She was at times criticized for her "masculinity," (she once played Romeo), but she was unsurpassed in the roles of Lady Macbeth, and Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering*. She was a great idealist, and she considered it her duty to hold before the public the highest examples of intellectual, artistic, and moral conduct. Winter called her "a minister of the beautiful."

E. L. DAVENPORT (1816–77) made his debut at Providence in 1836 in support of Junius Brutus Booth. He then accepted an engagement with the company at the Tremont Theatre, Boston, where he remained two years. Then followed three years at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and his New York debut at the Park Theatre in 1846 as Romeo to Mrs. Mowatt's Juliet. In 1847 he accompanied this actress to London, and appeared with her in several productions. Mrs. Mowatt returned soon to America, but Davenport stayed abroad for seven years, and established himself as a great favorite on the English stage. Later, in this country, he starred for many years in classic plays, and at one time or another managed theatres in New York, Washington, Boston, and Philadelphia. In such roles as Hamlet and Richelieu he was considered second only to Booth, and according to Ireland he was "the most graceful and polished of native performers in genteel comedy." He was also the founder of a theatrical family, giving two daughters and two sons to the American stage. Of these four, Fanny achieved the greatest fame.

MRS. JOHN DREW (Louisa Lane) (1820–97) was born in England of theatrical parents, and made her debut at the age of twelve months. At the age of five she was playing regular parts in melodrama. Brought to America in 1827, she appeared at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and the next year made her New York debut at the Bowery. During the next few years she acted with a great many of the foremost actors of the period, and in 1850 married John Drew, an Irish comedian. In 1861 she became manager of the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and for eight years maintained at that house one of the most brilliant stock companies ever known in this country. After the decline of stock had set in, she took to the road with Joseph Jefferson, and toured with him (chiefly in *The Rivals*) until 1892, when she retired. The most brilliant actress-manager in our history, she was also one of our most versatile performers, and was universally loved

and admired. She had four children: Georgiana, John, Sidney (adopted), and Louisa. The first three attained success on the stage, and Georgiana, after her marriage to Maurice Barrymore, became the mother of the most noted family of the twentieth century American stage: Ethel, Lionel, and John Barrymore.

CHARLES FECHTER (1824–79) was born in England of French parents, and he always retained a French accent. As a young man he played in both Paris and London, and by 1870 had attained considerable fame. In that year he came to America, and first in Boston, then in New York, he essayed the role of actor-manager. As a manager he was a failure (partly, no doubt, because in the words of Dickens, he had "a perfect genius for quarreling"); but as an actor he was very successful, particularly in romantic melodrama. He had a flair for the striking and unusual, and was said to possess "magnetic glamour." His most famous innovation was his playing of Hamlet with flowing blond hair. He made few stage appearances after breaking his leg in a fall on the ice in 1876, and he retired in 1878 to a farm in Pennsylvania.

W. J. FLORENCE (1831–91) and his wife, MALVINA PRAY FLORENCE (1830–1906) formed one of the most popular comedy teams in our theatre history. Shortly after their marriage in 1853 they achieved fame in light plays (some of them written by Florence) which featured the characters of an Irish boy and a Yankee girl. In addition to plays, Florence composed many songs, which often were sung effectively by his wife. In 1856 they appeared with signal success in London, and later toured the British Isles. In 1863 the Florences suddenly (because of their enormous success in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*) abandoned their traditional Irish and Yankee farces and burlesques, and entered upon a new career of standard English and American comedy. Their greatest hit came in 1876 with the production of Benjamin E. Woolf's *The Mighty Dollar*, in which Florence impersonated the vulgar Yankee politician, the Hon. Bardwell Slote. The Florences continued their popularity through the 188os.

EDWIN FORREST (1806–72) barely qualifies for mention in this chapter. Inasmuch as the highlights of his career have been dealt with previously, we will at this point note only his pathetic farewell performances in New York during February, 1871. In three weeks of that month he played twenty times at the Fourteenth Street Theatre, devoting two weeks to *King Lear*, and one to

Richelieu. He was an old and broken actor, and, in the words of Odell, "unhappy and forgotten of a generation that knew him but slightly . . . once a popular idol, now a myth but half credited." The newspapers reported the engagement with "impressive emphasis," but its total effect was dismal. "The supporting company was poor, the theatre . . . unpopular, and the weather unusually severe." Forrest himself, "the tamed old lion," offered, according to his biographer, Lawrence Barrett, "that strange spectacle of a great light going out in flickers of the old brightness, giving forth only rare, intermittent flashes. . . ."

MRS. G. H. GILBERT (1822–1904) was born in England, was trained as a dancer, and in 1846 married G. H. Gilbert, also a dancer. They came to America in 1849, and Mrs. Gilbert made her debut in this country as a dancer in Chicago in 1851. Her career as an actress was launched at Cleveland in 1857, after which she spent seven years playing in western stock companies. She first appeared in New York in 1864, but created her first great impression in the production of *Caste* at the Broadway Theatre in 1867. At that time she attracted the attention of Augustin Daly, who shortly afterwards engaged her for his permanent stock company, and she played continuously for him from 1869 until the year of his death, 1899. Even as a young woman she showed extraordinary talent in the representation of dowagers, and in this line of parts she had no equal. She was noted not only for the perfection of her technique, but also for her admirable spirit of co-operation—her willingness to "play together." In her later years she was known as "the grand old woman of the stage."

JOHN GILBERT (1810–89) was born in Boston and made his debut at the Tremont Theatre in that city in 1828. Very soon after his debut he went to New Orleans, where he played for several years. In 1834 he returned to the East, and for twelve years filled engagements in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. In 1846 he made an appearance in London. After returning to New York, where he played at the Park Theatre, he moved to Philadelphia, and remained at the Arch Street Theatre from 1858 to 1862. He then joined Wallack's stock company in New York, and remained with that troupe until it disbanded in 1888. In the sixty years of his life on the stage he established an enviable reputation as a first-rate comedian, and he was considered unrivalled in the field of old men parts. William Winter asserted that

"In such characters as Sir Sampson Legend and Sir Anthony Absolute no man of his time approached him, and it is doubtful whether in that line of individuality he was ever equalled."

MATILDA HERON (1831–77) was born in Ireland, but came to America at an early age, and made her debut at the Walnut Street Theatre in 1851. In 1852 she played Juliet to Charlotte Cushman's Romeo, and in this role she attracted the attention of T. S. Hamblin, who engaged her for the Bowery Theatre, New York, where she made her debut in *Macbeth* in August of the same year. In 1854 she played in California, and became a great favorite there. She then traveled abroad, appeared at Drury Lane Theatre in London, and visited Paris, where she was strongly impressed by a performance of *La Dame aux Camélias*, by Alexandre Dumas, *fils*. She immediately set to work on her own adaptation of this piece, and was able to present it (as *Camille*) at Wallack's Theatre in January, 1857. Although the play had been exploited previously in New York (by Laura Keene and others), Miss Heron's production proved the sensation of the season. It also proved by far the greatest success (some have said, the only real success) of her entire career. According to William Winter the role of Camille suited perfectly her "repulsive naturalness, her wildness of emotion, force of brain, and vitality of embodiment." She revived the play more than once at Wallack's, where she played leading roles for a number of years. One of her last performances was at Booth's Theatre in the summer of 1876, when she appeared in *Medea* at a benefit for her daughter, Bijou Heron, (1863–1937) who by then was a well-established actress in her own right. One of the leading producing managers on Broadway today is Gilbert Heron Miller, son of Bijou Heron and Henry Miller.

FANNY JANAUSCHEK (1830–1904) was born in Prague, of pure Czech blood. At sixteen she made her debut in her native city, and at eighteen was engaged as leading woman at the Stadt Theatre, Frankfort, where she remained for ten years. Later she toured the principal cities of Germany, Austria, and Russia—and met with triumphant success. The King of Bavaria showered her with jewels. She made her New York debut in *Medea* at the Academy of Music in 1867, and was at once acclaimed for her tragic power. At this time she could not speak English, and shortly after her arrival she played in *Macbeth* opposite Edwin Booth, he

speaking English and she German. But after she decided to remain in this country she worked hard at our language, and by 1873 was able to employ it on the stage. For many years she toured the United States in classic plays, and was admired and honored as one of the last actresses of the "grand style." In the later years of her career, with new stars and new styles rising, she was forced to turn to melodrama, and her last appearances (1895–96) were in *The Great Diamond Robbery*.

JOSEPH JEFFERSON III (1829–1905) was raised on the American stage. As a child he trouped with his father and mother in the East, the West and the South. After the death of his father in 1842 he and his mother continued their barnstorming in Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and other frontier states. Later Jefferson played a long engagement in Philadelphia. In 1857 he was engaged as leading comedian by Laura Keene for her New York Theatre, and in the following year he rose to sudden fame with the sensationally successful *Our American Cousin*, in which he divided comedy honors with E. A. Sothern. In 1861 he played in California, and later toured Australia. In 1865 he went to London, taking with him the adaptation of Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* which he had prepared for his own use in 1859, and which he had presented with some success in this country. In London he commissioned Dion Boucicault to rework the piece, and when this was done, the play was presented by Jefferson at the Adelphi Theatre (September, 1865), where it proved an instantaneous hit and enjoyed a run of one hundred and seventy performances. After his return to America he began a series of tours in the role of Rip which continued for the rest of his life. He played it for the last time in 1904, the year before his death. Yet during these many years he did not confine himself to *Rip Van Winkle;* he toured frequently and extensively in Sheridan's *The Rivals,* and his Bob Acres in that play is an immortal characterization. But there was hardly a theatregoer of the late nineteenth century who did not think of Jefferson (and with the warmest affection) as Rip. Winter described him as "a poet among actors," and explained that "the magical charm of his acting was the deep human sympathy and the loveliness and individuality by which it was irradiated."

JOHN MCCULLOUGH (1832–85) was born in Ireland and in poverty. It is said that when he emigrated to America at the age

of fifteen he could not even write. He made his debut on the stage of the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, in 1857, and by 1861 had developed sufficiently as an actor to be engaged by Edwin Forrest to play his second roles. For several years he toured with Forrest in Shakespearian repertoire, and in 1866 accompanied him to California. In San Francisco he accepted the managership of the California Theatre, a post which he filled for eight seasons—part of the time with Lawrence Barrett as co-manager. He then returned to New York, where he starred at Booth's Theatre as Spartacus in Bird's *The Gladiator*. During the next ten years he made numerous tours of the country, and even ventured a summer season (1881) at Drury Lane Theatre, London, where he was not received with much enthusiasm. In 1884 his health broke, and he lost his mind. He died insane the following year. Lacking the range and subtlety of Edwin Booth, McCullough as an actor approximated Edwin Forrest, after whom, indeed, he patterned himself. "In stormy bursts of passion," said Towse, "he exhibited vast power." And other writers have spoken of his "noble presence, classic features, and ringing voice." His most notable roles were Virginius, Othello, Brutus, and Coriolanus.

JOHN E. OWENS (1823–86) was born in Liverpool, England, of Welsh parentage, and was brought to America at the age of three. He began his acting career with William Burton in Philadelphia in 1840, and in 1850 made his New York debut at Brougham's Lyceum. Although during the 1850s he became established as a popular comedian, it was not until 1864 that he achieved outstanding fame. That came with his characterizations of Solon Shingle, the Yankee farmer in *The People's Lawyer*, and Caleb Plummer in *The Cricket on the Hearth*. The next year he appeared in his famous Yankee roles in London, and then returned to exploit them in America for many years. He also at various times managed theatres in Baltimore, New Orleans, and Charleston. His last stage appearance occurred in 1882 at the Harlem Theatre, in his by then classic role of Solon Shingle. According to William Winter, "Owens was born to be a comic actor. He was intrinsically funny. . . . His humorous vitality was prodigious."

EDWARD ASKEW SOTHERN (1826–81) was born in Liverpool, England, and was educated for the medical profession, but chose

the stage instead. After several years spent in touring the English provinces under the name of Douglas Stuart, he came to America in 1852 and appeared at the National Theatre, Boston, and later at Barnum's American Museum in New York. He was then engaged for Wallack's, at which house he supported various actresses, including Matilda Heron in *Camille*. In 1858 he was elevated to sudden fame by his characterization of Lord Dundreary in *Our American Cousin*, produced by Laura Keene. More or less by accident, Sothern created a role which not only delighted the public but which provided him with a dependable vehicle for the rest of his life. Although during the next two decades he played at Wallack's and elsewhere a considerable number of parts, he continued at frequent intervals to reappear as Lord Dundreary, and always (in England as well as in this country) was received with tumultuous enthusiasm. His impersonation of the vague, drawling, "Haw-haw" type of English aristocrat became so firmly established that it has been imitated ever since. Sothern was last seen in the role in 1880, the year before his death.

William Warren (1812–88) was born in Philadelphia, and made his debut at the Arch Street Theatre in that city in 1832. He played for a short time in 1843 at the Park Theatre, New York, and later acted in London. In 1847 he joined the company at the Boston Museum, and remained with it for the rest of his career, which continued until 1882. No actor of his period identified himself more thoroughly with a single theatre, and none received a greater measure of respect and affection from the public. In Boston he was as well known off the stage as on, and his genial but dignified personality became a tradition. He was a versatile comedian, but his special talent was in connection with eccentric characters. During his fifty years on the stage he is reported to have given more than 13,000 performances, and to have portrayed 577 characters. His most famous roles included those of Dogberry, Polonius, Bob Acres, Sir Peter Teazle, and Micawber.

FOREIGN STARS

In addition to the foregoing older stars, all of whom either were native Americans or Americans by adoption, our late nineteenth-century stage was illuminated at frequent intervals by the visits

of famous European actors. Of these we will mention outstanding examples, arranging them chronologically according to their first American tours.

ADELAIDE RISTORI (1821–1906), the daughter of Italian strolling players, first rose to fame in her native country. In 1855 she appeared in Paris, and at once challenged the supremacy of Rachel in the field of poetic tragedy. Her first American tour began in the autumn of 1866, and continued until the following spring. It comprised 170 performances, and took her to many cities. Although she played in Italian, she was a tremendous success. She made three subsequent tours of this country, the final one in 1884–85, when she played in English, and was a disappointment. She was said to have had tremendous fire, "imperious address," and "mournful beauty." Her greatest roles were Lady Macbeth, Mary Stuart, Medea, and Queen Elizabeth.

TOMMASO SALVINI (1829–1915) was also an Italian. By the time of his first visit to America (in 1873) he was already an established star in the Latin countries. He created a sensation here as elsewhere. Physically powerful, with "a voice as glorious as ever proceeded from a man," Salvini was a veritable torrent of emotional expression. Yet, according to Freedley, "it must not be thought that he was merely a ranter. He had an inner fire which not only inspired his audiences, but also his fellow actors." Among those who found inspiration in his performances was Constantin Stanislavski, who "went night after night to see him act during his Russian tour." John Ranken Towse, the American critic, declared Salvini to be "incomparably the greatest actor and artist whom I have ever seen . . . one who has never had an equal, probably, since the days of Garrick." His most famous role was Othello. He visited America five times in all, the last time in 1886. He always played in Italian, although on some occasions he was supported by English-speaking actors. In 1886 he offered a bilingual performance of *Othello*, with himself as the Moor, and Edwin Booth as Iago.

ADELAIDE NEILSON (1846–80) was born in England, and began life as a factory girl. Her education was slight, but she had a natural fondness for reading, and this carried her into the beauties of Shakespeare. She determined on a stage career, and was able to make a provincial debut as Juliet in 1868. In 1870 she made her first London appearance, at Drury Lane Theatre, first in *Amy*

Robsart (the dramatization of *Kenilworth*) and shortly afterwards as Juliet. She was an immediate sensation. New York first saw her in November, 1872, when she opened a month's engagement at Booth's Theatre, appearing first as Juliet, then as Rosalind, and finally as Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*. Her success was triumphant. During the following eight years she did considerable touring in this country, traveling as far as San Francisco, and from time to time reappeared in New York. In 1874 she was seen at the Lyceum as Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing;* in 1877 she starred for Augustin Daly (opposite the young John Drew) in *Twelfth Night* and *Cymbeline;* and in April and May, 1880 she offered a series of farewell performances at Booth's Theatre, appearing in her favorite classic roles. She then played a five-week engagement in San Francisco, and on July 28th sailed from New York for Europe, where she anticipated enjoying a long rest. Eighteen days later she died in Paris of acute indigestion. Her death at the age of thirty-four shocked and grieved the theatrical world. She had swiftly endeared herself to all lovers of classic drama in England and America. And her image persisted. As late as 1934 Odell wrote that, "she has never had a rival in public esteem. Forever and forever, as long as history endures, Miss Neilson will be the Juliet most enthralling to lovers of the stage. Her rich, dark-eyed beauty, her grace, her pensive charm, her intensity, her golden voice—these are the spells by which she still takes the imagination captive. . . . She was like a dream of love and beauty, the exact repetition of which never came again." With touching appropriateness, though certainly without premonition of her imminent death, Miss Neilson said in 1880, to the audience at her final performance in New York, "It seems to me that I am leaving not only friends, but happiness itself; that the skies can never again be as bright as they have been to me here, nor flowers bloom, nor music sound any more. . . ."

Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923) was a Jewess born in Paris. After studying at the Conservatoire, she made her debut at the Comédie Française in 1862. Discouraged at her ability to achieve immediate success, she left this national playhouse and played in other theatres. In 1867 she attracted favorable attention at the Odéon, and shortly afterwards returned to the Comédie Française, where she remained until 1880. In the latter year, following a quarrel with the Comédie's management, she began a series of

foreign tours which continued intermittently for several decades, which took her over the whole world, and which brought her to America nine times, first in 1880, and last in 1917. So many of her visits here were labeled "farewell tours" that the term eventually became amusing. Partly because of her brilliance as an actress, and partly because of her flair for publicity, Bernhardt became the best-known actress in the world. Her roles covered a tremendous range, from Phèdre, and other classic French heroines, to Camille, and even Hamlet. She was noted for her vocal virtuosity, for her terrific temperament, for her unlimited energy, and for her colorful eccentricities. As a household pet she kept a young tiger, and in her boudoir rested a satin-lined coffin, in which she would seek repose when weary of the world—flowers upon her breast and lighted candles at her side. With the assistance of her press agent she became universally known as "The Divine Sarah."

LILLIE LANGTRY (1852–1929), whose maiden name was Emily Charlotte LeBreton, was born on the island of Jersey, was married to Edward Langtry, a Londoner, and became well known in English society for her exceptional beauty. She went on the stage in 1881, and the next year appeared in New York at Wallack's Theatre and later at the Fifth Avenue. Although she was undoubtedly an actress of limited powers, her personal attractiveness enhanced her art, and she achieved considerable popularity. For a number of years she divided her time between England and America, making stage appearances in New York in 1883, 1887, and 1900. Like Lillian Russell, she became a symbol of feminine beauty, and, with the endearing nickname of "The Jersey Lily," she was during the '90s "the toast of the nation." Her international fame was based partially on her intimate friendship with King Edward VII.

SIR HENRY IRVING (1838–1905) was born John Henry Brodribb. After years of apprenticeship in the theatres of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Liverpool, and other cities of the British Isles, he made his first London appearance in 1866. It was not until 1870, however, that he made his first hit. This was in *The Two Roses*, produced at the Vaudeville Theatre, and his success attracted the attention of H. L. ("Colonel") Bateman, an American who had assumed control of the old Lyceum Theatre for the purpose of advancing his daughter Isabel's career. Bateman en-

gaged Irving as leading man at the Lyceum, and the third production under this arrangement, a melodrama entitled *The Bells*, proved a sensation. Irving kept the piece in his repertoire for many years. Other successes followed, and in 1874 Irving took London by storm with his performance in *Hamlet*. With two hundred successive performances, he doubled the record set in New York ten years earlier by Edwin Booth. Bateman died in 1875, and three years later Irving, now prosperous, took control of the Lyceum. He then engaged Ellen Terry as his leading woman, and together they launched a career which carried them to the pinnacle of popularity, and which lasted until 1902. Their first tour of America was made in 1882–83, and it was a triumph. It was followed by frequent visits during the remainder of the century. Irving was not a subtle actor, but he was a highly magnetic one, and he had a technical mastery which enabled him to hold an audience spellbound. As a producer he was both lavish and meticulous, and his productions (particularly of Shakespeare's plays) were magnificent syntheses of spectacular settings and costumes, effective music, and impressive acting. Irving was knighted in 1895, and upon his death was honored by burial in Westminster Abbey.

Ellen Terry (1848–1928) was the loveliest English actress of her time. When she became Irving's leading lady she was thirty years of age, and had years of stage experience behind her. She had made her debut at the age of four. In her maturity she was not only "all woman," but she was, in an artistic sense, all women. Equally appealing in comedy and tragedy, she captured the hearts of every kind of audience. Her Portia was called perfect, her Lady Macbeth superb, her Rosalind entrancing, and her Beatrice inimitable. In connection with the last-named role, William Winter speaks of "her indescribable charm of mischievous sweetness," and he goes on to say that "Her appearance and carriage are beautiful, and her tones melt into music." It was no wonder that George Bernard Shaw should have come to adore her, to write plays for her, and to find in her the inspiration for his most fascinating correspondence.

Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson (1853–1932) was born in London, and made his debut there in 1874. During the next few years he gained a wide experience under various managers in a great variety of plays, classic and modern. In 1885 he teamed with the beautiful American actress, Mary Anderson, (who was then

playing in England) to tour the provinces, and later, America. He was Romeo to her Juliet, Orlando to her Rosalind. His second American tour occurred in 1891. In 1895 he assumed management of the Lyceum Theatre, London, and began an association with Mrs. Patrick Campbell which lasted for several years, and proved immensely successful. In 1897 he appeared for the first time in *Othello* and in *Hamlet*. In the latter role he was a sensational hit, and he continued to appear in it at frequent intervals until his official retirement in 1916. He engaged in four extended American tours between 1900 and 1916. He was knighted in 1913, at the close of a series of farewell performances in London. He was a scholarly actor—sensitive and refined. He lacked tragic power, and, according to Towse, he was never "volcanic or thrilling." But his Hamlet was "exquisite," and probably the best of his time.

BENOIT CONSTANT COQUELIN (1841–1909), the greatest French actor of the late nineteenth century, made his debut at the Comédie Française in 1860, and continued at that theatre until 1886, when he resigned from the company. In 1888 he formed his own company and toured Europe and America. This company opened their New York engagement in October of that year with Molière's *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. He returned to America for a short tour in 1894, and in 1900 made a third visit with Sarah Bernhardt. On this last occasion these two brilliant performers featured two plays by Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *L'Aiglon*. The role of Cyrano had been created especially for Coquelin, and when he opened the play in 1897 at his theatre in Paris, the Porte Saint-Martin, it had proved an enormous success. Coquelin's technical facility is a matter of historical record. As a master of his art he dazzled and amazed the public. And, as Henry James so penetratingly observed, he offered "no bribe whatever—none of the lures of youth or beauty or sex. . . . It is simply a question of appreciating or not appreciating his admirable talent, his magnificent execution." The lesson he conveyed was "that acting is an art and that art is style." He could run the gamut of emotions—as Rostand well knew when he fashioned Cyrano—and he was equally at home in comedy and tragedy, in verse or prose. His voice, said Henry James, was the feature which most strikingly identified him. It was not sweet, but it had "an unsurpassable distinctness, a peculiar power to carry. As I write I seem to hear it ascend like a rocket to the great hushed dome of the theatre of

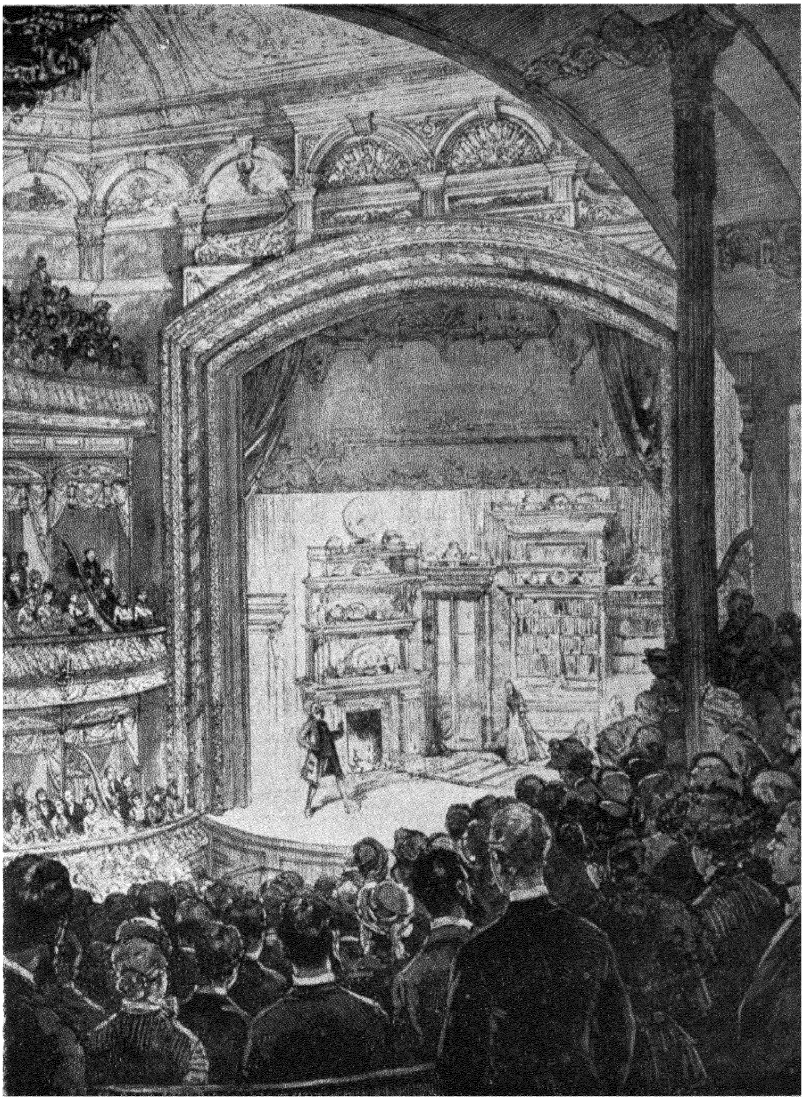
the Rue de Richelieu. It vibrates, it lashes the air, it seems to proceed from some mechanism still more scientific than the human throat."

THE KENDALS. William Hunter Kendal (1843–1917) and Madge Robertson Kendal (1849–1917) were an exceedingly popular team of English players who were brought to America in 1889 by Daniel Frohman, and were so well received in their first offering, Sardou's *Scrap of Paper*, that they remained here for several seasons, during which they toured the country with continual success. Although during their long careers on the stage, they appeared in a wide range of plays, they were at their best in light, modern comedy. Mrs. Kendal was the youngest sister of Tom Robertson, the talented playwright, and as Madge Robertson became one of the most admired of English comediennes. In the first years of their married life (the late sixties), according to Towse, she completely overshadowed her husband as a performer. At that time Kendal was said to have been good looking, but rather a "stick." Later a better balance was achieved, and eventually they were "exceedingly well matched." They helped, both in England and in America, to establish the new realistic style of acting, a contribution which paralleled that of Tom Robertson in the field of playwriting.

ELEONORA DUSE (1859–1924) was born in Italy (on a train) while her actor-parents were on tour. She made her debut at the age of four, and at fourteen (the correct age) played Juliet at Verona (the right place). Subsequently, she became the foremost actress of Italy, of Europe, of the world. Although in 1885 she toured South America, she did not visit the United States until 1893. In that year she made her New York debut in *Camille*. Ten years later she returned in the plays of Gabriele d'Annunzio, which had been composed for her, and which by the perfection of her art she made world-famous. These included *La Gioconda*, *Francesca da Rimini*, and *La Città Morta*. Some years later great public indignation was aroused against d'Annunzio because of his caddish and malicious mistreatment of Duse, who not only had made his plays palatable to many who found them in themselves abhorrent, but who also had given him her complete affection. She was most famous in the plays of Ibsen—particularly in *Ghosts* and *The Lady from the Sea*. In 1913, because of poor health, she retired, but in 1923 she was persuaded to return to the stage, and

after some appearances in London she made a final visit to America, offering eight performances at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, and then beginning a tour which ended with her death in Pittsburgh in April, 1924. Of all modern actresses Duse has inspired the most profound critical admiration. Scorning conventional theatrical effects, she illuminated her roles with what Stark Young calls "spiritual actuality." As Freedley says, some members of her audience found it hard to accustom themselves to this "uncorsetted woman who scorned makeup and left her hair untouched by dye," but the discriminating found in her the embodiment of poetry and the essence of reality. Huneker said, "Her face is the mirror of her soul." And he called her "the woman with the imagination, the glance, the beautiful hands." In his exquisite *Letter to Duse*, Stark Young says, "Madame, you know what realism is. To you, from the very start, the theatre . . . is neither realistic, nor poetic; it is only good or bad, true or false. . . . The stubbornest realists found it true beyond their wildest preaching and formulas. . . . The poets flocked to you because your kind of truth was theirs; like them, you created a soul in reality. . . . Madame, you, of all artists in the theatre, know that, seen most deeply, life becomes a dream. . . ."

Olga Nethersole (1870–1951) was born in England and made her debut at Brighton in 1887. Later the same year she played in London, and immediately created a favorable impression as an emotional actress. In 1890 she toured Australia in a repertoire of modern dramas, and in 1894 made her first New York appearance at Palmer's Theatre in *The Transgressor*, shocking the more conservative critics and portions of the public by the "intensity and realism of her acting." The following year she was brought to New York again by Charles Frohman, who presented her in *Denise*, *Frou-Frou*, and *Camille*. In 1899, under the same management, she returned with Pinero's powerful society drama, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, and in February, 1900, appeared in Clyde Fitch's *Sapho*, a production which was halted by the police on the grounds of immorality, though the charge later was withdrawn and the play permitted to resume. Subsequent American tours by Miss Nethersole continued at intervals until 1913. As a portrayer of colorfully unconventional heroines, and as a constant irritant to the puritanical-minded, she was the chief rival of our own Mrs. Leslie Carter.



When Wallack's Theatre was new.

(Harper's Weekly, 1882.)

The Florodora Sextet in *Florodora* at the Casino, 1900, in their most famous number, "Tell Me Pretty Maiden."

(Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.)

These were the principal foreign actors and actresses to enrich the American stage during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. There were many others who came—some of them unquestionably notable; but here we have limitations of space.

Chapter IX

New Stars and Dramatists: 1870–1900

IT HAS already been shown that the latter portion of the nineteenth century inherited a wealth of talent, native and foreign, from the theatre of previous decades. But because of the extraordinary expansion of the theatre after 1870, and because of the "star-making" proclivities of several producing managers, the new stars by far outnumbered the old.

In this history we are using the word star in a general rather than a technical sense—that is, as synonymous with outstanding fame, and not necessarily implying "star billing" above the play or the production as a whole. It is true, however, that the famous players to whose careers we will give individual attention would in most instances qualify as stars even in the technical sense.

The order in which we will consider them is a chronological one, based on the dates of their New York debuts.

NEW STARS

"POWERFUL IN THE EXPRESSION OF PASSION"

FANNY DAVENPORT (1850–98) was the daughter of the famous tragedian, E. L. Davenport. Born in London, she was brought to this country at the age of four, and received her schooling in Boston. At the age of eight she made her first stage appearance at the Howard Athenaeum, when, on the Fourth of July, she held an American flag while the rest of the company (including her father and mother) sang the "Star Spangled Banner." She made her New York debut at Niblo's Garden in 1862, and was then engaged by Mrs. John Drew for the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia. There she received several years of excellent training. In 1869 she attracted the attention of Augustin Daly, who presented her first as Lady Gay Spanker in *London Assurance,*

and thereafter in a great variety of roles. Her talent, which had not been immediately discernible to the public, became apparent about 1874, and from that time forth she was recognized as a star. In the 1880s, after she had left Daly's company, she headed her own company, and made extensive tours. Her greatest successes were in the spectacular and violent melodramas of Sardou, such as *Fedora*, *Tosca*, and *Cleopatra*. She was a tall, striking woman, powerful in the expression of passion.

THE DARLING OF SAN FRANCISCO

LOTTA, otherwise Charlotte Crabtree (1847–1924), was born in New York, but was taken to California at the age of six, and shortly afterwards made her debut as a singer and dancer in the mining towns. After several years of effort she worked her way into the theatres of San Francisco, and by 1860 had achieved considerable popularity. Her mother (who was her manager and promoter) took her to New York in 1864, and Lotta made her first appearance in that city at Niblo's Saloon. Within a year she had begun to acquire a following, and by 1869 she was able to return to San Francisco for a triumphant guest-star engagement. During the 1870s and 1880s she was one of the most popular comediennes in America, her greatest success being *Little Nell and the Marchioness*, a dramatization of Dickens' novel, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. She retained this piece in her repertoire until her retirement in 1891. Lotta's popularity was based to a large degree on her winsome personality. Bright-eyed, laughing, and piquant, she delighted audiences of every sort, and she became a symbol of youthful charm. Not in any sense a classic actress, she wisely avoided heavy drama, mixing light comedy with pathetic melodrama, and employing in these the full range of her personal mannerisms. She retired with a huge fortune, and lived with her mother until the latter's death. Lotta's Fountain on Market Street in San Francisco (a gift of hers to the city) remains as a sentimental reminder of this sentimental actress.

A CAREER IN CHARACTERS

MRS. THOMAS WHIFFEN (1845–1936) was born in England, and came to this country with her husband in 1868, both of them as members of an opera company which played in New York and then toured. She made her first appearance in legitimate drama

some years later at the Madison Square Theatre, where she played in *Hazel Kirke*, *Esmeralda*, *The Private Secretary*, and other hits. In 1887 she joined Daniel Frohman's stock company at the Lyceum, and remained there until 1900. Then for several years she was a member of Charles Frohman's company at the Empire. She was a character actress of the highest standing, and as such she lent her support to many of our finest plays and stars during half a century. In 1927, at the age of eighty-two, she toured America in the all-star production of *Trelawney of the Wells*.

"A NATURAL BORN ACTRESS"

CLARA MORRIS (1846–1925) was born in Canada, but received her early dramatic training in John A. Ellsler's stock company at Cleveland. In 1870 Ellsler sent her with a letter of recommendation to Augustin Daly, in New York, and Daly, with one of his frequent flashes of perceptiveness, presented her in the leading role of *Man and Wife*, his dramatization of the novel by Wilkie Collins. The unknown young actress from the West was recognized immediately as an interesting performer, and two years later, after the usual intensive training to which Daly subjected all his "discoveries," she made a sensational hit in *Article 47*. In 1873 she left Daly's management and joined A. M. Palmer at his Union Square Theatre, where she scored distinct successes in a number of plays, particularly in *The Sphinx* and *The Hunchback*. In 1874 she was widely acclaimed for her realistic performance of *Camille*, and in 1875 she left Palmer long enough to appear at Booth's Theatre as Lady Macbeth. Returning shortly to the Union Square, she continued there until 1882, although her New York engagements were alternated with numerous tours. She retired in 1894, but came out of retirement in 1904 to participate in an all-star revival of *The Two Orphans* at the New Amsterdam Theatre. Clara Morris is frequently described as a natural born actress. It is agreed that she lacked a conventional technique of acting, but it is also agreed that she was one of the most powerful emotional actresses our stage has ever known. According to Towse, "she was habitually crude, and occasionally unrefined, in pose, gesture, and utterance"; yet he considers her "one of the very few American actresses to whom the gift of genius may be properly ascribed." There were various opinions concerning the

merit of her Lady Macbeth—whom she represented as "a seductive and dangerous siren, full of lure and guile"—but there was unanimity in regard to her excellence in the realm of French melodrama. There her "genius . . . shone out resplendently in the intensification of the commoner passions. . . ."

ART AND PERSONALITY

MINNIE MADDERN FISKE (1865–1932) was born in New Orleans of theatrical parents, and made her debut at the age of three. As Minnie Maddern, a little red-head, her first appearance in New York was at Wallack's in 1870, in *Fritz, Our German Cousin.* In 1882 she made her adult debut in *Fogg's Ferry,* and in 1884 was a great hit as the star of *Caprice,* a play written for her by Henry P. Taylor. In 1890, upon her marriage to Harrison Grey Fiske, editor of the *New York Dramatic Mirror,* she retired from the stage for four years. In 1894, as Mrs. Fiske, she resumed her career with a production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* and thereby revealed herself as a serious actress of unexpected brilliance. In 1897 she had a great success in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* and in 1899 another in *Becky Sharp.* Although she was probably the most skillful comedienne in our theatre, she was a devoted admirer of Ibsen, and during the first three decades of the twentieth century (she played almost to the time of her death) she alternated his sober, idealistic social dramas with popular comedies such as *The New York Idea, Erstwhile Susan,* and *Ladies of the Jury.* The late Alexander Woollcott worshipped at her shrine, and wrote a book about her. John Ranken Towse, however, considered her a "personality actress," and felt that she lacked both variety and depth. Robert Garland, in 1929, referred to her as "The Great Lady of the Theatre, the High Class Low Comedienne, the Grand Old Trouper," who, in his "prejudiced and unreliable eyes," could do no wrong. "She could star herself in a dramatization of the telephone directory and I would praise her. For there is something about her which delights me, something I have never been able to get into words." She is an excellent example of that sort of actress who confuses and confounds the standards of criticism, rendering indistinguishable from each other the technique of acting and the display of personal mannerisms.

"SHE WINS YOU SURELY . . ."

ROSE COGHLAN (1850–1932) was born in England, made her first stage appearances in the provinces in 1866, and her London debut in 1869. Her New York debut was at Wallack's Theatre in 1872, where she remained for a season, and then returned to England. In 1877 she was back at Wallack's, and except for short periods of absence, was a popular leading actress in that house until 1888. Her first great hit in this country was in the role of Countess Zicka in Sardou's *Diplomacy*, presented at Wallack's in 1878. During the 1890s and early 1900s she played chiefly in England, but in 1907 she toured America in Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and from then until 1920 divided her time between New York and London productions. She was a sterling actress, equally at home in comedy or serious drama, in Shakespeare, Sheridan, or Shaw. Her Lady Teazle was one of the best ever seen; and her Rosalind was declared unsurpassed on our stage. Although she is said to have lacked the brilliance of her brother Charles, she achieved approximately the same measure of fame as did he. Her appeal was not sensational or immediate; it was of steady, sure growth. A contemporary critic remarked that "she wins you surely if you go more than once to Wallack's."

"CLEAN-CUT COMICALITY"

WILLIAM H. CRANE (1845–1928) was born in Massachusetts and began his career in 1863 as a singer in a traveling light opera company. He continued in this field for eleven years, making his first New York appearance at Niblo's Garden in *Evangeline* in 1873. In 1874 he determined to change to the legitimate drama, and obtained an engagement at Hooley's Theatre in Chicago. Shortly afterwards, with the Hooley company, he visited San Francisco, and other California cities, where he became a great favorite. In 1876 he was even tendered an official benefit in Sacramento by the governor and members of the state legislature. The same year he returned to New York, where he formed a partnership with Stuart Robson which continued until 1888, and which provided the American public with one of the most famous comedy teams in our history. One of their first hits (in January, 1877) was a farce entitled *Our Boarding House*, in which Crane as Colonel M. T. Elevator, and Robson as Professor Gillipod,

"paralyzed the public by an association of artistic grotesquery and clean-cut comicality never before seen upon the local stage." Later they were a great hit as the two Dromios in *The Comedy of Errors*, and as Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night*. After 1888 he became an individual star, and for many years was one of Charles Frohman's chief assets. He created a whole portrait gallery of American characters, somewhat in the tradition of the Yankee. Among his greatest successes were *The Senator*, *The Governor of Kentucky*, and *David Harum*. He toured the country repeatedly and always with happy results. Supreme in his line, he impressed everyone as being "a born comedian."

FIRST OF THE BARRYMORES

MAURICE BARRYMORE (1847–1905), whose real name was Herbert Blythe, was born in India and educated in England. Although intended for a legal career, he adopted the stage, and after several years of experience in London and in the provinces he came to America in 1875, appearing first in Boston, and shortly afterwards at Daly's Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York, where he remained for two years as a regular member of the company. Two other Daly recruits in 1875 were John Drew the younger and his sister Georgie. The latter became Barrymore's wife in 1876. Upon leaving Daly, Barrymore toured for several seasons, with Joseph Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle*, with Fanny Davenport in Shakespearian repertory, and with other stars. Then, for a time, he was leading man at Wallack's. More tours followed, including several with Mme. Modjeska, and another with Lillie Langtry. In the late 1880s he joined A. M. Palmer at the Madison Square Theatre, and remained with him for five years. One of his great successes during that period was *Alabama*, by Augustus Thomas, produced in 1891. He was an unusually handsome man, polished, and somewhat eccentric. According to Modjeska, "He was much admired by women, but was too intellectual to be a mere matinee idol." He was the father of Ethel, Lionel, and John Barrymore.

THE GENTLEMAN OF THE STAGE

JOHN DREW II (1853–1927) had his early training for the stage at his mother's Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia. Obviously he could not have been given a better start in the profession. In

1875 he was engaged by Augustin Daly for his Fifth Avenue company in New York, and made his debut there in *The Big Bonanza.* Presently, however, he joined Edwin Booth's company, playing Rosencrantz in *Hamlet,* and later toured for several seasons with Fanny Davenport. In 1879 he rejoined Daly's company, and remained with it until 1892, when he became a member of Charles Frohman's Empire stock company, and was elevated to stardom. For many years he was teamed with Ada Rehan in classic and modern comedies, and their *Taming of the Shrew* is historically famous. John Drew was at his best in polished, sophisticated roles. In the words of J. Ranken Towse, "As a modern man of the world—the polished clubman, the wise mentor, the social diplomatist, the polite wooer—he excelled all competitors." He was not, however, so happy in roles which required poetic feeling and depth of human emotion. Although he proved effective in period plays where style was essential—his Charles Surface in *The School for Scandal* was much admired—he was most at home in "dress-suit" comedies, and as a model of drawing-room deportment he established a standard for the American theatre. His career extended for nearly three decades into the twentieth century, and he died in San Francisco while on a nation-wide tour with the all-star production of *Trelawney of the Wells.* It might properly be said that with him died the tradition of the "gentleman" on the American stage.

MOTHER OF THREE STARS

GEORGIANA (GEORGIE) DREW (1856–93), like her brother, was trained by her mother at the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia. And, like him, she was engaged by Augustin Daly for his Fifth Avenue company in New York in 1875. After one season there she became a supporting actress with a succession of stars—including Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, John McCullough, Mme. Modjeska, and William H. Crane. In 1891 she joined Charles Frohman's company, but her career was cut short by her death in Santa Barbara, California, at the age of thirty-seven. Although never, in the technical sense, a star, she was a much-loved actress, and a competent one. Furthermore, she was the mother of Lionel, Ethel, and John Barrymore.

A BROAD COMEDIAN

NAT GOODWIN, otherwise Nathaniel Carl Goodwin, (1857–1919), was a native of Boston, and he made his debut at the Boston Museum in 1874. He first played in New York, at Niblo's Garden, in 1875, and shortly afterwards made a hit at the Fourteenth Street Theatre in a burlesque of *Black-Eyed Susan*. Subsequent engagements in New York, at Tony Pastor's and elsewhere, proved that Goodwin's chief talent lay in the field of burlesque and light comedy, and this was the line which he followed during a long and prosperous career. As early as 1878 he went on tour at the head of his own company, and for several decades he delighted the American public with his broad comedy. Now and again, however, he essayed more serious roles. One of his outstanding successes was *In Mizzoura*, by Augustus Thomas, produced in 1893; and in 1898 he appeared in the title role of Clyde Fitch's drama, *Nathan Hale*. For many years he was a Charles Frohman star. Though critical opinion did not class him as a great actor, he was nevertheless an extremely popular one. He is, incidentally, remembered not only for his popularity but also for the excessive number of his wives.

A SUPERIOR LEADING MAN

CHARLES COGHLAN (1842–99) was born in England and rose to great popular favor on the London stage. In 1876 he was engaged by Augustin Daly as leading man at his Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York, and made his American debut there in September, as Alfred Evelyn in Bulwer's *Money*. He was an immediate success with the public. Later in the season he scored as Orlando, opposite Fanny Davenport as Rosalind. The next year, following a disagreement with Daly, he transferred his talents to the service of A. M. Palmer at the Union Square, and after one season with him, joined Lester Wallack's company, where he remained for many years. He was a leading man *par excellence*—handsome of figure, capable of great distinction in dress, endowed with a rich, sympathetic voice of wide range, with "a natural demeanor of intrinsic superiority," and with masterful skill in the performance of all types of comedy and romance. According to Towse, "He was infinitely superior to any of the leading men of his era. . . ." His versatility seems not to have extended into the field of tragedy,

but this lack was not seriously felt at Wallack's, for comedy was the standard fare in that house. Coghlan was also a playwright, though a minor one. One of his last appearances was in the title role of his own drama, *Citizen Pierre*, presented in 1899.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

JAMES O'NEILL (1847–1920) was born in Ireland, but was brought to America by his father at the age of seven. His father died soon after, and the lad was left to shift for himself. He made his debut in Cincinnati at the age of thirteen, and for a number of years played with western stock and touring companies. In 1870 he filled his first engagement as leading man. This was at Ellsler's Academy of Music in Cleveland. Shortly after the disastrous Chicago fire of 1871 he moved to that city, where he played leading roles for McVicker, then for Hooley. He then spent a year playing in San Francisco, a city which was always hospitable to him, and to which he returned many times. In 1876 he joined A. M. Palmer's company at the Union Square Theatre, New York, and for several seasons proved a worthy addition to that brilliant troupe. He participated in the revival of *The Two Orphans* his first season, and later scored heavily in *The Danicheffs*. In 1879 he impersonated Christ in a Passion Play produced by Maguire and Baldwin at the Grand Opera House, San Francisco, under the direction of David Belasco. The production attracted great attention but was soon closed by authorities because of religious opposition. In 1883 O'Neill found his great starring role. This was the Count in *Monte Cristo*, a play which had been presented many times, but which took on new life when O'Neill played it at Booth's Theatre, New York. He toured it for many years throughout the country, and became identified with it almost as completely as was Joseph Jefferson with *Rip Van Winkle*. A physically graceful but virile actor, possessed of a rich voice with a touch of brogue, he was at his best in romantic melodrama. During the 1890s he essayed several Shakespearian and other classic roles, including *Hamlet*, but his success in most of them was only moderate. In *Macbeth* he is said to have been superior. He lived to see his son Eugene begin a career which has led him to the highest position among American playwrights.

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN"

MARY ANDERSON (1859–1940) was born in California, her father being an Englishman and her mother a Philadelphian of German descent. At an early age she attracted the attention of several stars, including Edwin Booth and Charlotte Cushman, both of whom encouraged her toward a stage career. She made her debut as Juliet in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1875, and created a favorable if not a sensational impression. The next year she played in New Orleans, San Francisco, Washington, Boston, and other cities. Everywhere she aroused admiration, and in Boston she received enthusiastic praise from various literary celebrities, including the poet Longfellow. She made her New York debut at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in November, 1877, appearing as Pauline in *The Lady from Lyons.* Her success assured, she played in New York and its vicinity, chiefly at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, until 1883, when she went to London and proved a tremendous hit at the Lyceum Theatre. She remained in England two years, appearing, shortly before her return to America, as Rosalind at Stratford-on-Avon. Her last professional performance was given in Washington D.C. in March 1889, the production being *A Winter's Tale.* The next year she married, retired from the stage, and settled in England. Although her career had been short, it had been entirely one of stardom, and she was able to boast, as few actresses have been able to do, that she had never played a secondary role. This was due not so much to exceptional talent as to physical beauty and a thrilling voice. According to Towse, "she presented a figure of classic and virginal purity that was almost ideal. Her tall, lithe form was at once stately and graceful . . . her face was radiant with health, innocence, and dignified beauty." Odell remembers her as "the most beautiful woman I ever saw on the stage, or, for that matter, off the stage. 'Divinely tall, and most divinely fair,' might have been written of her . . . her voice, a rich contralto, was simply magnificent."

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN THE FLESH

WILLIAM GILLETTE (1855–1937) was born in Hartford, Connecticut, and was educated in that city and at Yale and Harvard Universities. He made his professional debut at the Globe Theatre, Boston in 1875, and his first New York appearance at the

New Park Theatre in 1877. He then began to combine playwriting with acting, and in 1881 had his first play, *The Professor*, produced at the Madison Square Theatre, with himself in the leading role. In 1886 he scored a great success (as actor and playwright) with *Held by the Enemy*, the first good play to be based on the Civil War. In 1894 he repeated his dual triumph with *Too Much Johnson*, in 1896 with *Secret Service*, and in 1899 with *Sherlock Holmes*. From 1897 onward into the 1920s he divided his time between London and New York, (with extensive tours interspersed), appearing both in new plays and in revivals of his previous hits. Notable among the new plays in which he starred were J. M. Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* (1903) and *Dear Brutus* (1918). His most popular and most frequent revivals were of *Secret Service* and *Sherlock Holmes*, pieces which endeared themselves to several generations of theatregoers, and which provided Gillette with tremendously effective characterizations. Tall, handsome, and restrained in his acting, he was the ideal hero for polite melodrama. It would be difficult to imagine a better Sherlock Holmes.

THE POLISH TRAGEDIENNE

HELENA MODJESKA (1844–1909) was born in Poland, and spent sixteen years on the Polish stage before coming to America. In 1876 she and her husband (a critic) were forced for political reasons to flee their native land. Arriving in this country, they proceeded to Southern California, where they settled on a farm, and devoted themselves to chicken-raising. The call of the stage, however, proved too strong for Mme. Modjeska, and in 1877, having learned some English, she made her way to San Francisco, where she obtained an engagement at the California Theatre, making her first appearance as Adrienne Lecouvreur. She was a triumphant success, and later the same year made her New York debut at Daly's Fifth Avenue. Here, also, in spite of her imperfect English, she was acclaimed as an actress of beauty and power. Thereafter, until the beginning of the twentieth century, she held an important place in the American theatre as an exponent of classic drama. In 1886 she played with Edwin Booth. Although her most famous roles were Shakespearian (Juliet, Desdemona, Viola, and Rosalind), she was noted for her Camille and her Mary Stuart. And in 1883 she startled the public with the first American

production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which at that time was called *Thora*. The play was presented in Louisville, and the critic of the *Courier-Journal* expressed the view that the play itself would probably never become popular with us, but that "Mme. Modjeska's portrayal should insure it a continual life." Although her English pronunciation improved with the years, her Polish accent was always noticeable. We have it on the authority of Alexander Woollcott that as Camille she cried out, "Armong, I loaf you!"

WINSOME AND DELICATE

ANNIE RUSSELL (1864–1936) was born in Liverpool, England, was taken to Canada as a child, and made her debut in Montreal in 1872. Her first New York appearance occurred in 1878, when, as a member of a juvenile opera company, she played in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. With this company she then toured South America and the West Indies. Her first legitimate engagement was with a touring production of *Hazel Kirke* in 1881. Later the same year she created the role of Esmeralda in the play of that title presented at the Madison Square Theatre, and achieved immediate popularity. She remained at the Madison Square until 1888, when because of illness she retired for several years. Her career was resumed in 1894 with the production of *The New Woman*. In 1895 she played with Nat Goodwin in several of his successes, including *In Mizzoura* and *A Gilded Fool*, in 1896 made a tremendous hit in *Sue*, and on her return to New York was accredited as a *bona fide* star. During the first two decades of the present century she continued her starring career, notably in *Mice and Men* (1902), Shaw's *Major Barbara* (London, 1905), *The Stronger Sex* (1908), and *Twelfth Night* (1909). Her art was characterized by winsomeness and delicacy, and these qualities she managed to display in a great variety of roles, poetic and realistic.

SHAKESPEARIAN TROUPER

ROBERT BRUCE MANTELL (1854–1928) was born in Scotland and educated in Ireland, made his first stage appearance in England in 1876, and his American debut at Albany, New York, in 1878, when he played Tybalt in Mme. Modjeska's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. His New York City debut occurred in 1879, when he supported Modjeska in *East Lynne*. Later he played

leading roles with Fanny Davenport. In 1885 he appeared in the title role of Steele MacKaye's play, *Dakolar*, the opening production at the New Lyceum Theatre. After 1890 he made Shakespeare's tragedies his chief concern, and for many years (extending well into the present century) he headed his own repertory company, which toured the entire country again and again. In his younger period he was an outstanding Romeo; later he was at his best as King Lear, Othello, and Macbeth. A powerful actor, he was never considered a subtle or truly great one. But he was an admirable trouper, and the last of the old school of Shakespearian actors.

SYMBOL OF AN ERA

LILLIAN RUSSELL (1861–1922), whose real name was Helen Louise Leonard, was born in Iowa, and as a girl studied singing, first in Chicago and later in New York. At the age of eighteen she made her debut, singing in the chorus of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera company. A few months later she was overheard by Tony Pastor practicing in her boarding-house, and he was so charmed with her voice that he engaged her for his variety theatre. There she developed a strong following, and soon afterwards began touring in concert and light opera. During the 1890s she was in constant demand in New York among producers of new operas. About 1900 she joined the company at Weber and Field's Music Hall, and remained there four years. In 1906 she turned for the first time to legitimate drama, and in 1908 was unusually successful in the horse-racing play, *Wildfire*. She was an appealing rather than a great singer, and as an actress she was certainly mediocre. But she was a great beauty, and as a symbol of the statuesque type so fashionable at the century's close, she has achieved enduring fame.

"THE MOST LOVELY, HUMOUROUS DARLING"

ADA REHAN (1860–1916) was born in Ireland, and was brought to America at the age of five. She went on the stage at fourteen, and spent several years of apprenticeship in the splendid company of Mrs. John Drew at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia. In 1879 she attracted the attention of Augustin Daly, who engaged her for his new theatre, and presented her first in *Love's Young Dream*. The audience took her immediately to their hearts,

and kept her there for twenty years. According to Towse, "Miss Rehan was in her element in every variety of piquant, tender, mischievous, high-spirited, alluring, whimsical, and provocative girlhood." With experience she became highly accomplished as a comedienne, and proved the feminine mainstay of Daly's company until the producer's death in 1899. During those two decades she was teamed almost continuously with John Drew, and as a team they made theatrical history. Miss Rehan played more than two hundred roles for Daly, chiefly in comedy, and although these covered a wide range, from classic to modern, it was as a Shakespearian heroine that she shone most brilliantly. Most famous for her Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, she was acclaimed almost equally for her Rosalind and her Viola. She was all spirit and fire, but not delicate enough for poetic roles, thought Towse. He complained, also, that she was deficient in the reading of verse. Ellen Terry called her "the most lovely, humourous darling I have ever seen on the stage."

"A SWAGGERING ROGUE"

OTIS SKINNER (1858–1942) was born in Massachusetts, the son of a minister, and at the age of nineteen, armed with a letter of introduction from a friend of his family, P. T. Barnum, obtained an engagement at the Philadelphia Museum in November, 1877. From then until the following June he served a strenuous apprenticeship, appearing in ninety-two roles. In his reminiscent *Footlights and Spotlights* he tells us that during that period he "scowled as villains, stormed as heavy fathers, dashed about in light comedy, squirmed in character parts, grimaced in the comics, and tottered as the Pantaloon in the pantomime. . . . Even sex was no bar, for I was sometimes clapped into skirts for nigger wenches and coarse old hags." The next season he transferred to the Walnut Street Theatre, and in September, 1879 made his New York debut at Niblo's Garden. The following spring he played minor roles with Edwin Booth in a series of classic revivals, then played for a time in Boston, and for three years supported Lawrence Barrett in repertory. In 1884 he joined Augustin Daly's company in New York, and remained with it until 1888. Shortly afterwards he became leading man for Mme. Modjeska, and toured with her for several seasons. He then joined Joseph Jefferson in *The Rivals*. In 1903 he became a co-star with Ada Rehan,

and in 1906 a star in his own right under the Charles Frohman banner. As a star his outstanding successes were achieved in *His Grace de Grammont*, *The Honor of the Family*, *The Duel*, *Kismet*, and *Mister Antonio*. His career continued through the third decade of the present century. Although in his more than fifty years on the stage Mr. Skinner ran the gamut of masculine roles, it was as a swaggering rogue that he succeeded most strikingly. He was a lusty actor, vital and confident. Trained in the old school, he played for "points," but always masterfully and with artistic finesse. And, as John Mason Brown has put it, he was no "slave to hoary convention. He went his own way when he wanted, but always with the surety of one who knows the past before breaking with it . . . though he had scrapped the fustian of 'the old tradition,' he had—luckily for all of us—salvaged its authority."

". . . AND MARLOWE"

EDWARD HUGH SOTHERN (1859–1933) was born in New Orleans, the son of the eminent actor, Edward Askew Sothern, and was educated in England. His first appearance on the stage was in support of his father at the Park Theatre, New York, in September, 1879. Shortly afterwards he filled an engagement in Boston, and then spent a season in support of John McCullough. From 1881 to 1883 he played in London and in the English provinces. He then returned to America, where he appeared under various managements until 1885, when he joined Daniel Frohman's company at the Lyceum, and there he remained, as a leading actor and Frohman's mainstay, until 1898. His outstanding roles at the Lyceum were in *Lord Chumley* (1888), *Letterblair* (1891), and *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1895). In 1899 he made his first venture into Shakespeare with a production of *Hamlet*, and although he did not immediately follow up this line, he returned to it in 1904. Meanwhile, in 1901 he scored a triumphant success with a romantic drama based on the life of François Villon, *If I Were King*. Coming under the aegis of Charles Frohman in 1904, he was made a co-star with Julia Marlowe, and these two launched a series of Shakespearian productions which continued for two decades, and which, through many coast-to-coast tours, became literally a national institution. Sothern was an able rather than a great actor. He was scholarly in his approach to Shakespeare, and

his productions were always mounted lavishly and with meticulous care. He and Marlowe were an excellent team—he handsome, she beautiful. Both were intensely serious and idealistic in their devotion to the classics. If neither of them reached the height of individual greatness, together they achieved sufficient fame.

"VERSATILE AND VIRILE"

HENRY MILLER (1860–1925) was born in England and educated in London and Toronto, Canada. In the latter city he made his first appearance on the stage, and shortly afterwards (in 1880) made his New York debut at Booth's Theatre in support of Adelaide Neilson. During the next several years he played under various managements, in New York and elsewhere, and in 1887 was engaged by Daniel Frohman for his Lyceum company. In 1889 Charles Frohman engaged him for the leading role in Bronson Howard's gripping drama of the Civil War, *Shenandoah*. This play, presented at the Star Theatre, proved a great success, and not only established Charles Frohman as an important producer, but also marked an important step in the career of Henry Miller. Miller continued for many years under "C.F." 's management, becoming leading man of the Empire Theatre company shortly after that house was opened in 1893, and continuing in this capacity until 1897, when he became a star. His first starring vehicle was *Heartsease* (1897) and later ones included *The Only Way* (1899) and *D'Arcy of the Guards* (1901). In 1903 he joined with Margaret Anglin, and launched a series of highly successful productions, including *The Devil's Disciple* and *Camille*. In 1906 he took control of the Princess Theatre, and there, with Miss Anglin, continued his successes—notably with the production of Moody's distinguished melodrama, *The Great Divide* (1906). Between 1908 and 1918 he did a considerable amount of touring, played several times in San Francisco, and one season in London. In 1918 he opened his own theatre, the Henry Miller, in New York, which he controlled until his death. He was a sound actor, versatile and virile, equally at home in Shakespeare, romantic melodrama, or drawing-room comedy. His style was simple, direct, and forceful, and the warmth of his personality infused all his roles. His son, Gilbert Miller, is a leading producing-manager on Broadway (and in London) today.

ECCENTRIC VIRTUOSO

RICHARD MANSFIELD (1857–1907) was born on the island of Heligoland, Germany, and spent his youth in various European countries. Most of his education, however, was received in England. He began his stage career in the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan, and he continued in the comic opera line for a time after coming to America in 1882. More or less by chance an opportunity came to him to appear in the play, *A Parisian Romance*, which was presented by A. M. Palmer at the Union Square Theatre in 1883, and overnight Mansfield became a famous actor. During the rehearsal period he had taken tremendous pains to develop a colorful and amazingly detailed characterization of Baron Chevrial, the "decrepit old rake" of the play, yet so much of his work on the role had been carried on secretly that his fellow players were nearly as astonished as was the audience when Mansfield electrified them at the first performance. Thenceforth he was a star, a mannered and eccentric one, but undeniably brilliant. In 1886 he was a hit in *Prince Karl;* in 1887 his virtuosity was acclaimed in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* In 1889 he presented *Richard III* in both London and New York, and the following year he scored a triumph as Beau Brummell in Clyde Fitch's play of that name. In 1894 he presented the first Shaw play to an American audience—*The Devil's Disciple;* in 1898 he presented Rostand's superb romantic drama, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, following in the footsteps of the great Coquelin, and not suffering by comparison. His last appearance, shortly before his death, was in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt.* He was a character star, and he was careful nearly always to appear in roles which lent themselves to extremes of eccentricity, in manner, in appearance, and in temperament. He lacked the profundity for tragedy, but he was effective in satirical comedy, and in romantic melodrama he was probably without superior.

ALWAYS A STAR

VIOLA ALLEN (1869–1948) was born in Alabama, but was educated in Boston, Toronto and New York. She made her debut in July, 1882, at the Madison Square Theatre, in the leading role of Frances Hodgson Burnett's popular play, *Esmerálda.* This piece had opened some time before, with Annie Russell in the role, but Miss Russell fell ill, and the stage manager suggested to C. Leslie

Allen, a member of the company, that his daughter Viola go into the part. So it came about that at the age of thirteen she was a leading lady. Two years later she was engaged by John McCullough to play opposite him in Shakespearian and other classic dramas; in 1885 she played the principal feminine role in Steele MacKaye's *Dakolar,* which opened the new Lyceum Theatre; and in 1886 she was engaged for leads opposite the great Italian actor, Tommaso Salvini. In 1889 she appeared in the original cast of Bronson Howard's war play, *Shenandoah,* and shortly afterwards joined Joseph Jefferson in his famous production of *The Rivals,* in which she played Lydia Languish. In 1893 she became a member of Charles Frohman's Empire stock company, and after five years in that capacity, was elevated to stardom. Her first starring vehicle was Hall Caine's *The Christian.* Her career as a star continued through the first two decades of the twentieth century, and among her outstanding successes were *In the Palace of the King, The White Sister, The Hunchback,* and *Twelfth Night.* An actress of great charm and versatility, Miss Allen could take pride in the fact that she attained stardom at an earlier age than any actress of her time, and that, like Mary Anderson and very few others, she never played any but leading roles.

MAGNETIC, WARM, AND VITAL

Julia Marlowe (1866–1950), whose real family name was Frost, was born in England, and was brought to this country at the age of four. She was educated at various public schools in Ohio and Kansas, and at the age of twelve made her debut as a sailor in a mid-western production of *H.M.S. Pinafore.* After spending some time in the world of comic opera she developed an interest in Shakespeare, and began taking lessons in elocution. In 1887 she achieved her first "starring" role as Parthenia in *Ingomar,* which was presented first at New London, Connecticut, and later (at a special matinee) in New York. In December of the same year she was able to appear at the Star Theatre as Juliet, and shortly afterwards as Viola in *Twelfth Night.* She was not at first taken seriously by the critics, yet her acting was, as Towse says, "irradiated by unmistakeable flashes of the true fire." She persisted, and after ten years of arduous experience in New York and on tour, with new plays and old, she attained stardom in 1898 in Charles Frohman's production of *Countess Valeska.* Con-

tinuing under Frohman, she was a triumphant success in Clyde Fitch's *Barbara Frietchie* (1899), and in *When Knighthood Was in Flower* (1901). Her ideal world, however, was still that of Shakespeare, and in 1904 she became co-star with E. H. Sothern for the express purpose of presenting the roles she loved best. As man and wife, Sothern and Marlowe trouped their excellent Shakespearian productions up and down and across the United States almost continuously for twenty years. Although the consensus of critical opinion has never credited Julia Marlowe with being the greatest Juliet of her age, nor the greatest Viola, Rosalind, or Ophelia, yet she did receive from many quarters the most lavish praise in each of these roles. She was a highly magnetic actress, warm and vital. And her devotion to her art was rewarded not only by a steady maturing of that art, but also by the admiration of millions.

PIQUANT, WISTFUL, AND LOVEABLE

MAUDE ADAMS (1872–) was born at Salt Lake City, and made her debut at the age of nine months on the stage of the Salt Lake Theatre, where her mother was an actress. Later she played juvenile roles in the West, and in 1888 made her New York debut at the Star Theatre in *The Paymaster*. In 1890 she played her first role for Charles Frohman in *All the Comforts of Home*, and during the same year appeared in the more important production of *Men and Women*, by H. C. DeMille and David Belasco. In 1892 she became John Drew's leading lady, and continued in this capacity (under Frohman's management) until 1897. In the latter year she was made a star, and her first starring role was that of Lady Babbie in J. M. Barrie's famous sentimental comedy, *The Little Minister*. For the next twenty years she scored triumph after triumph, endearing herself to the American public more deeply, perhaps, than any actress of her time. And many of these triumphs were based upon the ingratiating plays of Barrie: *Quality Street* (1901), *Peter Pan* (1905), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), *The Legend of Leonora* (1914), and *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916). She also enjoyed outstanding success in two poetic plays by Edmond Rostand: *L'Aiglon* (1900), and *Chantecler* (1911). It was in the two fantasies, the Scottish *Peter Pan* and the French *Chantecler*, that Miss Adams created her most lasting impressions. Both were revived by her at various

times in her career. As a piquant, wistful, entirely loveable personality, she was for many years a unique figure on the American stage. She retired in 1918, and for thirteen years devoted herself to various research projects, especially in the field of stage lighting. In 1931 she emerged for a season's tour with Otis Skinner in *The Merchant of Venice*. Except for a brief summer theatre engagement in 1934, she has done no acting since, but has been active as a college teacher of dramatic art in the Mid-West.

"HARD AS AN ARC-LIGHT"

MRS. LESLIE CARTER (1862–1937) was a striking, red-haired, temperamental society woman of Chicago who, in 1890, after a sensationally publicized divorce, went to New York and placed herself in the hands of David Belasco with the entreaty that he create for her a theatrical career. At this time Belasco was in the process of severing his connection with the Lyceum Theatre organization and venturing forth as an independent producer. As an ambitious "star-maker" ready to pit himself against his former associates, the Frohmans, Belasco saw possibilities in Mrs. Carter. Very soon, therefore, he presented her in *The Ugly Duckling* and *Miss Helyett*, working with her all the while to develop her acting ability. It was an uphill fight, for in addition to her lack of stage experience, there was the matter of strong public prejudice against her. Belasco, however, was as patient as he was shrewd, and after several years of training (two of which involved no public appearances at all) he was rewarded by seeing his flaming beauty a hit in his own melodrama, *The Heart of Maryland* (1895). Mrs. Carter played the role of Maryland Calvert, which had been tailor-made for her, during three successive years, in New York, on tour, and in London. In 1899 she scored again in Belasco's showy *Zaza*, although the critics were still reluctant to admit that the star possessed any talent worthy of admiration. Norman Hapgood, reviewing the opening performance, thought Mrs. Carter acceptable in "her outbreaks of fury and in her picture of low tempting," but completely unconvincing in other scenes—particularly those dealing with the spiritual redemption of "Zaza, the wicked and of course irresistible music hall singer." With highly effective candor, he characterized the actress as being "hard as an arc light and as lacking in exquisitiveness as a turnip." But Belasco and Mrs. Carter could ignore such insults;

the box-office story was in their favor. In 1901 they repeated their success with *Du Barry*, and in 1905 with *Adrea*. In 1906 Mrs. Carter parted company with Belasco, and for several seasons toured under her own management. Subsequently she starred for John Cort and others, appearing in *Camille*, *Magda*, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *The Circle*, *Madame X*, and various other plays suited to her style. Her career extended into the 1920s.

BRIEFER MENTION

The foregoing, it seems to the present writer, are the outstanding players among the many who came into prominence during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. Any list chosen thus arbitrarily is subject to criticism, and the experience of formulating it is a frustrating one. So flourishing was our theatre during that period, and so peopled with personalities, that we might easily double our biographical list. Lacking the space to do this, we can but mention: May Irwin (1862–1938), a comedienne who made her debut in 1875, and became a star of vaudeville, musical comedy, and legitimate comedy; De Wolf Hopper (1858–1935), who made his first New York appearance in 1879, and became an immensely popular star in musical comedy, light opera and straight comedy; Georgia Cayvan (1858–1906), a Southern girl who began her career in *Hazel Kirke* at the Madison Square in 1880, and for many years afterwards was a leading lady for Daniel Frohman; Francis Wilson (1854–1935), who made his debut at Philadelphia in 1878, and who achieved stardom in musical comedy; Julia Arthur (1869–1950), a lovely romantic actress who first played in 1883, reached New York in 1891, played with Irving in London in 1895, and for years starred in Shakespeare; Henrietta Crosman (1865–1944), comedienne and dramatic actress whose debut occurred in 1883, who acted for Charles Frohman throughout the 1890s, and was made a star in 1900; Wilton Lackaye (1862–1932), distinguished character actor who also made his New York debut in 1883, and who achieved lasting fame for his Svengali in *Trilby* in 1895; John Mason (1858–1919), popular leading man who first appeared on the Philadelphia stage in 1878, reached New York in 1884, supported Edwin Booth, and was leading man for Mrs. Fiske; May Robson (1865–1942), whose debut occurred at Brooklyn in 1884, who eventually became America's favorite comedienne,

and whose first starring role was in *The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary* (1907); Odette Tyler (1869–), the girl from Savannah, Georgia, who made her New York debut in 1884, appeared in the historic production of *Shenandoah* in 1890, was a leading woman for both Frohman and Belasco; Robert Edeson (1868–1931), stalwart and virile actor whose career began in Brooklyn in 1887, led to stardom in 1902, and included his famous characterization of a modern Indian in *Strongheart* (1907); William Faversham (1868–1940), rugged matinee idol, whose first stage appearance was made in London in 1885, who reached New York two years later, was a leading man for Charles Frohman during the 1890s, attained stardom in 1901, and is best remembered for *The Squaw Man* (1905); Arthur Byron (1872–1943), who reached the New York stage in 1893 after four years of touring, and who became a great favorite as leading man for Maude Adams, Ethel Barrymore, and other stars; Virginia Harned (1872–1946), who made her debut at New York in 1890, was a favorite for years at the Lyceum, created a sensation as Trilby in 1895, married E. H. Sothern and played classics with him; David Warfield (1866–), the San Francisco boy who began his New York career in 1890 as a vaudeville and burlesque comedian, and who arrived at legitimate stardom (in association with another San Francisco boy, David Belasco) in 1901 with *The Auctioneer;* Arnold Daly (1875–1927), whose first connection with the theatre was as office boy for Charles Frohman, who became an actor in 1892, and who, beginning in 1904, introduced a number of the plays of George Bernard Shaw to America; James K. Hackett (1869–1926), son of the famous James H. Hackett, who joined the Lyceum company in 1892, gained renown in romantic melodrama, such as *The Prisoner of Zenda,* and became a star under his own management in 1901; Lionel Barrymore (1878–), who first played in 1893 with his grandmother, Mrs. John Drew, in *The Rivals,* and later developed into a powerful dramatic actor; Nance O'Neil (1874–) a Western actress of unusual strength in emotional roles, who made her debut in San Francisco in 1893, and her first New York appearance in 1896; Margaret Anglin (1876–), a Frohman star whose debut occurred in 1894, whose first big hit was in *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Richard Mansfield (1898), who was the heroine in *The Great Divide* (1906), and who later appeared in many classics, Shake-

spearian and Greek; Ethel Barrymore (1879–), who made her debut at the Empire Theatre in 1894 in *The Rivals*, and who became one of Charles Frohman's loveliest stars in 1901; Blanche Bates (1873–1941), a Western dramatic actress who first appeared in San Francisco in 1894, reached New York in 1897, and became one of David Belasco's most popular stars, being remembered particularly for *The Darling of the Gods* (1902), and *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905).

NEW PLAYWRIGHTS

In 1870 the most talented playwright in America was Dion Boucicault, of whose exploits as actor-producer-playwright we have more than once spoken. Boucicault's playwriting (which began in England in 1841, and in America in 1855) continued until his death in 1890. Among the products of his later period by far the most successful piece was *The Shaughraun* (1874), a powerful drama laid in Ireland at the time of the Fenian insurrection of 1866, with its immensely appealing character of Conn, the Shaughraun (wanderer), played so effectively by Boucicault himself. Subsequent plays, whether original or adapted, either failed or achieved moderate success. The last one to enjoy reasonable popularity was *The Jilt* (1885), a racing comedy laid in England.

That Boucicault was master of theatrical effectiveness (one is tempted to say tricks) cannot be denied. But he was an international phenomenon, and was only occasionally and accidentally related to the development of our native dramatic literature. Much more closely and consistently related to it was Augustin Daly, with whom, as Professor Quinn says, "modern American drama begins."

THE GREAT ADAPTOR

Daly, whose admirable career as a producer we have summarized in the preceding chapter, was still, in 1870, a comparatively new playwright, for his first play, *Leah, the Forsaken*, an adaptation from the German, had been presented in 1862, and his first original play, *Under the Gaslight*, in 1867. The sensational success of the latter piece, with its novel situation involving the binding of a character to a railroad track, and his last-minute

rescue by the heroine, led Daly to the composition of other melodramas based on similar mechanical devices, but his interests were so broad, and his artistic impulses so various, that his writing, taken in its entirety, represents nearly every kind of drama. Like Boucicault, he drew heavily on foreign authors, adapting their work freely to his needs, but in this process he was much more concerned than was Boucicault with the tastes and psychology of the American audience. His method of treating foreign plays was, to use Quinn's word, one of "domestication."

Stage successes drawn by Daly from English sources included *Man and Wife* (1870), from a novel by Wilkie Collins; *Divorce* (1871), from a novel by Anthony Trollope; and *Pique* (1875), from a novel by Florence Marryatt. From French sources he drew most heavily, showing a strong predilection for the work of Sardou and Alexandre Dumas. To Sardou he was indebted for *King Carrot* (1872), *Folline* (1874), *Odette* (1882), *The Golden Widow* (1889), and several other pieces; among his successful Dumas adaptations were *Monsieur Alphonse* (1873), and *The American* (1876). Additional Daly hits of French origin were *Frou-Frou* (1870), from Meilhac and Halevy, and *Article 47* (1872), from Adolphe Belot. He also worked the contemporary German field carefully, gleaning such useful material as *The Big Bonanza* (1873) and *An Arabian Night* (1879), from Gustav von Moser; *Lemons* (1877), from Julius Rosen; and *A Night Off* (1885), from Franz and Paul von Schonthan. His foreign adaptations altogether must be numbered by the score, for during his career he placed on the stage at least ninety plays, most of which were based on European originals.

Although the best known of his own original plays is *Under the Gaslight*, the best artistically is probably *Horizon*, produced in 1871, which though melodramatic is nevertheless an important milestone in the development of a realistic American drama. Although the action begins in New York, it soon is transferred to the wild West, and the play, with its honest characterizations and typically violent dramatic situations, becomes one of the earliest examples of frontier drama, "providing an opportunity," as Quinn says, "for the work of Mark Twain and Bret Harte."

One of Daly's most important contributions to the art of playwriting in America lay, however, not in his own writing, but in

his encouragement of other native playwrights. And chief among those whose work he brought successfully before the public was Bronson Howard (1842–1908).

THE LEADER OF HIS PROFESSION

Howard, a native of Detroit, had his first play, *Fantine* (based on an episode in *Les Miserables*), produced in that city in 1864, but the next year, because of his ambition to become a professional playwright, he moved to New York, where he worked on various newspapers, and peddled his plays. In 1870 Augustin Daly produced his satirical comedy, *Saratoga*, and it was an outstanding hit, achieving one hundred performances during its original run, and meriting a later revival. Although it is not in itself an important play, it has taken on great historical significance because it was the first success of an important author.

His next hit after *Saratoga* (though two other plays intervened) was *The Banker's Daughter*, produced in 1878 by A. M. Palmer at his Union Square Theatre. This is a serious triangle play, with much human interest and a pathetic ending. During the next few years a half-dozen of his comedies (several of them farcical) were produced in New York with varying degrees of success, the outstanding one of these being *The Young Mrs. Winthrop*, presented at the Madison Square in 1882, and for many years afterwards in stock. Barrett Clark considers this comedy one of Howard's best, although he points out that it seems old-fashioned today because it "bristles with asides, soliloquies, and other conventions which have since fallen into disfavor." In this connection it is important to emphasize the fact that Howard in his technique followed the course of the times, and his later plays shun the artificial devices referred to above. *The Young Mrs. Winthrop*, which Clark calls "a kindly sermon on the dangers and blessings of matrimony," marked a change in Howard's basic dramatic concepts, and represented an actual innovation in American drama. Here, as Quinn explains, "he placed on the stage for the first time in America a group of characters whose actions are determined by the power of social laws and the interruption of social distractions without making the prevailing note one of satire."

The Young Mrs. Winthrop was a success, but it was in 1887

that he achieved a real triumph with the production of *The Henrietta*, a satirical melodrama concerned with "big business," and fashioned especially for the talents of two excellent comedians of the Union Square company, Stuart Robson and William H. Crane. The play ran for 68 weeks, and grossed nearly $500,000. Royalties from the original run, together with those derived from later tours of the play, brought Howard literally a fortune, and proved to managers that native playwrights could compete at the box-office with the best foreign writers.

Two years later came the smash hit, *Shenandoah*, a gripping drama of the Civil War, which made effective use not only of the basic elements of the conflict itself, but also of several absorbing and well-integrated love stories. Although the play had not been received with much favor at its initial production at the Boston Museum in 1888, when it was produced by Charles Frohman at the Star Theatre in New York in 1889 it was an immediate sensation. A factor in this success, of course, was the superior cast assembled by Frohman, which included Wilton Lackaye, Henry Miller, Viola Allen, and Effie Shannon. After a long season in the metropolis, the production went on an extensive tour.

Shenandoah was the climax of Howard's career. He had a moderate success with *Aristocracy* in 1892, a play which contrasted the rich Westerner with the conventional Easterner, and mild interest was aroused in 1899 by *Peter Stuyvesant* (written in collaboration with Brander Matthews), but both were anticlimactic.

Howard's fame rests not so much on the merit of his individual plays as on his achievement as a leader in the profession of playwriting. He was the first American-born dramatist, using American themes, to make his profession financially profitable and at the same time dignified. He was instrumental in amending the copyright laws in a way that protected playwrights against piracy, and in 1891 he founded the American Dramatists Club, which served to improve the relationship between playwrights and producers. This organization led to the formation (in the present century) of the Dramatists' Guild, which now secures our playwrights against any possible unfair exploitation.

FARCEUR OF THE MELTING-POT

Edward Harrigan (1845–1911) operated in a field distinctly different from that of Bronson Howard. An actor in broad comedy and burlesque, first in San Francisco (1867), then in Chicago, and shortly afterwards (1870) in New York, he began composing short sketches for himself and his partner, and many of these sketches eventually were expanded into full-length plays. His first partner was Sam Rickey, but in 1872 he formed an alliance with Tony Hart, whose real name was Anthony Cannon, and these two became one of the most celebrated comedy teams in our history. Harrigan's farces were based on type characters—featuring especially the Irish immigrant, but including the German, the negro, and the Italian. He caught with shrewd realism and sympathetic understanding, the racial values of these types, which were so familiar to New Yorkers, and by playing them off against each other he created a theatrical melting-pot which reflected a fundamental aspect of American life.

Between 1870 and 1879 Harrigan composed not less than eighty vaudeville sketches, many of which were expanded into longer plays. Most famous of these was The Mulligan Guard series, in which the Irish character, Mulligan, is featured, along with his wife Cordelia (played by Tony Hart). Play after play presented these central characters, in much the same way that comic strips and radio "soap operas" present their established characters today. Mulligan's foil, and arch-enemy, is Lochmuller, the German butcher, and important secondary characters include Rebecca Allup, the colored cook, and the Reverend Palestine Puter, another negro. Most famous of the series is *The Mulligan Guard Ball,* which opened at the Theatre Comique (managed by Harrigan and Hart) in January, 1879, and ran for 100 nights.

Harrigan and Hart dissolved their partnership in 1885, but Harrigan continued his playwriting, sometimes reviving the Mulligans, and again creating new groups of characters. Always, though, he concerned himself with picturesque types, and usually with those of foreign extraction. He transferred to the stage in the most amusing manner imaginable the variegated "street life of New York."

DEAN OF THE LITTÉRATEURS

At the opposite end of the social and literary scale from the boisterous Harrigan stood William Dean Howells (1837–1920). As editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and regular contributor to *Harper's Magazine*, Howells for more than half a century (1866 to 1920) exerted a powerful influence upon American literature as a whole. He was primarily a novelist and critic, but he did write several plays, and these are consistent with his general aim, which was realistic, and which was based, as Quinn says, on "the doctrine of truth to life in all art."

Howells was actually not a man of the theatre. He was a literary man who could write well in any form, and who occasionally was tempted by the drama. Several of his best plays are one-act pieces which, because of their brevity, found either slight use or none on the professional stage. They were, however, extremely popular among readers of the magazines in which they were published, and they have always been favorites on the amateur stage. Between 1876 and 1916 Howells wrote twenty-five short plays, most of them farces. They had little in common, however, with the sort of rough-and-ready, knockabout, colloquial entertainment which the word farce generally connotes. They were refined; they were, as the saying goes, "polite." Yet they were by no means too literary for the stage. Two of them, *The Garroters* and *The Mouse Trap*, were played professionally in London, where they attracted considerable attention, and were hailed by critics (one of whom was George Bernard Shaw) as a welcome change from the typical curtain raisers of J. M. Morton and other British *farceurs*.

Although Howells wrote several full-length plays, none of them achieved success in the theatre. Best known, probably, are the two comedies, *A Counterfeit Presentment*, produced by Lawrence Barrett in 1877, and *The American Claimant* (written in collaboration with Mark Twain) which revived the famous character of Colonel Mulberry Sellers, popularized by Mark Twain's earlier *The Gilded Age*. His fame as a playwright rests almost entirely on his one-acts. These delightful pieces, as Quinn rightfully observes, "taught manners and social values to thousands who played in them or saw them on the amateur stage. That they

were played professionally so seldom was a loss . . . which can hardly be estimated."

Although Howells was our most distinguished advocate of realism during the late nineteenth century, he was by no means a solitary figure. Other novelists and playwrights cherished the same ideal, though each of them strove for its fulfillment in his own special way. Strikingly different from Howells, for example, was the actor-playwright, James A. Herne, (1839–1901) whose devotion to truth in art amounted to a passion, but whose personal inclination was strongly toward the simple and sentimental aspects of human nature.

GLORIFIER OF THE COMMON MAN

Herne's career as an actor began as early as 1859, and it carried him all over the country, from New York to San Francisco. In 1874 he was stage manager at Maguire's New Theatre, in the latter city, and two years later he became leading character actor and stage manager at Baldwin's. There he formed an association with David Belasco, and his first plays were written in collaboration with that talented young man. At Baldwin's Theatre in 1879 they presented *Marriage by Moonlight* and *Chums*, both of which were based on English originals, and the following year *Chums*, rechristened *Hearts of Oak*, became a hit in Chicago and New York. This piece was played for years by Mr. and Mrs. Herne. Herne's first original play was *The Minute Men of 1774–5*, which was produced in 1886 with fair success; his second was *Drifting Apart* (1888), a domestic drama laid in Gloucester, and dealing sympathetically with fishermen and their families. Although it was played two hundred and fifty performances on tour, it never attained genuine popularity, and was a financial loss. Herne, however, was so stubborn in his adherence to the realistic credo that he took an even further step toward popular disfavor in his *Margaret Fleming* (1890), "a faithful study of the cultivated American gentlewoman," the original production of which ran for only two weeks at a small theatre in Boston, and on which Herne lost several thousand dollars.

In 1893, however, great success came to this author, through his sentimental character study, *Shore Acres*, the play for which he is best remembered. It came unexpectedly and somewhat accidentally, for the play was mildly received at its initial showing in

Chicago, and, in spite of a better reception in Boston, it was unimpressive during its first week at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York, and would have been closed except for a contract which guaranteed a run of four weeks. Much to everyone's astonishment, during the third and fourth weeks it became popular, and, after being transferred to Daly's Theatre, ran for the entire season. For many years thereafter, on tour, and in stock, it proved a tremendous hit, restoring Herne's fortune, and providing a trusty vehicle for the acting talents of himself and his wife. It is a simple, homely melodrama, redolent with pathos, but even though its plot be contrived and insignificant, its characters represent the sort of truth to humanity in which Herne believed so religiously.

Herne wrote two more plays, both produced in 1899. These were *The Reverend Griffith Davenport*, a Civil War drama revolving around a Southerner who opposes slavery, and *Sag Harbor*, a rewriting of *Hearts of Oak*. The former was a failure, the latter a considerable success.

In evaluating Herne's contribution to the development of our native drama we reach the inevitable conclusion that his influence was chiefly in the emphasis on the faithful portrayal of the "common" man—whether he be Yankee farmer, New England fisherman, or Southern preacher. And much of the effectiveness of Herne's characterization was due to his own ability and integrity as a character actor. Before the close of the century there had been countless imitations of his plays—*The County Fair*, *Way Down East*, etc.—but none of these possessed the fidelity to life which Herne managed to achieve. He was uniquely able to ennoble the simple and sentimental specimens of humanity whom he chose to depict.

ADVOCATE OF "QUIET NATURALISM"

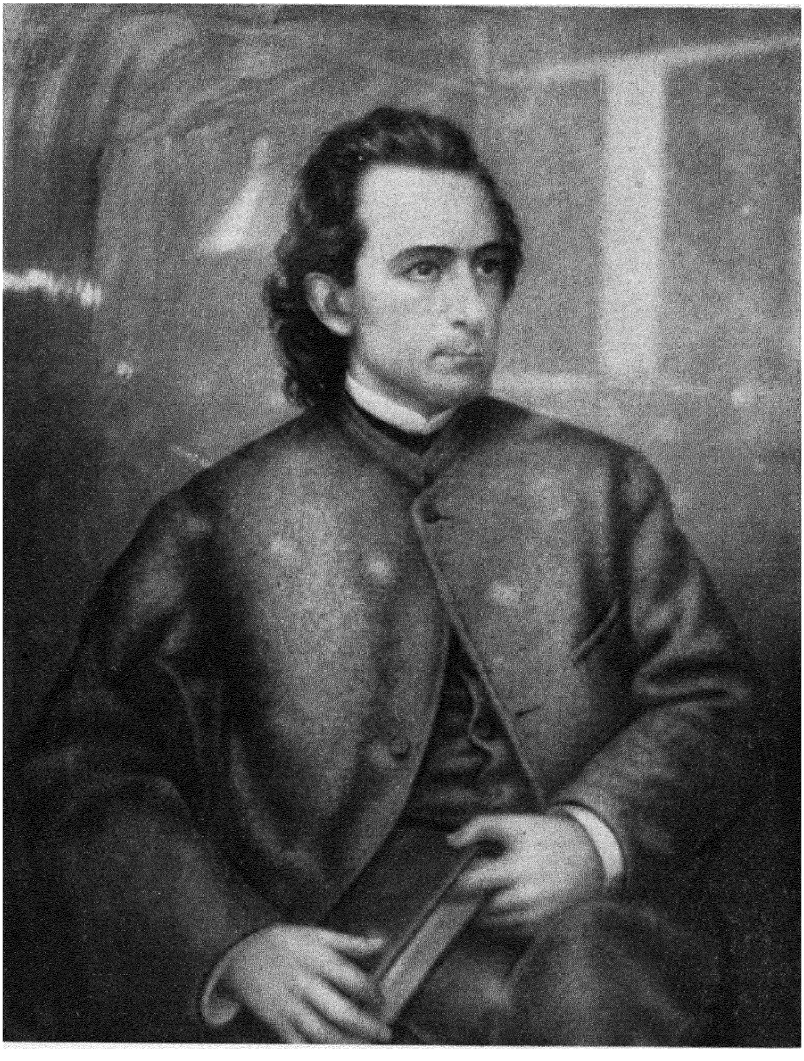
Of Steele MacKaye (1842–94) we have already spoken more than once, yet it would be unfair to omit him entirely from the present discussion. His contributions to the technical arts of the theatre were undoubtedly greater than his literary contributions, yet one of his plays, *Hazel Kirke*, achieved extraordinary fame. It served to open the new Madison Square Theatre in 1880, and enjoyed there a continuous run of almost two years. It was, furthermore, the first play to be sent on tour with duplicate com-

panies, and it was seen regularly throughout the country for thirty years. The statement has been made, and not disproved, that with the exception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Hazel Kirke* has had more performances than any play ever written. Laid in England, the play has to do with the forced marriage of Hazel Kirke to a nobleman, her return home after the marriage, her attempted suicide, and the repentance of her stubborn father. Although it followed a fairly familiar pattern of English melodrama, it possessed distinction because of its quiet naturalism. MacKaye, in other words, was another American playwright of that era who was concerned with the problem of relating the drama more closely to life. The tendency toward restraint in style seems to have been evident in several of his plays, but most evident in *Hazel Kirke*. This was his only major success as a playwright, though some historical importance attaches to *Dakolar* (1885), with which the Lyceum Theatre was opened, and *Paul Kauvar* (1887), a melodrama dealing with the French Revolution.

THE REALISM OF ACTION

If MacKaye is to be associated in our minds with realism of style, and Herne with realism of character, then William Gillette (1855–1937) can be identified with the realism of action. This is not to say that the former two playwrights were unconcerned with realistic action, but merely that Gillette laid special emphasis upon it. All three were actors as well as playwrights, and no actor is apt to minimize the importance of action. In a letter to Professor Quinn, who was editing *Secret Service* for publication, Gillette expressed his gratitude for the former's willingness to include the acting directions in the printed version of the play. "I would much prefer," he said, "that people read what my characters *do*—how they *behave*—and what is in their minds—than to merely get the words they utter."

Although Gillette made his debut as an actor in 1875, his first play was not presented until 1881. This was *The Professor*, a light comedy dealing with a middle-aged teacher and the difficulties he encounters because of the adoration of young female students. The piece was produced at the Madison Square Theatre, with Gillette in the title role, where it ran for one hundred and fifty-one nights, and then was taken on tour. Later the same year



Edwin Booth (1833–1893).

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

Maude Adams (1872–). Portrait by Ernest Haskell. One of the most luminous stars ever to appear on the American stage. (See p. 278.)

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

his second play, *Esmeralda* (written in collaboration with Frances Hodgson Burnett, on whose published story it was based), was also produced at the Madison Square, and ran for a full year. This was a rather sentimental play of family life, laid partly in North Carolina, but chiefly in Paris. It represents one of the earliest attempts at dramatizing the lives of the "folk" of the Carolina mountain region.

In 1886 Gillette achieved his first great success in the field of melodrama. In that year his *Held by the Enemy* was presented first in Brooklyn, then at the Madison Square in New York, where it enjoyed a long run. Although many previously-produced plays had dealt with the Civil War, *Held by the Enemy* is considered by Quinn to have been the first one of importance on this theme. It succeeded in personalizing through its characters the fundamental conflicts of the war, and it effectively illustrated the heroism of the spy. The latter element was to be used again in his even more famous *Secret Service.*

After an unsuccessful dramatization of Rider Haggard's *She,* and an original melodrama, entitled *The Legal Wreck,* Gillette turned to the composition of a series of farces, three of which proved immensely popular. These were *All the Comforts of Home* (1890), adapted from a German source; *Mr. Wilkinson's Widows* (1891), taken from the French; and *Too Much Johnson* (1894), which was largely original, though the germ came from a French musical comedy. In the last-named piece Gillette was a great hit as Augustus Billings, the philandering plantation owner who carries on his love affairs under the name of Johnson.

Although Gillette's career as a playwright extended well into the present century (his *Winnie and the Wolves* was produced in 1923), his last two hits were *Secret Service* (1895), and *Sherlock Holmes* (1899). These proved, indeed, the triumphs of his career. In the former he returned to the Civil War and spy theme, handling his material with consummate skill and creating in Captain Thorne a character which he played to perfection. Although the play was first produced in Philadelphia with Maurice Barrymore in the leading role, Gillette himself became Captain Thorne when the New York production opened in 1896. The next year he played it in London, and for many years thereafter he revived the piece and toured it extensively. Writing in 1927, Quinn re-

marked that Gillette "has now so completely identified the role of Captain Thorne with his own personality that it is hard for those who have seen him play, to imagine anyone else in it."

Certainly the same remark could be applied to Gillette's portrayal of Sherlock Holmes, which intermittently for more than a quarter of a century delighted the British and American publics. Although *Sherlock Holmes* was based partly on the famous detective stories of Conan Doyle, much of the plot was original with Gillette, and only three of its twenty-one characters were taken from the original source. These were Holmes himself, Dr. Watson, and "Professor" Moriarity, the arch-villain. The tall, cool, sensitive, moody Holmes was an ideal character for Gillette to portray. In appearance, in manner, and in his remarkable ability to suggest complete mastery of any situation, he was the perfect embodiment of the genius of Baker Street. Few actors have experienced such happy results in their attempts to write for themselves.

CLEVER IMPROBABILITY

In the realm of farce, the late nineteenth century reached its highest point of skillfulness in the plays of Charles Hoyt (1860–1900), whose first real success was *A Bunch of Keys,* first produced in the last month of 1882. Hoyt shared with Harrigan a remarkable facility in the delineation of comedy character types, but he laid more emphasis than did Harrigan on the plot itself. Preposterous as many of his comic situations were, they proved sufficiently credible for the theatre of his time, and they were always theatrically ingenious. *A Bunch of Keys* has to do with three sisters whose uncle has bequeathed a hotel to the one of them who is judged (by a traveling salesman) to be the homeliest. The efforts of the girls to avoid being the recipient of the bequest, and the efforts of their *fiancés* to get them to accept it, make for a lot of lively fun.

After the success of this piece, Hoyt began to turn out farces at regular intervals, and also made it a practice to assume the role of producer—thereby reaping a double fortune. With *The Texas Steer,* in 1890, he reached the maturity of his art as *farceur.* The play has to do with a congressman from Texas, who, with his family, encounters a series of hilarious adventures in the national capital. The following year Hoyt produced his greatest hit, *A*

Trip to Chinatown, a boisterous and improbable farce laid in San Francisco (though not in Chinatown). The original production of the play achieved a run of 650 performances (a record at that time), and on its revival in 1894, ran for 700.

It cannot be claimed that Hoyt was a significant playwright. His writing was superficial and ephemeral, but it was clever, and it gave pleasure to millions.

ADAPTATION AND COLLABORATION

Of all the playwrights of the late nineteenth century, David Belasco (1853–1931) offers the greatest problem to the historian, for his work was a bewildering *mélange* of originality, collaboration, and adaptation. A good deal of this confusion is the result of Belasco's indifference in the matter of crediting his sources.

We have mentioned in the preceding chapter that Belasco had his first play produced on the road in California when he was only twelve years old. When he was twenty, he served for some time in the West as Dion Boucicault's secretary and assistant, and from him learned many secrets of the dramatist's craft. The next year he became stage manager at Maguire's New Theatre in San Francisco, and there he became acquainted with James A. Herne. In 1876 these two were thrown together again at Baldwin's Theatre, where Herne was titular stage manager, but Belasco stage manager in fact. It will be remembered that at this theatre in 1879 they presented two plays on which they had collaborated: *Marriage by Moonlight* and *Chums*.

In 1881 Belasco had his play, *La Belle Russe* produced at the Baldwin Theatre, and then took the script to New York in the hope of selling it to Lester Wallack. Failing in this aim, he returned to San Francisco for a time. The play did fall into Wallack's hands, however, through Frank L. Goodwin, to whom Belasco had sold the rights, and Wallack produced it in 1882. It is a sensational melodrama, and although it was based on two obscure English plays, Belasco, following the fashion of the time, advertised it as "taken from the French."

Although Belasco did a considerable amount of play-adapting during his first years in New York (1882–86), he entered upon a much more important period in 1886, when he became stage manager for Daniel Frohman at the Lyceum Theatre, and collaborated on a series of plays with Henry C. DeMille (1850–93),

who had for some time served Frohman as a play reader. The team of Belasco and DeMille produced four hits in succession: *The Wife* (1887), *Lord Chumley* (1888), *The Charity Ball* (1889), and *Men and Women* (1890). Neither of these is important artistically, but each, through its popular success, contributed to Belasco's reputation (and self-confidence) as a playwright.

His next solid hit was *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, written with Franklin Fyles, and used to open the new Empire Theatre in 1893. This piece is characterized by Quinn as "one of the most vivid plays of Indian and army life which our drama contains." And in 1895 he produced with his *protegée*, Mrs. Leslie Carter, in the leading role, his enormously successful melodrama, *The Heart of Maryland*. Four years later Mrs. Carter starred again in his adaptation of *Zaza*, which proved both shocking and popular.

In 1900 Belasco began his association with John Luther Long, on whose short story, *Madame Butterfly*, he based his one-act play of that title, which was favorably received in its legitimate form, and which later, as an opera, became a modern classic. It was this play which launched Blanche Bates as a Belasco star. Subsequently Belasco and Long collaborated on two highly popular plays: *The Darling of the Gods* (1904), a tragedy of Old Japan, in which Miss Bates was starred during a continuous run of two years, and *Adrea* (1904), a romantic tragedy of the late Roman Empire, which provided Mrs. Carter with her most famous role. Later Belasco hits include *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905), another starring vehicle for Miss Bates, which in 1910 was presented as an opera with music by Puccini; *The Rose of the Rancho* (1906), which introduced Frances Starr as a leading woman; and *The Return of Peter Grimm*, a sentimental fantasy which was played long and effectively by David Warfield.

Belasco was not a literary playwright. He was an actor, a director, and a producer who wrote plays with extraordinary skill. He had his early training in a rough-and-ready school, where action and strong, simple motives were dominant. Although in the course of his playwriting career he passed through many phases, adapting himself somewhat to changing styles and points of view, he never relinquished his fundamental belief in simplicity of motive and strength of situation as the basic factors in drama. Because he knew so much about the theatre he was able

to apply a magic touch to whatever material he worked with, and it was this ability which brought so many writers to his door. He could, more surely than any of his contemporaries, make the implausible seem plausible.

BRILLIANT AND PROLIFIC

Clyde Fitch (1865–1909) had the most meteoric and brilliant career of all the American playwrights of his time. In 1886, following his graduation from Amherst College, he went to New York and began writing plays. His "break" came late in 1889, when he was commissioned to write *Beau Brummell* for Richard Mansfield. This play of wit and style was presented at the Madison Square Theatre in May, 1890, and was so successful that Mansfield kept it in his repertoire throughout his acting career. The effect on Fitch was to set him feverishly to work on a great variety of plays, many of which proved to be hits. Between 1899 and 1909 (the year of his death) he composed more than forty original pieces for the stage, and found time also for many translations and adaptations. Of his original plays the most famous are *His Grace de Grammont* (1894), a suave and delightful comedy of manners laid at the court of Charles II, in which Otis Skinner starred; *Nathan Hale* (1898), his first treatment of American history; *Barbara Frietchie* (1899), which proved a triumph for the talent and charm of Julia Marlowe; *The Climbers* (1901), a satirical comedy of New York society; *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (1901), a comedy which gave the beautiful young Ethel Barrymore her first starring vehicle; *The Girl with the Green Eyes* (1902), a powerful study of jealousy; *Major André* (1903), a drama of the American Revolution which, although a failure on the stage, was Fitch's own favorite among all his plays; *The Truth* (1906), a brilliant and beautifully fashioned "problem" play suggestive of the social plays of Ibsen, and whose heroine is a congenital liar; *The City* (1909), a sombre study of failure (because of inherited weakness) in New York.

The consensus of critical opinion is that *The Truth* is Fitch's finest play. It embodies all his skill as a craftsman, it exhibits his most perfectly delineated characters. And, although it was not at first appreciated in this country, it was immediately accepted in various European countries, and played there with outstanding success. It was, in fact, the first American play to be taken

seriously by the critics of Europe. Although Fitch did not interpret American life profoundly to the rest of the world, he did succeed, nevertheless, in making himself our first native playwright to win international prestige.

THE AMERICAN THEME

More firmly devoted to American themes and psychology was Augustus Thomas (1857–1934), whose father for a time managed a theatre in New Orleans, and who was brought up in the world of plays and players. At the age of fourteen he wrote his first play, and in his early twenties he organized his own company and toured the Middle West with a slap-stick farce entitled *Combustion*, and a curtain-raiser of his own composition entitled *Editha's Burglar*, based on a story by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It was this one-act piece which Thomas later expanded into a four-act play, *The Burglar*, which was successfully produced in Boston and New York in 1889.

After being trained for the legal profession, Thomas became a newspaperman, then a play adaptor and advance agent for A. M. Palmer in New York, and, after 1891, a professional playwright. It was the extraordinary success of his *Alabama*, produced by Palmer at the Madison Square Theatre, which enabled Thomas to drop his other activities and concentrate on the business of playwriting. Although the play is extremely sentimental, it is said to have accomplished a great deal in reconciling the bitter feeling between North and South which had persisted after the Civil War.

Thomas, like Fitch, was prolific. Between 1890 and 1925 he wrote no less than fifty plays. Some of these were farces, but the majority were serious treatments of American themes—dealing with economics, politics, and sectional problems. He was a strong proponent of local color, and on more than one occasion he visited localities for the purpose of gathering exact knowledge of them for use in his plays. Examples of his glorification of specific states (in addition to *Alabama*) are *In Mizzoura*, a comedy-drama which achieved great success in 1893; *Arizona*, a hit of 1899, wherein, as Freedley says, "honor and ethics are considered against a background of the army, cowboys, and Mexicans"; and *Colorado*, a failure of 1901.

Although today Thomas is not considered to have been a pro-

found thinker, he is nevertheless credited with having contributed to the growing seriousness of the American drama. He believed in the theatre of ideas, and he chose themes which seemed to him vital. As early as 1890 he employed (in a short play) the subject of telepathy, but it was many years before he was able to present this theme effectively on the stage. In 1907 it provided the basic idea for his most famous play, *The Witching Hour*. In 1911, with *As a Man Thinks*, an emotional drama on the theme of domestic fidelity, he made use of the "idea of mental healing," and thereby anticipated, in a sense, the methods of present-day psychiatry.

In Quinn's estimation, Thomas's importance lies chiefly in his distinctively American treatment of basic dramatic themes, of "those situations in which a human being becomes the center of a struggle between the intense desire for personal liberty and the circumstances which obstruct that desire in its fulfillment." In the European drama of revolt, liberty is so desirable "that everything else, from the family to the state, must go down before it. In Thomas's plays, as in the vast majority of American lives, the individual's liberty is precious, but the conflict for its preservation is constructive, not merely destructive."

PLAYS OF THE FRONTIER

In the development of a distinctively American drama one of the most interesting factors was the drama of the frontier. And the chief creators of this type were for the most part not professional dramatists, but poets and novelists.

A considerable number of plays produced during the last three decades of the nineteenth century depicted the character of the pioneer, and dramatized the rugged life of the world west of the Mississippi. *Kit the Arkansas Traveler*, by T. B. De Walden, produced in 1870, was one of the early examples of the type. Acted first by F. S. Chanfrau, and later by Henry Chanfrau, it retained its popularity until 1894, and served to create a standard for the pioneer hero.

In 1872 Frank Murdoch's *Davy Crockett* was produced, and became a tremendously popular piece in the hands of Frank Mayo. The play glorified, as the title indicates, the famous Tennessee trapper and hunter whose colorful and heroic life had been lived in the wilderness during the early decades of the century. Less successful, but more interesting historically, was *Ah Sin*, by those

brilliant chroniclers of the West, Bret Harte (1839–1902), and Mark Twain (1835–1910). Built around the character of Ah Sin, the Chinaman (celebrated in Bret Harte's poem as the "Heathen Chinee"), with a background of various types of San Franciscans, including rough miners, the play had more color than construction, and it failed in New York (in 1877), after a run of only five weeks. Bret Harte, however, was persistent in his efforts to achieve success as a playwright. Five of his dramatizations of his own stories never saw the stage. But in 1896 he had a hit with *Sue* (based on one of his stories, and written in collaboration with T. Edgar Pemberton), which not only enjoyed a long run in New York but which also was received with acclaim in London. The plot was melodramatic, but the character of Sue was drawn with appealing skill.

Another California writer who contributed to the New York stage was the poet, Joaquin Miller (1841–1913). His most popular play was *The Danites in the Sierras* (1877), whose theme was Mormon vengeance, and which, as Quinn says, was "based on Miller's conception of the West as a place of strong passions and emotions, of quick thinking and acting, of lurid lights and sharp shadows." It was played for years throughout the country by McKee Rankin and his wife, Kitty Blanchard. Miller had several other plays produced professionally, but *The Danites* was by far his greatest success.

Less famous in the annals of literature, but a notable creator of frontier drama, was Bartley Campbell (1843–88), a newspaper man and journalist of Louisville, Cincinnati, and New Orleans. Most of his plays were very melodramatic, but *My Partner*, presented at the Union Square Theatre in 1879, a strong drama of masculine friendship in conflict with love for a woman, is considered by Quinn to represent "the drama of the frontier in its most impressive form." The play was such a hit in New York that Campbell was enabled (through his royalties) to become his own producer, and it was later produced with marked success in both London and Berlin. Although Campbell subsequently wrote and produced several fairly successful plays, he eventually ran into financial difficulties, and in 1886 his mind broke under the strain of his activities, and he died in a hospital for the insane.

In this brief summary of native playwriting during the late nineteenth century, we have indicated that in a variety of ways

the American spirit was manifesting itself in the dramatic form. The manifestations often were crude, and in some instances were mingled with influences from abroad, but they were nonetheless admirable and significant. And they laid the foundations for the work of twentieth-century playwrights, who have brought our drama to an impressive maturity.

Chapter X

Forms and Phenomena: 1870–1900

So EXTRAORDINARY was the expansion of the theatre during the last three decades of the nineteenth century that there were opportunities for many specialized forms of stage entertainment. And although these forms had originated earlier in the century, and had been exploited in New York and a few other large centers, it was after 1870 that they were organized and operated on a nation-wide scale. There were five types which deserve mention —all but one of them distinctly different from the standard, legitimate drama. These were "Tom Shows," variety-vaudeville, burlesque, minstrel shows, and the circus. "Tom Show" is theatrical jargon for a touring production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and such productions were, of course, in a strict sense "legitimate," but they became so numerous and developed such a special world of their own that they must be considered an individual type.

TOM SHOWS

Although *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had its first successful production in 1852, and was revived frequently during succeeding years, it was not until the seventies that it was toured extensively. But by 1879 there were approximately fifty "Tom Shows" on the road. And the demand for them seemed unlimited. During the eighties the number increased with every season, and in the nineties there were between four hundred and five hundred companies in operation. Harry Birdoff, in his comprehensive history of this phenomenon, lists by name one hundred and thirty-five of the "better known Tom troupes of the nineties," and at the same time indicates that this list represents but a fraction of the total.

All available types of transportation were used by these shows: wagon, railway, and boat: every sort of assembly place was used for performance: tents, churches, halls, theatres, and opera houses.

Most typical was the tent-show, which, like the circus, carried not only its tent, but also complete seating and lighting equipment. The tents varied greatly in size, the largest ones seating as many as two thousand spectators. Production equipment and personnel varied proportionately. Little shows carried everything on a few wagons, and the few actors doubled as stage-hands and musicians; "mammoth" shows traveled in specially-built railway cars, and carried as many as seventy people.

"HERE COMES THE PARADE!"

Rivalry between companies was tremendous, and resulted not only in the most flamboyant advertising conceivable, but also in extravagant displays of scenery, costumes, bands, and parade features. The parade through the streets of the town or city, promoting interest in the play, came to be as important to the Tom Show as it was to the circus. Gilded chariots and wagons drawn by beautiful horses, gorgeously-costumed bands, ponies, dogs, cake-walkers, donkeys, and fife-and-drum corps were among the standard parade features. The Ed Davis company of the late nineties carried a parade which covered four blocks; but even this was surpassed by the Al W. Martin shows, whose motto was "Too Big for Imitators—too Strong for Rivalry!", and whose parade included a "Lady Zouave Drum and Bugle Corps, 18 Real Georgia Plantation Shouters, Mlle. Minerva's New Orleans Creole Girls' Fife and Drum Corps, the 'Original Whangdoodle Pickaninny Band,' Eva's $1500 gold chariot, a log cabin, floats, phaetons, carts, ornate banners, dazzling harnesses and uniforms, 3 full concert bands, the drum major an 8-foot colored boy, 10 Cuban and Russian ferocious, man-eating hounds, 25 ponies, donkeys, oxen, mules, horses, and burros, all trained as entertaining tricksters." This show traveled in three "70-foot magnificently equipped palace" railway cars, including a special diner.

THE BLOOD-HOUND BUSINESS

Special pride was taken by Tom Show owners in their blood-hounds (which, as nearly everyone knows, are important to the action of the play), and very frequently they gave them special advertising. Wellesley and Sterling's troupe, for example, carried on their playbills the following lines: "The wonderful dogs,

Sultan, Caesar and Monarch, for which Buffalo Bill makes a standing offer of $5000., or $3000. for Sultan alone, take part in the play. To see these wonderful dogs is worth the price of admission." So great was the demand for hounds during the heyday of Tom Shows that kennels were established all over the country for the special purpose of breeding them. Size and ferociousness were the desired characteristics (obtained by means of Cuban and Siberian strains), and some of the specimens produced were capable not only of frightening nearly to death the little Eliza whom they pursued, but also of thrilling with horror the entire audience. "Tip," a famous dog of 1889, measured 7 feet, 4 inches from tip to tip, and weighed 246 pounds.

SEEING DOUBLE

The close affinity between the circus and the Tom Show manifested itself in many ways, but most amusingly in the latter's adoption of the "double" idea—that is, the policy of presenting two of nearly every ingredient of the production. According to Birdoff, this development was brought about by the amalgamation of the circuses of P. T. Barnum and J. A. Bailey in 1881, with the resultant advertising of "two circuses for the price of one, with twice as many clowns, twice as many animals," etc. To meet this threat an enterprising Tom Show manager immediately began advertising two Topsys and two Markses, and presently other companies added twin Elizas, Simon Legrees, and Uncle Toms. "One Topsy accompanied with banjo the other's song and dance, amicably dividing the lines . . ." there was "a duplex whipping by bloodthirsty Simon Legrees," and "the firm of Marks & Marks, Lawyers, found one of them devoted to pantomime as his partner did all the talking." Probably nothing more fantastic than this simultaneous double-casting is to be found in theatrical history. But it drew the crowds, and it provided at least some justification for the use of such grandiloquent names as "Smith's Double Mammoth Uncle Tom's Cabin Company."

No play ever written has been given as many performances as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and none has ever created so amazing a tradition. Thousands of actors—including many famous stars—began their careers as "Tommers," and some of them continued with the show all their lives. From 1870 until the end of the century there was hardly a community in America (except in the deep

South) which was not visited every season by one or more Tom Shows. Bitterness over the slavery question and the Civil War died hard in the South. It is not dead yet. But in the seventies and eighties it was very strong indeed, and consequently the Southern states were dangerous territory for *Uncle Tom*. "Sometimes," says Birdoff, "a wandering troupe forgot its geography, finding itself below the Mason-Dixon line to its regret." The retreat to safety was apt to be made under a shower of bad eggs.

UNCLE TOM ABROAD

Uncle Tom was more than a national rage; it swept the world. Shortly after its original production in New York it was brought out in London, and was played throughout the British Isles for several years in various adaptations and under many titles, among which were *The Slave's Life in America, Negro Life in America, The Fugitive Slave, Eliza and the Fugitive Slaves*, and *Life among the Lowly*. Paris went mad over the piece, and there was intense rivalry among French theatres, each of which presented its own adapted version of the original novel or of some previous dramatization. With their own concepts of dramatic technique, and with almost complete disregard for both the original work and the facts of American life and geography, the Parisian adaptors achieved some extraordinary results. Snow fell on Uncle Tom's cabin; Niagara Falls intruded into the settings, and Topsy, "fitted out with a crude black mask, was introduced as Shelby's crazy slave"—though her madness was only feigned, in order that she (like Hamlet) might avenge her murdered parent! The vogue of *La Case de l'Oncle Tom* spread to the burlesque houses, to the restaurants, and to the world of popular music. "Children bought licorice advertised as *l'Oncle Tom candi*, and everyone sang "*Elisa la Quarterone*," "*Tom, ou le Chant des Noirs*," and "*Eva, Souvenir de l'Oncle Tom*."

In Spain the play became *La Cabaña del tio Tomas;* in Germany, *Onkel Tom's Hütte;* in Denmark, *Onkel Tomas;* in Holland, *De Negerhut;* and so on throughout the world in more than twenty languages. The exotic appeal of negro life was of course a factor in the play's foreign popularity, but probably an even greater factor was the human sympathy which it aroused—a universal feeling for the downtrodden and abused. As Birdoff neatly says, "The simple play stung the world's conscience."

Not even the combined forces of twentieth-century sophistication and mechanical entertainment have been able to kill the Tom Show. In 1931 various American newspapers reported that at last—after seventy-nine years of continuous performance—the play was off the boards. Immediately there were letters from people in all parts of the country pointing out that there were Tom Shows playing in their towns right then. The same reaction would occur today should any foolhardy reporter dare suggest that Uncle Tom was dead. He is still alive, riding in a trailer.

VAUDEVILLE

There is no real distinction between the terms variety and vaudeville. Both are used to designate a theatrical performance composed of specialty acts unrelated to each other, and with an emphasis on comedy. Actually this form of entertainment is of ancient origin; it is at least as old as pre-Christian Rome. But it was not until the nineteenth century that special theatres were set aside for such performances. In England they were called variety houses; in France the descriptive word was vaudeville—a corruption of Vau de Vire, the valley of the Vire River in Normandy, where there existed a popular tradition of ballad singing and tavern entertainment.

There were variety theatres in New York as early as 1850, but it was not until 1880 that the first chain of such theatres was established, and it was a year or two later that the word vaudeville came into American usage. It is interesting to note in this connection that Tony Pastor, who actually was the father of American vaudeville, disliked the French word, considering it affected, and clung consistently to 'variety.' According to Douglas Gilbert, who is our chief authority on the subject, the first American manager to label his show 'vaudeville' was John W. Ransone, who toured a specialty show in the early eighties; but it was B. F. Keith who popularized it—"the fussy and supersensitive Keith who appropriated it to bolster his vanity."

Variety in its early days was on the rough side, and its audiences were preponderantly male. Such women as patronized it were of questionable respectability. But a new era was inaugurated on October 24, 1881, when Tony Pastor offered at his new theatre on Fourteenth Street in New York, "a straight, clean variety show," and advertised it boldly as suitable for family

trade. It took him a while to develop a following, but his persistence was rewarded, and presently other managers began to adopt his policy.

BIRTH OF THE CIRCUITS

Although the idea of operating a chain of variety theatres was first put into effect about 1880 in New York by Miner and Canary (who established their own booking office and were able to offer acts from ten to sixteen weeks of playing time), it was not until B. F. Keith and E. F. Albee entered the field a few years later that the foundations were laid for the huge circuit which eventually blanketed the nation. In 1885 Keith and Albee (both of whom had begun as circus and museum men) formed a partnership and opened the Bijou Theatre in Boston with a continuous vaudeville show running from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. "Admission was a dime, and for five cents more one could obtain a chair." The venture was so successful that in 1887 the partners opened similar theatres in Providence and Philadelphia, and in 1893 took over the Union Square Theatre in New York. Thereafter, year by year, they extended their domain, until, in the 1920s, they controlled more than 400 houses in the East and Midwest.

Keith and Albee made a wonderful team. Albee was a realist, a hard, clever business man; Keith was a strict moralist, and a meticulous house manager. Albee's contention was that the essence of vaudeville was "women's backsides"; Keith would allow no profanity on the stage, no *double-entendres*, nothing which could offend the conventional patron. Between them they captured the American public and made millions of dollars.

During the nineties small vaudeville circuits were developed in all sections of the country. Most of them remained small until they were absorbed by Keith and Albee. A few expanded into impressive circuits, notably the chain created in New England by Sylvester Z. Poli, those of John Cort and John Considine in the Pacific Northwest, and the Orpheum circuit, which had its birth in San Francisco. Poli became a real power in Eastern vaudeville; Cort went broke; Considine teamed with Timothy D. Sullivan, a New York politician, to form the famous Sullivan-Considine circuit, which eventually reached into every far-western state; the Orpheum proceeded step by step up and down the Pacific Coast, and eastward as far as Chicago, comprising seventeen thea-

tres by 1905. Although he was not one of its founders, Martin Beck was the man who built the Orpheum into the most powerful western circuit. Entering the organization through its Chicago office, he rose rapidly to leadership, and, from 1906 onward worked hand in hand with Keith and Albee. It was he who built the historic Palace Theatre at Broadway and 47th Street, New York, in 1913—the theatre which became the symbol of "big-time" vaudeville, and which, when it closed in 1932, heralded the end of an era.

THE WILD NORTHWEST

Although he did not establish his first theatre (the Crystal in Seattle) until 1902, Alexander Pantages must be mentioned in connection with any account of vaudeville chains, for this uneducated Greek built in the early years of the century one of the largest popular-priced circuits in the country. After years of strenuous competition he out-built and out-managed the Sullivan-Considine organization, and blanketed the entire West. Because the Orpheum circuit's close connection with Keith-Albee gave it Western priority on the finest vaudeville acts, Pantages was usually limited to second-class attractions, but he exploited these with outstanding managerial shrewdness. It was something of a phenomenon that in the first decade of the century Seattle (a small and isolated city) should have been a vaudeville booking center second only to New York. The explanation lies, of course, in the fact that the Alaska Gold Rush, which started in 1897, made Seattle a boom-town, and attracted to it the adventurous and the speculative. From a population of only 80,000 in 1900, this northwestern outpost grew by 1910 into a provincial metropolis of 237,000. Just as the California Gold Rush of 1849 had made San Francisco a great theatrical center, so did the Alaska discovery make Seattle one—a lesser one, but nevertheless a center.

It was during the nineties that vaudeville began to import European music hall stars, though it was not until after 1900 that the practice became common. And in the nineties such stars limited their American appearances to a few of the largest houses. Chief importer of talent was Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York City, which throughout the decade made life bright on 23rd St., and later on 34th St., with a profitable combination

of beer and vaudeville. The proprietors were brewers as well as theatrical managers.

Among English music hall *artistes* who played across America (New York, Chicago, and San Francisco) were Vesta Victoria, Vesta Tilley, and Marie Loftus—three great names in London. And at the same time native stars were rising—Al Shean (who later teamed with Ed Gallagher to immortalize the endless and contagious song, "Oh, Mister Gallagher, Oh, Mister Shean,"); Lillian Russell (who alternated between musical comedy and vaudeville); and the Four Cohans, whose song-and-dance acts captivated the nation and started young George M. on a long and brilliant career as writer, producer and performer of musical comedy and straight plays.

The nineties was the formative period for vaudeville; it was after 1900 that the great circuits were established, that innumerable stars appeared, and that the pattern of American "family" vaudeville was crystallized and marketed to millions of regular patrons from coast to coast.

BURLESQUE

Like variety-vaudeville, burlesque had ancient origins, but did not take on a standard form and become a widely-distributed product until the late nineteenth century. Originally it was parody of any serious matter—literary, political, social or religious. Bernard Sobel, in his comprehensive book on the subject, finds Aristophanes to be the father of burlesque, and that racy writer belonged to the fifth century B.C. Mr. Sobel also points out that there were notable parodists in the Continental and English theatres from 1600 onward into the nineteenth century. And it was chiefly from England that we took our first American concepts of burlesque, concepts which found popular expression in the travesties of Mitchell, Burton, Brougham, and other New York wits of the 1840s and 1850s.

Our mid-century burlesque was, like its European proto-type, a light-hearted "ribbing" of classic plays or serious personalities and events; and often it possessed considerable literary merit of its own. It was not until the sixties that legs began to replace wit. The first impulse toward this change was probably furnished by Ada Isaacs Menken in 1861, when she "displayed herself in tights while strapped to the back of a living horse" in the melodrama,

Mazeppa. But much more important was the effect of *The Black Crook*, a spectacular extravaganza of 1866, which in its ballet offered a whole parade of legs, thereby arousing startled indignation in some quarters, but stimulating in thousands of theatregoers and many managers an ardent interest in the theatrical potentialities of the female form.

THE BRITISH BLONDES

Neither *Mazeppa* nor *The Black Crook* was, of course, a burlesque show. They merely provided inspiration for burlesque of the future. The first New York presentation to combine traditional parody with legs came with the engagement in 1869 of Lydia Thompson and the British Blondes, an importation from London, which offered a *mélange* of songs, dances, gags, and impersonations set in the framework of a story taken from Greek mythology. Although a large section of the public (especially the male public) was intrigued by the show, some of the critics were far from pleased. One referred to it as "an Irish stew . . . a bewilderment of limbs, bella donna and grease paint," and another remarked that "To represent Minerva with a fan and whiskey flask, Jupiter as a jig dancer, Venus with a taste for the can-can, is all done, we suppose, in a laudable spirit of burlesque, but we could almost hate Miss Thompson and her assistants for spoiling this pretty story." On the other hand, a third critic (Richard Grant White) found much to praise in the performance, and called particular attention to the beautiful diction of the principals. Furthermore, he could see no harm in the display of excellent female figures. The outcry against the latter came, he thought likely, from "mammas and papas who, having a very poor article of young woman lying heavy on their hands, are indignant that there should be so good and so easy an opportunity of trying it by a very high standard."

At any rate, Lydia Thompson triumphed, and from New York launched a series of nation-wide tours which continued for ten years, carrying to the most remote centers (such as Virginia City, Nevada) her combination of gags and glamour. She was the mother of modern burlesque, yet in her own productions she maintained a considerable amount of decorum, and a certain niceness. Sobel quotes her as saying on one occasion that "it was not the wearing of tights which was indecorous, but the manner in

which they were worn." There can be no question as to how strongly she would disapprove of the vulgarity which came into burlesque during the twentieth century, and which reached its climax in the "bumps" and "grinds" and strip-tease acts of Billy Minsky's shows.

During the 1870s several American burlesque troupes were formed, and most of them took their cue from Lydia Thompson. M. B. Leavitt was the manager who organized the most successful productions, and it was he who, with his Rentz-Santley shows, set a pattern which was to be followed for many years. The Leavitt formula provided a performance of three parts, and its ingredients were borrowed from the minstrel show, variety, and extravaganza. The first part consisted of songs, choruses and gags; the second was called the "olio," and included an assortment of variety acts; the third, "the afterpiece or burlesque, was a development of the minstrel-show walkaround—a grand finale by the entire company."

THE HONKY TONK

Yet, in spite of the standardization of productions by Leavitt and others, burlesque continued to be during the eighties and nineties a variegated, hit-or-miss business, at times indistinguishable from variety-vaudeville, and often a Honky Tonk species of entertainment. The Honky Tonk was a Far-Western institution, born of the California and Alaska gold rushes, and extremely popular with the rough and conglomerate populations of San Francisco and Seattle. The Honky Tonk was a saloon theatre, usually with a dance-hall attached to it, which featured girls and drinks in equal proportions. The typical Honky Tonk had a number of curtained boxes, where male patrons were visited by the show-girls, and it was the duty of the girls to solicit drinks (as many as possible) from the occupants. In some houses many of the "girls" were female impersonators. The entertainment was rowdy, and the reputations of the entertainers were generally low. As a matter of fact, veteran burlesque performers have been known to resent the implication that they had any connection with the world of Honky Tonk.

And there is a good deal of evidence that the standard burlesque companies of the eighties and nineties were not only surprisingly modest on the stage, but even more surprisingly respectable in

their private morals. One manager issued strict warnings against amorous partnerships among members of the troupe, and cut in half the salaries of those who ignored him. If they complained, he reminded them that two can live as cheaply as one! Most of the girls, we are told by veterans of the business, were honest, hardworking, thrifty, and decent. Some of them even carried their mothers on tour with them. That this condition still prevailed in the first decade of the twentieth century is asserted by Fannie Brice, who says she "never learned anything about life" during her early experience in burlesque. "The girls were very moral. They didn't go to parties. They were just home folks. Out of eighteen, sixteen were virgins."

THE MINSTREL SHOW

It will be recalled from earlier chapters that, although individual blackface comedians ("Jim Crow" Rice and others) attained popularity on the American stage as early as the 1830s, it was not until 1843 that a group of men (the famous Big Four—Emmett, Brower, Pelham and Whitlock) offered what historians all accept as the first minstrel show. Furthermore, it was this group which introduced the word minstrel onto our stage by labeling themselves the Virginia Minstrels. Previous to this the image conjured up by the word was one of a medieval ballad-singer.

The Virginia Minstrels were an instantaneous hit, and presently found themselves and their routine imitated far and wide. Among succeeding troupes were Christy's Minstrels, the Kentucky Minstrels, the San Francisco Minstrels, and others too numerous to mention. By 1870 the competition was so keen that minstrel show advertising became a veritable battleground of superlatives. "Superb" was matched by "Magnificent," and "Gigantic" by "Mammoth." Just as the Tom Show and the circus were driven by rivalry (and by the American taste) to double and triple the size of their troupes, the minstrel troupe was in the course of time multiplied from four performers to forty. It was in the seventies, as a matter of fact, that J. H. (Colonel Jack) Haverly, considered the greatest minstrel manager in history, first had his company's big bass drum inscribed with the challenging slogan, "Forty, Count 'Em! Forty!"

It seems impossible to fix on any exact date for the crystallization of the form which has come down to us as the traditional and almost unalterable minstrel show. But by the seventies this crystallization had certainly occurred. The show was in two parts, with an intermediate "olio" consisting of acts played well downstage before a drop curtain during the changing of the set. Part one followed a rigid pattern of dialogue and interspersed songs, with the blackface chorus seated in a semi-circle (the band behind them on a raised platform), and the dialogue being carried on by the Interlocutor and the two end men, Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones; part two offered the troupe complete freedom, and consisted of either variety acts, extravaganzas, or parodies of straight plays.

THE RIBS OF A HORSE

The Interlocutor was the "straight man," impressive of manner and grandiloquent of speech, who served as foil for the irreverent jibes of the clowning end men. Mr. Bones and Mr. Tambo derived their names from the instruments they used. According to Paskman and Spaeth, modern chroniclers of minstrelsy, the first set of "rhythmic noise producers" used by minstrels was an actual pair of bones made by Frank Brower (one of the original Virginia Minstrels) from the ribs of a horse sawed in twelve-inch lengths. Later these were replaced by sticks of ebony and other hard material. Mr. Bones's position was always at the right end of the circle. Mr. Tambo, the left end man, took his name from the tambourine, an instrument of European origin, but peculiarly adapted to minstrelsy because of its flexibility. Tapped on its head rhythmically, it serves as a light drum; shaken, with all its metal discs in operation, it is a wild and exciting noise-maker. In many cases the whole troupe carried tambourines, and by means of them created a bedlam of sound at climactic moments.

A perusal of minstrel show dialogue is either painful or entertaining, according to the taste of the reader. It is simple, it is filled with puns, and it is mechanically contrived. Yet, with only slight alterations, it served the purposes of vaudeville for many years, and more recently has been heard again and again on the radio. The durability of gags (and the nature of their metamorphosis) can best be illustrated perhaps by the most familiar one of all:

"Who was that lady I seen you with last night? That was no lady; that was my wife." About forty years later "my wife" became "your wife."

There were great names in late-nineteenth-century minstrelsy; McIntyre and Heath—most famous blackface team in history; Harrigan and Hart, who alternated between blackface characters in minstrelsy and Irish comics elsewhere; Primrose and West, both excellent performers, who headed their own company for thirty years; and Lew Dockstader, the greatest single name in minstrelsy, who first put on blackface in 1873, and never took it off, carrying it into vaudeville after the decline of the minstrel show in the early years of the twentieth century. It was as a member of Dockstader's troupe that Al Jolson got his start.

There were no feminine names in minstrelsy, for it was an all-male profession. Female impersonations, however, were often included in the show for comic effect.

THE BURNT CORK TRADITION

The minstrel show owed its existence to the negro—not only to his color, but also to his mannerisms and his music. Yet, as it developed, it was a white man's show—a white man who blacked his face. There were a few colored troupes—the first of which appeared in the seventies—but none of them attained the prestige or popularity of the best white companies. And, so strong was the blackface tradition of the minstrel show that even the colored performers covered their faces with burnt cork whether they needed it or not.

Unlike vaudeville and burlesque, which came to full bloom after the turn of the century, the minstrel show reached its height in the nineties. In the twentieth century it is a quaint survival, seen rarely in its original form, but coming to life (with varying degrees of transmogrification) in stage musicals, movies, and radio. The blackface entertainer has been largely replaced by the actual negro. And the latter no longer uses burnt cork.

THE CIRCUS

As we have already observed, the circus of the eighteenth century was a resident, semi-permanent institution, housed in a frame or brick-and-frame amphitheatre. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century it took to the road, and by 1820 there were

more than thirty small circuses traveling about New England and other Eastern states. They were small affairs, with two or three wagons, and perhaps half a dozen acrobats and clowns. There were no wild animals, for menageries at this time traveled separately, and provided competition for the circus. And there was no tent, but only a strip of canvas stretched around a ring of six-foot poles, to protect the performers from the gaze of outsiders.

But the circus grew, and by 1830 Buckley and Wicks boasted an outfit of 8 wagons, 40 horses, 35 people, and a tent 75 feet in diameter, capable of holding 800 spectators. In the 1840s the first circus band appeared, equestrianism (particularly bareback-riding) was added to the show, and at least one company traveled as far west as Chicago. In 1856 a still more important step was taken when Spaulding and Rogers toured via the railroad, owning their own cars, which were switched onto sidings at towns where they performed. It was in the 1850s, too, that P. T. Barnum entered the touring field with his Grand Colossal Museum and Menagerie. It was not, however, until 1871, when he combined his attractions with the circus company of William C. Coup, that he entered the circus world proper, and became the guiding spirit of The Greatest Show on Earth, presenting to a gaping public an amazing and unprecedented combination of "wild animals, curiosities, acrobats, equestrian performers, and clowns." With his penchant for outdoing all rivals, he carried the largest tent ever raised, and employed first two rings, then three.

BIGGER AND BETTER

In 1880 Barnum's circus was almost totally destroyed by fire, but, with his natural resilience, he rose at once to new heights by merging (in 1881) with James A. Bailey, whose circus was big and of established reputation. Thus was born the greatest circus the country has ever known, and whose name—combined with that of Ringling Bros.—is familiar to us still. It was, as Dulles says, "a still bigger and better Greatest Show on Earth." And Barnum knew the American public; he sold his circus to the millions not only by theatrical appeal, but also by his own lectures on temperance, and by convincing the church people that his aim was not to make money, but to "provide clean, moral and healthful recreation."

THE JUMBO INCIDENT

The three high points in Barnum's career as a showman were the exhibition of Tom Thumb in the early 1840s, the presentation of Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, in 1850, and his purchase of Jumbo, the world's largest elephant, in 1882. Jumbo had been the property of the Royal Zoological Gardens in London, and when news of his sale to Barnum was made public the British people rose in such wrath that the transaction took on the alarming aspect of an "international incident." "They were afraid," says Dulles, "that the loss of Jumbo would be followed by that of Shakespeare's grave or the Tower of London." And the elephant himself contributed to the drama on the day of his scheduled departure by lying down in the streets of London and refusing to budge. As "all England cheered" the pachyderm, Barnum's agent cabled his employer for instructions. "Let him lie there a week if he wants to," cabled Barnum in reply. "It's the best advertisement in the world." And he was right. When Jumbo finally reached New York, he led a torchlight parade to Madison Square Garden, where the circus was opening, and was cheered en route by half a million people. Subsequently he attracted millions throughout the country.

The nineties was the great era for circuses. Barnum and Bailey set the pace, but strong rivals arose—Ringling Brothers, Sells Brothers, Forepaughs—and countless smaller outfits, who together made America circus-conscious from Broadway to Podunk. Circus day became for all American youngsters, and for a huge number of adults, the most exciting day of the year. To the small town, as yet unsophisticated by the motion picture, and starved for spectacle, the circus, with its fantastic assortment of uniformed bands, calliopes, gilded chariots, prancing horses, ferocious animals, cavorting clowns, daring trapezists, bedizened ballerinas, and whooping Wild Westerners, brought color, romance, and such thrills as eclipsed even the Fourth of July. The fact that it brought also, in most instances, a small army of the world's slickest confidence men, pickpockets and gypsters, did not seriously dampen the public's affection for the circus. It is true that some towns, after repeated raids by especially rapacious outfits, passed restraining measures which set limits (geographical and otherwise) to circus operations, but on the whole the people forgot

and forgave, setting down their losses to their own gullibility. As P. T. Barnum well knew, we are a people who enjoy being "taken," provided the taker knows his business.

LYCEUM AND CHAUTAUQUA

Although neither Lyceum nor Chautauqua was during its early years in the strict sense a form of theatre, both eventually embraced theatrical entertainment, and this fact justifies an account of their nineteenth century origins.

According to Victoria and Robert Ormond Case, authorities on both these peculiarly American institutions, "Lyceum was born in 1826, when one Josiah Holbrook, of Millbury, Massachusetts, organized his farm neighbors into an association for mutual intellectual improvement." Starting with local speakers, the programs soon began to include speakers from a distance, and at the same time similar groups were organized in other communities. By 1850 there were three thousand Lyceums in the country. Famous scientists, philosophers, ministers, and writers were invited to address Lyceum groups, and although at first the speakers contributed their services, they soon began to accept "honorariums," and by the middle of the century were finding the activity a highly profitable one. Among early Lyceum celebrities were Horace Greeley, Louis Agassiz, Daniel Webster, Henry Ward Beecher, Alexander Graham Bell, James Russell Lowell, and the elder Oliver Wendell Holmes.

REDPATH THE PIONEER

As the number of Lyceums multiplied, the need became obvious for a bureau to supply speakers, and the first individual to meet this need was James Redpath, who sponsored the American appearances of Charles Dickens in 1842, and who later set up a booking office under the name of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau—an organization which still exists. Other bureaus came into existence as Lyceum business grew, but none seriously challenged the supremacy of this pioneer organization. By the close of the century the Lyceum circuit had become one of the major factors in American civilization—reaching virtually every community, and distributing with extraordinary effectiveness under the auspices of clubs, schools, and churches, a diversified program of educational and cultural entertainment which satisfied the mil-

lions of seekers after knowledge and artistic "uplift." It took a long time, however, for Lyceum to reach the point where it included *bona fide* drama in this program. After breaking the ice with recitals by dramatic readers, the Redpath Bureau finally, in 1910, presented the Ben Greet Players, of England, in two complete stage productions: Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors*. Thereafter Lyceum stages were occupied regularly by classic and modern plays.

Lyceum "courses," as they were called in order to emphasize their educational aspect, were pretty much limited to the winter season. And this left open an opportunity for a summer counterpart. It was Chautauqua which eventually seized the opportunity and put the country's culture on a twelve-month basis.

FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS

Chautauqua was founded (with no realization of its immense potentialities) by John H. Vincent, a young New Jersey minister, who had a special interest in Christian education, and who, in 1874, conceived the idea of a summer camp for Sunday-school teachers. Having some connection with a defunct camp site at Lake Chautauqua, New York, he arranged to offer a two-weeks' course for his students, including bonfires, community singing, and study, at a cost of six dollars. This trial effort, which attracted forty students, was such a remarkable success that within a few years the Chautauqua encampment attracted thousands. And, as it grew in popularity, it became less denominational and more broadly cultural, emulating, in fact, the winter Lyceum. The idea spread, and by 1900 there were no less than two hundred permanent summer Chautauqua establishments throughout the United States, pavilions and tent cities "set up in groves of trees beside this or that body of water."

The typical Chautauqua of the nineties was the Puritan's substitute for the theatre. Supported by church groups, it offered its subscribers a *mélange* of popular entertainment combined with Bible study, athletics, and community social events. On its program appeared famous orators, elocutionists, concert singers, Swiss bell-ringers, travelogues, glee clubs, and innumerable other attractions whose propriety could not be questioned. The two greatest features of this era were William Jennings Bryan and Russell H. Conwell. Bryan, "The Boy Orator of the Platte," and

thrice-defeated candidate for President of the United States, was, technically, the greatest orator of his time, and for twenty-five years he "played" the Chautauqua circuit, hypnotizing millions with the magic of his voice. His "Prince of Peace" lecture was delivered two thousand times, and his "Cross of Gold" became a national legend. Conwell, a minister, was a Chautauqua star for forty years, and his "Acres of Diamonds" lecture became the symbol of American psychology. With its thesis that poverty is stupid and unnecessary, and that fortune lies in our own backyards if only we have the ability to perceive it, "Acres of Diamonds" communicated greater satisfaction to more Americans than any message ever delivered. It was given publicly by its author on six thousand occasions, and it brought him a fortune which he employed in the endowment of Temple University in Philadelphia.

Considering the great popularity of Chautauqua in the nineties, it is surprising but true that touring tent units did not make their appearance until 1903. But from that date onward the business was operated as efficiently as vaudeville, and on an even larger scale. In its peak year (1924) there were 12,000 regular stands for Chautauqua, and its public reached the astounding total of 30,000,000. By that time, too, the legitimate drama had become a regular feature of its program. The rigid Methodist, who eschewed the commercial theatre, was at last, by means of the sanctimonious magic of Chautauqua, brought under the delightful spell of *Peg o' My Heart* and *Turn to the Right.*

THE THEATRICAL SYNDICATE

A natural but deplorable result of the application of big-business methods to the legitimate theatre was the formation in 1896 of a Theatrical Syndicate, the intention of which was to achieve a monopoly. Six men were involved in the operation: Samuel F. Nirdlinger (Nixon) and J. Frederick Zimmerman, theatre managers of Philadelphia; Al Hayman and Charles Frohman, owners of the Empire Theatre in New York; and Marc Klaw and Abraham L. Erlanger, New York booking agents. Moving swiftly and with shrewd calculation, they succeeded in obtaining control of most of the theatres in America, and thereupon forced actors and rival managers to accept their terms and their booking arrangements.

There was, of course, an immediate revolt against this trust, and for more than a decade the American theatre was a battleground. Most formidable among the managers who rebelled was David Belasco, who had just attained independent status as a producer, and who fought the Syndicate with all his power until its hold was weakened; individual stars who refused to sacrifice their freedom of action included Mrs. Fiske, Richard Mansfield, Joseph Jefferson, Nat Goodwin, James K. Hackett, James A. Herne, James O'Neill, Sarah Bernhardt, and various others of the highest rank. Bernhardt, excluded from standard theatres, played in tents, and Mrs. Fiske on more than one occasion appeared in such makeshift structures as roller-skating rinks.

"MONEY-GRUBBING TRADESMEN"

Critics, and others who had the best interests of the theatre at heart, cried out against the injustice and danger of the situation. As late as 1908 the venerable William Winter exclaimed that the theatre had "passed from the hands of those who ought to control it,—the hands either of Actors who love and honor their art or of men endowed with the temperament of the Actor and acquainted with his art and its needs,—and, almost entirely, it has fallen into the clutches of sordid, money-grubbing tradesmen, who have degraded it into a bazaar."

The fight put up by Belasco and the recalcitrant stars was a noble one, and it had some effect on the Syndicate; even more effective, however, was a counter-force which was first felt in 1900, and which grew steadily during the first decade of the twentieth century. This was the entrance into theatrical management of three brothers from Syracuse, New York, namely: Sam, Lee, and Jacob Shubert. Beginning with a chain of theatres in New York State, the Shuberts, with brilliant and ruthless aggressiveness, eventually created a nation-wide network of their own theatres, challenging the Syndicate in every center, and opposing Trust with Trust. The original Syndicate lost the battle; the Shuberts became the most powerful producing and booking corporation in the country, and even today, though they by no means exercise a monopoly, they control a majority of our commercial legitimate theatres.

BIRTH OF THE MOVIES

In the early nineties a number of inventors, notably Edison in America and Lumière in France, were experimenting with methods of making a series of photographs of people and objects with such rapidity that when these photographs were shown they created the effect of natural movement. Such pictures were first exhibited as peep-shows in penny arcades and billiard-rooms, where one put a coin in a slot, looked through the peep-hole, and watched human figures moving—"a man sneezing, a girl dancing, or a baby taking its bath." The first public projection of pictures on a screen occurred in 1895 at the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. The first theatre showing took place at Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York, in April, 1896. The novelty immediately spread to other vaudeville houses, and by the end of the century crude, flickering short films were a typical item on the standard vaudeville program. It was not, however, until the twentieth century that special theatres were established for motion picture showings. No one in the late nineties took this mechanical innovation seriously, or dreamed that it would someday threaten the very existence of all older theatrical forms.

Chapter XI

The Happy Days: 1900–1910

It is a curious but indisputable fact that every generation looks back at some previous generation with envy and labels it "the golden age," or "the happy days." This habit is, of course, explainable. We are sharply conscious of the troubles and shortcomings of our own era, and consequently we attempt to find solace in contemplation of the past. Our search for record of a happier period than our own is made easier by a host of sentimental biographies and memoirs, and by the narratives of aging historians, who tend to glorify the events of their own youth. Whether one finds his "golden age" in the distant or relatively immediate past depends on various factors—chief of which is the searcher's particular interest or passion. Seldom, however, does the choice fall upon the generation immediately preceding his own, for glamour requires a certain perspective, and the world of one's parents is more old-fashioned than glamorous. In 1910 the theatre of 1870 seemed wonderful; today we cannot resist a nostalgic admiration of 1910.

The early years of the present century were "happy days" certainly in the sense that all forms of theatrical entertainment were booming. The specialization which developed during the final decades of the nineteenth century was carried soon after 1900 to a triumphant commercial climax. If artistic ideals suffered in the process, that was only natural, for the theatre, like an individual, finds it difficult to serve two masters.

The year 1900 ushered in a variety of significant events. One of them was the inauguration of nation-wide burlesque circuits, or "wheels,"—chief of which was the Columbia wheel—; another was the formation of the United Booking Office, a combination of vaudeville managers which for several years exercised a vicious control—almost a monopoly—of the vaudeville world;

a third was the launching of *Theatre Magazine* under the editorship of Arthur Hornblow, a venture which provided the country with a lively and excellently illustrated monthly record of the legitimate theatre for a period of thirty years.

In 1900 scarcely a showman took the motion picture seriously, for it was still a cheap novelty, a rather contemptible side-show. Ten years later suspicions were growing that this upstart of the entertainment world bore watching; another five years and many a managerial brow broke out in a cold sweat. In 1900, and for several years following, the concern of showmen was how to beat their competitors in the established theatrical fields, and how to extract more money from a public which already was pouring millions into the ever-increasing number of box-offices throughout the nation.

THE VAUDEVILLE WAR

Particularly ruthless was the internecine war waged in the world of vaudeville. Circuits were no sooner established than they were faced with rival circuits; soon, inevitably, one was beaten and bought up by the other. There also was a constant battle between managers and performers. No sooner was the United Booking Office put into operation, with its obvious exploitation of the performer, than the actors formed a protective union called The White Rats, which fought valiantly against inequity of all sorts—salaries, commissions, billing, routes, etc.—and, although it was actually defeated, its efforts paved the way for a later organization of a more effective sort. There was even conflict in the booking world. Although the United Booking Office had succeeded in creating a virtual monopoly of variety acts, it was constantly harassed by the activity of William Morris, a shrewd independent agent, who managed somehow to circumvent the powerful combine, and who, in 1907, was retained by Klaw and Erlanger, in association with the Shuberts, to book vaudeville acts for their nation-wide chain of theatres. This move —inspired by jealousy—resulted in the Keith and Albee interests (United Booking Office) buying off Klaw and Erlanger for a quarter of a million dollars, on consideration that the latter stay out of vaudeville for a period of ten years.

MORRIS VS. ALBEE

This settlement took care of Klaw and Erlanger (who had plenty to occupy their attention anyway, inasmuch as they headed the legitimate theatre trust) but it did not remove William Morris from the vaudeville arena. On his own he proceeded to build up an independent booking agency, and with the help of Harry Lauder, the Scotch comedian who at the time was enjoying a sensational success in this country, Morris laid the foundation for his successful future. The vaudeville trust fought Morris and Lauder with everything they had, but Morris outwitted them. In Washington, D.C., when all theatres were closed to Lauder's appearance, Morris got the ear of President Theodore Roosevelt, who at the time was crusading as a "trust-buster," and who personally telephoned to the Belasco Theatre management, suggesting that Lauder be permitted to perform there. The request was granted, Roosevelt attended the performance, and Morris was triumphant. As Douglas Gilbert, our foremost authority on vaudeville, says, "Everybody had a good time except Albee,"—the villain in the piece. "Few men," he adds, "took Albee. One, maybe two, double-crossed him. Morris was the only agent who took him, and Morris fought fair."

No doubt it is difficult for today's younger generation to realize the appeal that circuit vaudeville had for theatre-goers of thirty and forty years ago. In order to do so one must bear in mind that at that time there were no radio broadcasts, and that motion pictures were very immature. The public craving for broad comedy and sentimental music was therefore satisfied largely by vaudeville. Burlesque appealed to the coarser (largely masculine) crowd, legitimate plays offered satisfying story romance and comedy, but the sure-fire, easy-to-take, low-priced, and variegated offerings of standardized vaudeville supplied an undeniable need for family entertainment. By 1910 there was not an American community of any considerable size which did not have at least one vaudeville house. And these houses could offer performances at convenient times, with more frequent repetition than was possible in the legitimate houses. An actor in a standard, full-length play was not usually, even in those pre-Equity days, expected to give more than ten performances a week, but the vaudeville performer, whose act required only ten

or twelve minutes, could, and did, give as many as five performances a day. It is true that on the high-class, "big-time" circuits, such as Keith-Orpheum, only two performances a day were required (thus giving rise to the term "two-a-day"), but on the lesser circuits a continuous show was offered from noon to midnight, a convenience to the public which anticipated the continuous-run policy that has proved so advantageous to motion picture exhibitors.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

On the standard eight-act vaudeville bill there was something to please almost every type of patron. The entertainment ran the gamut from animal acts (trained seals, trick dogs, etc.) and "dumb" acts (acrobats and trapeze artists) to high-brow dramatic sketches presented by stars of the legitimate stage. In between came tap-dancers, monologists, magicians, ballad- and blues-singers, European clowns, Oriental ballet troupes, black-face comedians, tabloid musical comedies, mind-readers, movie newsreels, and various other novelties, naive or sophisticated. Vaudeville built itself into American life. Women shoppers used it for relaxation in mid-afternoon; teen-agers swarmed to the Saturday matinees; entire families booked regular seats for a specific night of the week throughout the season.

There were many big names in vaudeville: Walter C. Kelly ("The Virginia Judge"), George Beban, Chic Sale ("The Specialist"), the Marx Brothers, Nat C. Wills, Frank Tinney, W. C. Fields, Clark and McCullough, Whipple and Huston (Walter Huston, later a star of stage and screen), Harry Houdini (the greatest magician who ever lived), and the female luminaries whom Gilbert calls the "Madames of the Marquee," Eva Tanguay, Nora Bayes, Elsie Janis, and Irene Franklin. Of these four women, Tanguay was the most sensational. It was she who during the early 1900s changed the tone of vaudeville from sentiment to sex. Her box-office draw was terrific, and her salary ran from $3000 a week up. Although puritanical B. F. Keith was shocked by her flagrant disregard of the niceties which were integral to his policy, her popularity was so great that he was forced not only to tolerate her, but even to agree to billing her as "The Girl Who Made Vaudeville Famous"—a phrase of her own coinage.

BIBLE OF SHOW BUSINESS

In 1905, when the battle for vaudeville markets was being fought with ruthless vigor, a young New York vaudeville critic named Sime Silverman, annoyed at being reprimanded for the honest critiques he was writing for the *Telegraph*, borrowed $1500. from his father-in-law and founded a weekly trade paper called *Variety*. Although vaudeville news was already purveyed to the show world by *Billboard* (founded in 1894), *Variety* gradually, through its uncompromising honesty, won its place in the profession, and exerted a wholesome influence by opposing the tyranny of the Keith-Albee interests and supporting such independent characters as William Morris. Eventually *Variety* expanded to include news of the entire show world, and today it is the unquestioned "bible" of the profession. Although its picturesque jargon, made up of innumerable trade idioms and slang expressions, is the characteristic which is most frequently mentioned, its integrity is its basic virtue. Its famous headline, STICKS NIX HICK PIX (which translated means that rural communities are not supporting movies with rural themes) is a charming bit of theatrical journalism, but more important is the fact that when one wishes to consult an objective and "unslanted" piece of dramatic criticism, one is apt to turn to *Variety*.

THE LEGITIMATE STAGE

The theatre-building boom which started near the close of the nineteenth century continued with increased vigor during the first two decades of the twentieth. Many of the new houses were dedicated to vaudeville, but more were intended to house road shows and resident stock companies. This was the great era for stock. Every city had one or more companies playing the year round, and the larger towns were served by companies which split each week between two or three communities. Although accurate statistics are unavailable, it is estimated that in 1910 there were as many as 2000 stock companies operating in the country. Among these organizations there was no rigid uniformity of policy, but the typical routine was the presentation of a new play every week, the same actors appearing in each play throughout the season. As with professional baseball clubs, the players were retained by the manager for one or more seasons according to

their success and popularity. Many popular actors built such a steady following in a particular city that they stayed on for years and years. Others moved about the country at a rapid rate.

Stock was the chief training school for actors in those days; it was almost the only training school, for the community and college theatres had not yet developed, and private dramatic schools were extremely few. Theatrically ambitious young people knocked regularly at the stage doors of stock houses, and hundreds of them were engaged every season for walk-ons and bit parts. As utility players they learned the art of acting in a strenuous but eminently practical way. Frequently stock was the stepping-stone to Broadway, for the New York managers always had eyes for promising talent in the "provinces," and the "major leagues" recruited regularly from the "minors."

HAPPY IN A SQUIRREL-CAGE

The artistic standard of stock productions varied tremendously. Usually it was not very high. The plays presented were for the most part recent popular successes from Broadway, with farce and melodrama predominating, and the productions were given routine, slap-dash preparation. There was not much time for finesse when a play had only five or six rehearsals. Actors were forced by circumstances to give "stock" characterizations, and most of them changed their style slightly if at all from week to week. They were under too great pressure for experiment or artistic growth. In the Eastern portion of the country, where the Sunday closing law prevailed, players had at least one day of rest. In the Far West, on the other hand, the typical schedule called for ten performances a week—seven nights and three matinees. In Pacific Coast cities plays frequently opened at the Sunday matinee, following the one and only complete dress and scenic rehearsal of Sunday morning. In picturing this activity one must remember that the actors had given two performances of another play the day before, that after the closing performance Saturday night they had gone home to lay out their wardrobe for the new piece, and to study feverishly the lines which they were expected to be "up in" the following morning. Finally, let us consider the fact that after the curtain had fallen on the Sunday night performance, the exhausted performer was handed his "sides" for still another play—which would open the following Sunday!

The well-protected actor of today very properly shudders at the thought of such a heartless policy. And yet the stock player of 1910 was usually a happy individual. He was revolving in a squirrel-cage, but he liked it. And, because of this, his performance was animated and in most cases competent. The audience was friendly, the play ingratiating, and "a good time was had by all." If the result was not high art it was at least as satisfying to the general public as is the average motion picture today.

BROADWAY AND THE ROAD

The road show and the Broadway production, on the other hand, often attained superior artistry. They had the stars, they had the money, and they had the time to spend on production. Sometimes the plays were stupid in their sentimentality or sensationalism, but surprisingly often they were of high quality. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the nature of the Broadway stage (and its extension on the road) during the period under discussion is to list the typical attractions of each year. The reader, meanwhile, will please bear in mind that the list is in no case complete —but merely representative.

1900

At the dawn of the twentieth century, New York theater-goers were excited over *Ben Hur*, the spectacular dramatization of the famous novel by General Lew Wallace, which had opened in the previous November, and which was to run throughout the season. Edward Morgan was Ben Hur, Mary Shaw was Amrah, Emmett Corrigan was Ilderim, and William S. Hart (later to become the outstanding hero of Western films) was Messala. They also liked Clyde Fitch's new melodrama, *The Cowboy and the Lady*, which had opened on Christmas day, and which starred the popular Nat Goodwin and the beauteous Maxine Elliott.

On January 17th a single performance was given of Ibsen's *The Master Builder*. The cast was undistinguished, and obviously the one performance could not leave much of an imprint on the public consciousness, yet the event seems worthy of our record because it was the first production of this noble play in America.

"SAPHO" AND THE POLICE

In February there was to-do over *Sapho*, by Clyde Fitch out of Alphonse Daudet, with Olga Nethersole, the reigning "vamp," in the title role. Although the police were slow to catch up with this sensational display, they closed it on March 5th, after 29 performances. Undismayed, Miss Nethersole switched to Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, and continued happily on her primrose way. At this time also Mme. Modjeska was appearing in a repertoire of classics which included *Mary Stuart*, *Macbeth*, and *Marie Antoinette*. And at the end of March E. H. Sothern opened his production of Hauptmann's poetic drama, *The Sunken Bell*, which despite its Teutonic obscurity achieved a run of 40 performances.

Early in April came the spectacular dramatization of the famous historical novel, *Quo Vadis*. And it came not singly, but in a pair of productions which opened under separate managements, at the Herald Square and the New York Theatres, on the evening of the 9th. Neither production could boast itself a smash hit, but both won some measure of success. One dramatization was by Stanislaus Stange, and the other by Jeannette L. Gilder. The former proved the more palatable, and was seen for 96 performances. The following December the play was revived with a revised cast headed by Wilton Lackaye, and continued for 32 performances.

SOTHERN IN "HAMLET"

The next month to offer anything new of interest was September, when Augustus Thomas's strong drama, *Arizona*, proved the autumn's first hit. Theodore Roberts and Eleanor Robson were principals. Close on the heels of this production came *Richard Carvel*, dramatized from the novel by Winston Churchill (not the statesman) and presented with great effectiveness by the Empire Theatre company, which included John Drew, Arthur Byron, Ida Conquest, Olive May, and many other outstanding performers. A week later E. H. Sothern appeared in *Hamlet* for the first time on a New York stage.

The rural drama then entered the lists, with James A. Herne appearing in his own play, *Sag Harbor*, supported by Julia Herne, his wife, Chrystal Herne, his daughter, William Hodge (soon

to become a star), and Lionel Barrymore. The play opened September 27th and ran for 76 performances. But *David Harum* (adapted from the immensely popular novel of the same title), which opened four days later than *Sag Harbor*, outdistanced its bucolic rival, and with William H. Crane in the title role, ran up a total of 148 performances.

For contrast, David Belasco offered Mrs. Leslie Carter in a revival of his own adaptation of the sensational French melodrama, *Zaza*, and Richard Mansfield made his first New York appearance in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The latter, we may note with some satisfaction, outdistanced the former. But even more popular was Rostand's poetic historical drama, *L'Aiglon*, in which Maude Adams scored one of her greatest early successes. At the end of October the mighty James O'Neill reappeared in his perennial hit, *Monte Cristo*, and added 80 performances to his long record with this romantic piece.

THE "FLORODORA" GIRLS

A bright spot of November was *Florodora*, the musical comedy which broke all records, and which introduced the immortal sextette of girls. Equally bright, though with a different lustre, was the five-week repertory engagement of Sarah Bernhardt and Benoit Constant Coquelin, which included presentations (in French) of *L'Aiglon*, *Hamlet*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *La Tosca*, and *La Dame aux Camélias*.

The year went out in a blaze of theatrical excitement, for on New Year's Eve there were five openings on Broadway: *The Burgomaster*, a musical comedy with Raymond Hitchcock and Henry E. Dixey; *In the Palace of the King*, romantic drama with Viola Allen; Margaret Anglin in *Mrs. Dane's Defense*, by Henry Arthur Jones; Ada Rehan in Paul Kester's *Sweet Nell of Old Drury;* and E. S. Willard in the first performance of a four-week repertory which included Robertson's *David Garrick*, Barrie's *The Professor's Love Story*, and *Tom Pinch* dramatized from Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

This sampling of the theatrical fare of 1900 (a small percentage of the total offerings) should suffice to prove that theatregoers at the beginning of the century were not suffering from lack of either quantity or quality.

1901

The year 1901 was but two weeks old when its first big theatrical hit arrived. This was Paul Kester's stage adaptation of the romantic period novel by Charles Major entitled *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, and the star was Julia Marlowe. Exactly one week later came Clyde Fitch's biting social satire, *The Climbers*, in which Amelia Bingham scored a brilliant success.

This was a Fitch year. On February 4, when *The Climbers* had barely settled into its long run, the same author's lively comedy, *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, opened with the young and lovely Ethel Barrymore as Madame Trentoni. This was Miss Barrymore's first starring role, and *Theatre Magazine* commented that although she was "rather young and inexperienced to be starred," yet she was clever and had "a charming personality and refinement of manner." The next evening Charles Frohman and David Belasco presented Paul M. Potter's dramatic version of Ouida's novel, *Under Two Flags*, with Blanche Bates starred, and immediately found themselves possessed of a hit. This florid melodrama was mounted, said one critic, with "splendor."

THE FOUR COHANS

Not content with two hits running simultaneously, Clyde Fitch opened his *Lovers' Lane* on February 6 (two nights after the premiere of *Captain Jinks*) and this third entry proved a winner also. Later in the month the Four Cohans (of vaudeville fame) arrived in a new musical farce entitled *The Governor's Son*, whose author and leading man was young George M. Cohan himself.

March openings were not numerous or distinguished, but two items arrest attention: Robert Loraine's New York debut in *To Have and to Hold;* William A. Brady's revival of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with Wilton Lackaye as Uncle Tom and Theodore Roberts as Legree. It may be presumed that Broadway was growing envious of the rest of the country, where Tom Shows were almost continuously on view.

The first day of April brought *Are You a Mason?*, a farce adapted from German sources by Leo Ditrichstein, with a cast which included May Robson, Arnold Daly, Cecil B. DeMille, and, in the chief comic role, Ditrichstein himself. Two weeks later, at

the Empire, Charles Frohman staged an effective revival of Sardou's *Diplomacy*, with William Faversham and Margaret Anglin in the leading roles.

Ignoring the eighteen productions which were brought out during the later spring and summer months, we come in September to *The Auctioneer*, by David Belasco, which marked the beginning of David Warfield's career as a star (after years in burlesque), and also the beginning of his long and profitable association with Belasco. The role of Simon Levi in this play was long remembered as one of Warfield's most telling characterizations.

Highlights of October were *A Message from Mars*, an enormously popular melodrama which served to introduce to America two excellent English actors: Charles Hawtrey and Henry Stephenson; and Justin Huntly McCarthy's period romance, *If I Were King*, in which E. H. Sothern portrayed the dashing French medieval poet, François Villon. This was one of Sothern's greatest successes in romantic drama, and the role served him for many years as a popular vehicle.

"QUALITY STREET" AND A PARADE OF ROMANCE

On November 4th the ubiquitous Clyde Fitch made his fourth entry of the year with *The Way of the World*, but the piece (unlike its predecessors) had a short run. A week later occurred the American premiere of J. M. Barrie's charming comedy, *Quality Street*, in which Maude Adams, as Phoebe Throssell, stole all hearts. And a week after that, Augustus Thomas immortalized another state of the union with his *Colorado*.

The last month of the year was filled with new displays of white wigs, velvet breeches, and flashing swords. Richard Mansfield strutted in Booth Tarkington's *Beaucaire*, Charles Dalton swashbuckled in *The Helmet of Navarre*, Henry Miller was flamboyant and adroit in *D'Arcy of the Guards*, Mrs. Leslie Carter headed a huge and colorful company in Belasco's melodrama of aristocratic France, *Du Barry*, Kyrle Bellew and Eleanor Robson joined the romantic parade with *A Gentleman of France*, and finally, on New Year's eve, Otis Skinner revived the classic of American poetic drama, Boker's *Francesca da Rimini*. In 1901 the legitimate stage was still the principal means of escape from the commonplaces of contemporary life into the splendors and

graces of the past. The motion picture had not yet provided such an escape.

1902

On the 13th of January one of London's reigning stars, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, made her first New York appearance. At the head of her own company she played a three-week repertory engagement, presenting Sudermann's *Magda,* Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* Björnson's *Beyond Human Power,* and several other plays chosen to exhibit her emotional powers. One of her leading men was George Arliss, who also at this time made his New York debut, and who went on to a brilliant career of stardom on the American stage as well as in motion pictures.

February features were Paul Potter's *Notre Dame,* taken from Hugo's novel, with Hilda Spong and George Barbier; and *As You Like It,* with Henrietta Crosman making her first New York appearance as Rosalind. Chief event in March was Robert Edeson's debut as a star in *Soldiers of Fortune,* a dramatization by Augustus Thomas of a story by Richard Harding Davis. April was a dull month, brightened only by the revival at the Empire of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest,* with Margaret Anglin, Charles Richman, and William Courtenay. May was not much more productive—except in the field of musical comedy, where *The Wild Rose* burst into happy bloom (with the assistance of Edwin Foy, Elsie Ferguson, and a host of beauties which included Evelyn Florence Nesbit; and where, also, *King Dodo* flourished in the hands of Raymond Hitchcock. Most significant among straight plays of that month was the revival by Mrs. Fiske of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* a dramatization of Thomas Hardy's sombre novel in which she had first appeared in 1897.

COMEDIANS AND BEAUTIES

After the summer doldrums came a rash of musicals, the most contagious item being *Twirly Whirly,* produced by Weber and Fields at their Music Hall, with the full strength of their extraordinary company of comedians and beauties, which included William Collier, Weber and Fields themselves, Lillian Russell, Fay Templeton, and Bessie Clayton. In the serious drama Pinero scored most heavily, his *Iris* being produced in September with Virginia Harned and Oscar Asche, and his *The Second Mrs.*

Tanqueray being revived with Mrs. Campbell in October. Both productions were offered by Charles Frohman.

A surprise October success was Ben Greet's English production of the old morality play, *Everyman*, in which Edith Wynne Matthison and Charles Rann Kennedy made their American debuts. For many years thereafter these two players devoted themselves assiduously to the presentation of religious and poetic drama, and Mr. Kennedy achieved fame as a writer of plays with a spiritual message. *Everyman* enjoyed a run of 75 performances in the autumn, and a subsequent run of 56 the following spring.

IMMORTAL DUSE

November was a strong month. On the 3d came Clyde Fitch's new play, *The Stubbornness of Geraldine*, with Mary Mannering; on the 4th began Eleonora Duse's repertory season with her Italian company, the offerings being three plays by Gabriele D'Annunzio: *La Giaconda*, *La Città Morta*, and *Francesca da Rimini;* on the 12th Mrs. Fiske and Tyrone Power presented Paul Heyse's heavy Biblical drama, *Mary of Magdala*, which ran for more than a hundred performances; on the 17th James K. Hackett produced *The Crisis*, a dramatization by Winston Churchill of his own novel; and on the same date Viola Allen and Edward Morgan appeared in Hall Caine's dramatization of his own best-selling novel, *The Eternal City*. That month Broadway could not be accused of frivolity.

December began heavily also, but lightened at the approach of the holidays. On the 1st Richard Mansfield starred himself in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (achieving a creditable run of fifty performances); on the 3d David Belasco produced his spectacular Oriental melodrama, *The Darling of the Gods*, starring Blanche Bates, and including a veritable army of sterling players —among them, Charles Walcot, Albert Bruning, and George Arliss; on Christmas day came Clyde Fitch's *The Girl with the Green Eyes;* and on the 29th, George Ade's musical satire, *The Sultan of Sulu*, which sent the old year out with a laugh, and kept the laugh going for many months thereafter.

1903

During this calendar year there were exactly a hundred openings on Broadway, twenty-eight of which were musicals. First

big hit in the latter category was *The Wizard of Oz,* based on the immensely popular fantasy of L. Frank Baum, and played to everyone's delight by the great comedy team, Montgomery and Stone. Then came *The Prince of Pilsen,* which ran through the spring and summer, and was revived for shorter runs each spring during the following four years. In the autumn the musical leaders were *Whoop-Dee-Doo,* a bouncing extravaganza produced by Weber and Fields, Victor Herbert's operetta, *Babes in Toyland* (192 performances), and *The Girl from Kay's,* with Sam Bernard, Harry Davenport, Marie Doro, and Elsie Ferguson (205 performances). The winning December entry was *Mother Goose,* adapted from the traditional English pantomime, and with interpolated numbers by George M. Cohan and others.

THE FITCH POT BOILS

Four of the seventy-two straight plays were from the fast-flowing pen of Clyde Fitch. None of them was important, several were facile adaptations from foreign sources, but they kept the Fitch pot boiling and made their contribution to the million dollars this author is reported to have made from his playwriting—presumably the first playwright in the world to profit so handsomely.

From the standpoint of dramatic literature the year was not a distinguished one. Farce followed melodrama, and sentimental comedy followed farce: *Mice and Men, The Earl of Pawtucket, A Fool and His Money, My Wife's Husbands, Under Cover, Are You My Father?, Raffles, The Marriage of Kitty, What's the Matter with Susan?*—these titles tell the story. Among the more interesting offerings were *Resurrection,* a dramatization of Tolstoy's novel by Henri Bataille and Michael Morton, in which Blanche Walsh was the star; a revival of *Arrah-Na-Pogue,* a Dion Boucicault hit of 1865; Tyrone Power and Rose Coghlan in *Ulysses,* a poetic drama by Stephen Phillips; Mrs. Fiske in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*—her first New York appearance in this role; Forbes-Robertson in a dramatization of Kipling's famous novel, *The Light that Failed;* William Gillette in J. M. Barrie's charming whimsicality, *The Admirable Crichton;* Arnold Daly in Shaw's *Candida* (first professional production of the play in New York), which opened shyly with a trial matinee, and suddenly bloomed into a hit with a run of 133 performances; Henrietta

Crosman in Belasco's *Sweet Kitty Bellairs;* and Eleanor Robson in Israel Zangwill's ingratiating comedy, *Merely Mary Ann.*

If the public was not often edified at the theatre of 1903, at least it was steadily amused.

1904

Although there were actually more plays presented in New York in 1904 than there were in 1903, the increase was due entirely to the flurry of repertory which struck the city in the later year. Which is to say that more old plays were revived.

The first big hit of the year was a western melodrama, *The Virginian,* a dramatization of Owen Wister's famous novel of the same title, in which Dustin Farnum achieved stellar success. Opening on January 5th, the play ran for 138 performances. On the 18th of the month Ada Rehan opened a season of repertory, supported by Otis Skinner, and offered three classics: *The Taming of the Shrew, The Merchant of Venice,* and *The School for Scandal.* Miss Rehan's extraordinary popularity made the venture a happy one. And on February 8th Viola Allen (also an outstanding favorite in classic comedy) revived *Twelfth Night* for 16 performances.

On March 1st Richard Mansfield braved the gloom of Russian atmosphere with a production of Alexis Tolstoi's *Ivan the Terrible,* which he performed 15 times, and then went on to a series of revivals of his past successes: *Beau Brummell, A Parisian Romance, Beaucaire,* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* At the end of the month The Century Players produced (for the first time in America) Ibsen's sombre *Rosmersholm.* It had only 8 performances.

HARDY PERENNIALS

On March 28th occurred a revival of the celebrated French melodrama, *The Two Orphans,* which had been such a sensation at A. M. Palmer's Union Square Theatre thirty years before, and in the distinguished cast were Grace George, Kyrle Bellew, James O'Neill, Clara Morris, and Margaret Illington. The revival lasted for 56 performances.

On April 18th there was a curious double revival of *Camille,* one production headed by Virginia Harned and William Courtenay, the other by Margaret Anglin and Henry Miller. Neither

production enjoyed much of a run—the former lasting for 8 performances, and the latter for 16.

Among the early autumn openings the most successful was the sentimental piece of backyard Americana, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, dramatized from the best-selling novel of Alice Hegan Rice. And an additional offering in the field of simple emotions was the revival of Denman Thompson's *The Old Homestead*, which had been a favorite on our stage from the time of its first performance as a sketch in 1875, and which now managed to survive for 61 performances.

Then came a real smash hit—*The College Widow*, a comedy by the popular humorist, George Ade. Without the assistance of a stellar cast it achieved a run of 278 performances. In somewhat pathetic contrast, George Bernard Shaw's clever Napoleonic comedy, *The Man of Destiny*, was revived (from the previous season) by Arnold Daly for only 8 performances.

A CONSPIRACY OF SENTIMENT

On September 26th David Belasco and David Warfield (who had discovered their affinity with the production of *The Auctioneer* in 1901) took the public by storm with their presentation of Charles Klein's assault on the tenderhearted, *The Music Master*. Warfield appeared in this role (with a short interruption) for two years.

Chief October event was the Sothern and Marlowe repertory season of classics under the management of Charles Frohman. The first engagement carried them to the end of November, and this was followed by several other engagements during the winter and spring. Among the plays offered were *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *If I Were King*, and *The Sunken Bell*. This was the first New York co-starring appearance of this pair, who were to continue their association for many years with such outstanding success.

Early in November George M. Cohan, who had been rising in the theatrical world, starred himself (for the first time) in his own musical comedy, *Little Johnny Jones*, and was supported by his veteran vaudevillian mother and father, and by Ethel Levey. Although the original run of the play totaled only 52 performances, there was a revival of it the following season, and in the

history of both years one finds that the public was humming and whistling its hit tunes: "Give My Regards to Broadway," and "The Yankee Doodle Boy."

ECHO DE PARIS

By way of sophistication, Mme. Réjane, the renowned French dramatic actress, offered (with her own French-speaking company) four weeks of repertory beginning November 7th, including such favorites of the Parisian stage as Daudet's *Sapho*, Porto-Riche's *Amoureuse*, Brieux's *La Robe Rouge*, Becque's *La Parisienne*, Berton and Simon's *Zaza*, and the inevitable *La Dame aux Camélias*.

As we have previously noted, this was a year of repertory. On December 5th Robert B. Mantell opened a series of revivals which included *Richard III*, *Othello*, and *Richelieu*.

A novelty of December was a musical version of Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* entitled *Lady Teazle*, in which Lillian Russell appeared in the title role. This opened on Christmas Eve. The day after Christmas Maude Adams appeared in a revival of her previous success, Barrie's *The Little Minister*, the play in which she made her debut as a star in 1897. On the same day Edward Terry, a popular English star, opened a repertory engagement with a group of modern plays, comprising Pinero's *Sweet Lavender*, Louis N. Parker's *Love in Idleness*, the same author's *The House of Burnside*, and Stephenson and Yardley's *The Passport*. An undistinguished bill of fare. Also, and finally, on the 26th, Viola Allen began a revival of *The Winter's Tale*, which continued for 32 performances.

MILLIONS FOR FUN

It had been a poor year for new plays, a good one for old. There were, however, new excitements of a sort in the New York realm of entertainment: at Coney Island was opened a new amusement park called Dreamland, which was said to have cost $2,000,000, and which boasted among its extravagant features a Pompeiian Building, wherein was presented a spectacular exhibition of "The Last Days of Pompeii"; and announcement was made of the immediately forthcoming construction of the mammoth Hippodrome on Sixth Avenue (extending from 43rd St. to 44th St.) to

cost a $1,500,000, whose proscenium arch would measure 116 feet in width, and the equipment of which would include tanks for aquatic events, sinking stages, and many other technical facilities for the production of grandiose vaudeville, circus, and revue acts.

1905

When one surveys the theatrical record of these early years of the century one becomes painfully aware of the lack of first-rate American playwrights. The country was filled with adequate playhouses and talented actors—only the playwrights were in default. There were, of course, Clyde Fitch, Augustus Thomas, David Belasco and Charles Klein, all able craftsmen, but content usually with hack work, either uninspired originals or unimportant adaptations. Fitch, with his usual fecundity, contributed four plays to the New York stage during 1905: *Cousin Billy*, *The Woman in the Case*, *Her Great Match*, and *The Toast of the Town;* Thomas provided *Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots*, *The Education of Mr. Pipp*, and *De Lancey*. No one of these titles adds distinction to our dramatic literature.

BUSY BELASCO

Belasco presented in New York in January the third play written by him in collaboration with John Luther Long. This was *Adrea*, a romantic tragedy laid in the fifth century on an island in the Adriatic Sea. The huge cast was headed by Mrs. Leslie Carter and Tyrone Power. At this time Belasco controlled his own theatre in New York, but his productions were shut out of theatres in other cities by the Trust, and to meet this challenge he built a new theatre in Washington, D.C., where *Adrea* was given its first performance on December 26th, 1904. It was then brought to Broadway, where it ran until May 4th, and was revived during the following season. Dr. Quinn thinks very highly of the play, and asserts in his *History of the American Drama* that it "so far has not been excelled in its own species . . . by any play acted in English in the Twentieth Century." Less literary, but much more popular, was Belasco's second offering of the year, *The Girl of the Golden West*, which came the following November, with Blanche Bates and Robert Hilliard in the prin-

cipal roles. Five years later this melodrama was converted into an opera with music by Puccini, and opened at the Metropolitan Opera House with Emmy Destinn and Enrico Caruso as stars.

The smash hit of the year, however, was Charles Klein's melodramatic *The Lion and the Mouse*, which opened in November and ran for two years, amassing a total of 686 performances. The play revolved around the character of an unscrupulous millionaire, played effectively by Edmund Breese, and the rumor was that the character was inspired by John D. Rockefeller. Two other native products attracted sufficient attention to warrant mention: *Strongheart*, William C. DeMille's drama with a modern American Indian as hero (in which Robert Edeson was appealing), and Edwin Milton Royle's western, *The Squaw Man*, which provided William Faversham with a starring vehicle for a run of more than 200 performances, and which featured the character of an Indian girl (played by Mabel Morrison) as heroine.

SHAW TO THE RESCUE

Apart from these melodramas, romantic and otherwise, the American plays of 1905 were unexciting. Importations, on the other hand, furnished not only excitement, but in several cases stimulating ideas and extraordinary artistic charm. The plays of Shaw, for example. His *You Never Can Tell* was given its New York premiere on January 9th, with Arnold Daly and Mabel Taliaferro in the leading roles, and enjoyed a surprising run of 129 performances. The following September his more provocative, and certainly more important, *Man and Superman* was shown for the first time in this country, and, with the brilliant English actor, Robert Loraine, in the role of John Tanner, it achieved 192 performances—a record for this now-established classic which was broken for the first time in 1948 by Maurice Evans. The same month Arnold Daly opened a two-month repertory season of Shaw plays, presenting *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny*, *How He Lied to Her Husband*, *You Never Can Tell*, *John Bull's Other Island*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

"AN INSULT TO DECENCY"

Of the latter group all were revivals except *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and this piece proved so shocking to some of the citizenry

that complaints were made to the police, and both Mr. Daly and his leading lady, Mary Shaw, were arrested and haled into court on charges of presenting an immoral play. The New York newspapers attacked the production viciously. The *Herald* called the play "an insult to decency," the *Sun* said "it smelled to heaven," the *Evening Post* thought it "contemptible and abominable," and the *Times* announced soberly that Mr. Daly had "made a serious mistake." But despite the furore the culprits were acquitted in court, and the outraged public was left to gnash its teeth in vain.

A pleasant antidote to this Shavian unpleasantness was, however, served up immediately by J. M. Barrie, whose sweet whimsicality, *Peter Pan*, opened at the Empire Theatre on November 6th, with Maude Adams in the title role. Although the original production ran for only 123 performances, it was revived frequently during succeeding seasons, becoming the best-loved fantasy of modern drama, and in England a national tradition. Another Barrie play, *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*, opened on Christmas Day, with a cast headed by Ethel Barrymore, and although its popularity did not equal that of *Peter Pan*, it was successful enough, and it, too, has had many revivals.

A BIT OF GLOOM

There were heavy as well as light plays from abroad. *When We Dead Awake*, by Henrik Ibsen, was given 23 performances in March; Robert Browning's poetic tragedy, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, was seen 5 times during April and May; Maeterlinck's romantic drama, *Monna Vanna* (with Bertha Kalich and Henry Kolker), opened in October, and ran for 50 performances; and Olga Nethersole played Paul Hervieu's *The Labyrinth* for 16 performances during late November and early December.

A lilt was given to the close of the year by the production, beginning Christmas Day, of Victor Herbert's ingratiating (and thereafter perennially popular) comic opera, *Mlle. Modiste*, in which the piquant Fritzi Scheff sang and danced her way to one of her greatest triumphs.

1906

In 1906 the New York theatre was obviously changing. There were more productions than ever before, but there was less repertory and fewer revivals. Plays by native dramatists increased in

number but did not improve in quality. There were three repertory engagements: Richard Mansfield in a series of revivals of modern and classic plays during March and April; four weeks of English romantic drama and melodrama (*Paolo and Francesca*, *The Lyons Mail*, etc.) by H. B. Irving, Dorothea Baird and their London company during October, and three weeks of Shakespeare by Robert B. Mantell and his company in November.

Among new plays of foreign origin presented during the year the most interesting were: Henri Lavedan's *The Duel*, with Otis Skinner; Jacob Gordin's dramatization of Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, with Blanche Walsh; Henry Arthur Jones's *The Hypocrites*, with Richard Bennett and Doris Keane (209 performances); Pinero's *His House in Order*, with John Drew and Margaret Illington; and Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, with Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Gertrude Elliott. Interesting revivals included: Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, with Arnold Daly and Chrystal Herne; Brandon Thomas's fabulously popular farce, *Charley's Aunt*, with Etienne Girardot, who had created the leading role on Broadway in 1893; Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, with Viola Allen; Robert Browning's *Pippa Passes*, with Mabel Taliaferro (nine performances, all matinees); and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, with Alla Nazimova, the Polish actress who in this production made her debut on the English-speaking stage.

"THE GREAT DIVIDE"

Of the many new plays of American authorship presented during the year, few indeed arouse any sense of literary pride. Actually only one has taken its place in anthologies of supposedly important native plays. That one is William Vaughn Moody's *The Great Divide*, which was presented by Henry Miller on October 3d, with himself and Margaret Anglin in the principal roles, and which achieved a highly successful run of 238 performances. Although today *The Great Divide* is something less than thrilling, it was in 1906 an admirable improvement on the melodramas to which the public was accustomed. Written by a professor of English at the University of Chicago (who was also a very good poet, though this play is not poetic) it is literate, well constructed, and honest in motivation and characterization. Dealing, as it does, with the impact of Eastern culture and Western violence (the story concerns a refined young woman

of Puritan inheritance who falls into the hands of three rough characters in the Rocky Mountain region, is gambled for by them, and finally comes to love and accept the one who wins and takes her by force) the play appealed to all Americans, and symbolized to them the two dominant aspects of our civilization. And its formula is still a good one in the theatre—the intelligent treatment of a conflict between passion and refinement.

Other American plays of that year deserving brief mention, for one reason or another, are: *The Clansman*, by Thomas Dixon, Jr. from his own novel, and later to serve as the basis for the epoch-making motion picture, *The Birth of a Nation; The Chorus Lady*, by James Forbes, in which Rose Stahl was starred after playing a one-act version of the same story in vaudeville for two years; *The New York Idea*, by Langdon Mitchell, with Mrs. Fiske; *The Rose of the Rancho*, a florid melodrama by David Belasco and Richard Walton Tully, which with Frances Starr in the leading role enjoyed a long and prosperous run; *The Man of the Hour*, by George Broadhurst, a superficial melodrama which hit the popular taste to the extent of a run of 479 performances; and *Brewster's Millions*, a farce-comedy based on George Barr McCutcheon's story, which delighted money-conscious Americans with its plot of the young man who is faced with the problem of spending a million dollars in one year, and which is historic for the introduction to the stage of the fictitious actor, George Spelvin (an invention of Winchell Smith, co-author of the play), who has become a familiar American legend.

MUSICALS GALORE

Although one may be critical of the artistic and intellectual level of straight plays, one is always more tolerant of musicals. And a survey of the 33 musical productions which were heard during 1906 leads one to the conclusion that theatregoers of the time were satisfactorily cared for in the matter of tuneful diversion. On the very first day of the year they were introduced to George M. Cohan's lively and memorable piece, *Forty-five Minutes from Broadway*, and, unless they were impervious to infectious melody, they carried in their heads for many months the two hit numbers: the theme song, bearing the play's title, and "Mary Is a Grand Old Name." Then there were Victor Herbert's *The Red Mill*, with Montgomery and Stone; *The Vanderbilt*

Cup, with Elsie Janis; *Twiddle-Twaddle*, with Weber and Fields and their extraordinary company; and such now-forgotten but then delightful frivolities as *The Social Whirl*, *Mamzelle Champagne*, *About Town*, *The Rich Mr. Hoggenheimer*, *The Blue Moon*, *The Parisian Model*, and *The Belle of Mayfair*.

Commercially the theatre was booming. Except in San Francisco, where in April the earthquake and fire destroyed all nine of the city's playhouses.

1907

Although in 1906 there had been an ebb of repertory, in 1907 it flowed freely. In January Sothern and Marlowe opened an eight-week season, during which they offered a diversity of literary pieces, including Sudermann's *John the Baptist*, Percy MacKaye's *Jeanne D'Arc*, Hauptmann's *The Sunken Bell*, and four plays by Shakespeare. In October they returned for two weeks in a purely Shakespearean repertoire. In January also Charles Frohman presented the celebrated English actress, Ellen Terry, in a three-week engagement, which included performances of Shaw's *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (for the first time in New York), Heijermans' masterpiece of Dutch fishermen's life, *The Good Hope*, and Charles Reade's one-act, *Nance Oldfield*.

On March 4th Ben Greet and his English players opened an engagement which continued for several weeks, and which included presentations of six Shakespearean plays, as well as Charles Reade's *Masks and Faces* and the morality play, *Everyman*. Later in the same month Richard Mansfield appeared in a series of revivals of his popular vehicles (*Peer Gynt*, *Beau Brummell*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *A Parisian Romance*) which proved to be his last stand on Broadway, for he died the following August. Four of the five revivals represented successes of previous seasons; *Peer Gynt* had been performed by him first on February 25th, and had been given for 22 performances up to the time it was incorporated in the repertory group.

ITALIAN VITALITY

The most unusual repertory program of the year, undoubtedly, was the four-week season of the Italian star, Ermete Novelli, who, with his own company and in his native tongue, presented in rapid

succession beginning March 18th, seventeen plays of an international character, including *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, Goldoni's *The Beneficent Bear*, the same author's *A Curious Accident*, a modern Italian adaptation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, Alexandre Dumas's *Kean*, and several other French and Italian pieces. The company played a two-week return engagement in New York in December.

In April Robert B. Mantell played a two-week engagement in Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu* and six plays by Shakespeare. From October 18th to December 10th Arnold Daly and his company (with the assistance of Madame Hanako, the Japanese tragedienne, and her company) presented a series of one-act plays, the products of various English, Irish, American, and Japanese playwrights. This venture represents one of the very few instances when the short literary play has been given an extended hearing on Broadway. The final repertory effort of the year occurred in November, when Mrs. Patrick Campbell appeared for one week in four of her famous roles, the plays being *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *Magda*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*.

It will be understood, of course, that in nearly every case, repertory engagements in New York were incident to extended tours of the country.

MORE SHAW

In addition to repertory offerings, notable plays of foreign authorship produced during the year included: *Widowers' Houses*, by George Bernard Shaw, presented for the first time in New York with Effie Shannon and Henry Kolker; a revival of the same author's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, with Mary Shaw; John Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*, with Ethel Barrymore (for a disappointing run of 20 performances); Sardou and de Najac's *Divorçons*, as adapted by Margaret Mayo, with Grace George starred; an adaptation of Guiraud's play, *Anna Karenina*, based on Tolstoy's famous novel, with Virginia Harned and John Mason; Henri Bernstein's *The Thief*, as adapted by Haddon Chambers, starring Margaret Illington and Kyrle Bellew, which ran for 281 performances; and a revival of Shaw's *Candida* by Arnold Daly, with Margaret Wycherly in the title role and Mr. Daly as Marchbanks.

Among American dramatists Clyde Fitch and Augustus Thomas held their top-ranking positions by the productions of *The Truth*, by the former, and *The Witching Hour*, by the latter. The phenomenally prolific Fitch had been supplying Broadway with several plays each season, but most of them had been extremely superficial. In *The Truth* he did more than reveal his facility as a craftsman—he created a group of thoroughly convincing characters, chief among them being Becky Warder, the heroine, who is a congenital liar. The play is high comedy, and Professor Quinn, who has made a careful evaluation of Fitch's work, considers it "the crest" of his effort. Although the play's excellence was not perceived on its first presentation, January 7th, and its run embraced only 34 performances, it was produced with outstanding success in London shortly afterwards, with Marie Tempest in the leading role, and then moved on to triumphs in the continental countries. It gave its author an international reputation such as never before had been gained by an American dramatist. On the strength of its European success *The Truth* was revived the next season by Clara Bloodgood, who created the role of Becky in the original New York production, and was toured by her throughout the country. In 1914 it was successfully revived on Broadway by Grace George.

A MARKET FOR THE OCCULT

Not far behind Fitch in fecundity was Thomas, and he, too, was content usually to turn out whatever the market seemed to require. *The Witching Hour* is no great work of art, but at least it gave the impression of importance because it dealt with matters which at the time were being given serious consideration among those who passed as thinkers. These matters were in the realm of "occult science," and were specifically telepathy and hypnotism. In the climactic scene of the play the hero hypnotizes almost instantaneously the man who is threatening to shoot him, and thus forces him to drop the gun. Although the episode lacks scientific accuracy, it was accepted by the audiences of 1907, and carried the play to a run of more than 200 performances in New York as well as a road tour of two full seasons. John Mason achieved, in the leading role, one of his major triumphs.

Few other native plays brought to light that year merit discussion, although there were several distinct hits. *The Rejuvena-*

tion of Aunt Mary, by Anne Warner, provided much innocent fun for the public and marked May Robson's debut as a star. The farce was revived frequently by Miss Robson in later years. *The Warrens of Virginia* proved a ten-strike for its author, William C. DeMille, and for its producer, David Belasco. Although Frank Keenan and Emma Dunn headed the cast, a supporting role was played by Mary Pickford, who at this time made her Broadway debut. Another hit was *Polly of the Circus*, by Margaret Mayo, with Mabel Taliaferro. Among the failures, on the other hand, was *Sappho and Phaon*, a poetic tragedy by Percy MacKaye, gifted son of Steele MacKaye. Produced by Harrison Grey Fiske, with Bertha Kalich and Henry Kolker in the title roles, the play lasted for a pathetic 7 performances.

FIRST OF THE "FOLLIES"

In the musical comedy field George M. Cohan led the pack with *The Talk of New York*, in which Victor Moore was featured; and among the operettas the sensation was Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, with Donald Brian and Ethel Jackson. The latter achieved the extraordinary total of 417 performances. Historically important, too, was the production of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1907*, the first in a long series of spectacular revues conceived and presented by Florenz Ziegfeld. Although this first edition of the *Follies* did not glitter with many brilliant names, and although it had only 70 performances, it was nevertheless sufficiently successful to encourage the repetition of the idea.

Theatrical sidelights of the year: Richard Strauss's *Salomé* (based on Oscar Wilde's notorious play), created a scandal on its presentation at the Metropolitan Opera House; headliners in vaudeville included Eddie Foy, Al Jolson, Joe Cook, Harry Houdini, Adele and Fred Astaire, and Trixie Friganza; there were more than four hundred nickelodeons in business. The latter item has an ominous significance, for, in case the reader does not know, a nickelodeon was a place for the exhibition of that novelty, the motion picture.

1908

There were but three ventures in repertory on Broadway during 1908. E. H. Sothern and his company led off at the end of January, and continued until the end of April. Plays presented

were: *Our American Cousin* (in which Sothern for the first time assumed the role of Lord Dundreary, created by his father in 1858), *Hamlet, If I Were King, The Fool Hath Said: 'There Is No God'* (Laurence Irving's dramatization of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*), and Paul Kester's version of Cervantes' *Don Quixote.* In May the first three of these plays were revived for an engagement of three weeks.

Beginning February 8th, Olga Nethersole and her company offered three weeks of repertory, the torrid star appearing in many of her famous roles, such as Magda, Sapho, Camille, Adrienne Lecouvreur, and Mrs. Tanqueray. And on May 2d Mme. Vera K. Komisarzhevsky and her Russian associates opened a three-week series of productions which included *A Doll's House,* Sudermann's *The Fires of St. John,* Gorky's *The Children of the Sun,* and Maeterlinck's *Sister Beatrice.*

Shaw was strangely absent from the Broadway stage during the year, but there was a reasonable quota of English and Continental plays on view. Maude Adams appeared in *The Jesters,* a poetic drama translated from the French of Miguel Zamacoïs, and the Irish National Theatre Company of Dublin presented Yeats's one-act comedy, *A Pot of Broth,* and Lady Gregory's moving playlet, *The Rising of the Moon,* each serving for a time as a curtain-raiser for Charles Frohman's production of a French farce entitled *Twenty Days in the Shade.* It was in these performances that J. M. Kerrigan (for many years an admired actor in this country) made his New York debut.

In February Mrs. Patrick Campbell appeared in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's adaptation of Sophocles's *Electra,* the translation from the German being by the English poet, Arthur Symons; and in the same month Otis Skinner starred with great success in Paul Potter's *The Honor of the Family,* which was an adaptation of Emile Fabre's dramatization of Balzac's *La Rabouilleuse.* In March Charles Rann Kennedy's allegorical Christ-play, *The Servant in the House,* provided the young Walter Hampden with his first starring role.

"THE DEVIL" ON TWO STAGES

On the evening of August 18th there was a curious double-opening of Ferenc Molnar's melodramatic fantasy, *The Devil*—one production offered by Harrison Grey Fiske with George

Arliss in the title role, the other presented by Henry W. Savage, with Edwin Stevens. This duplication was caused by the failure of the Hungarian author and his agent to copyright the play in the United States, and by a presumably accidental sale of the American rights in the play to two rival managers. The upshot was that Mr. Fiske and Mr. Arliss outdistanced their competitors, and ran up a total of 175 performances to the latters' 87. It is a matter of minor importance, no doubt, but of a certain picturesqueness, that in the Savage and Stevens production of the play, a supporting role was carried by a young actress named Theodosia de Cappet, who later was to achieve world-wide fame as the reigning "vamp" of motion pictures under the name of Theda Bara.

From England came two clever comedies by the rising playwright and novelist, W. Somerset Maugham. The first was *Jack Straw*, in which John Drew and Rose Coghlan appeared (together with a charming young actress named Mary Boland); the other was *Lady Frederick*, in which Ethel Barrymore was starred. And from the same source came another smash hit from the canny Scot, J. M. Barrie—the tender and humorous *What Every Woman Knows*, in which Maude Adams created with devastating charm the American version of Maggie Wylie. This role was recreated with equal effectiveness in 1926 by Helen Hayes.

DOMESTIC HITS

If no play of artistic importance was contributed by American playwrights during the year, at least there were several domestic hits. One of these was Eugene Walter's social melodrama, *Paid in Full*, with Tully Marshall and Lillian Albertson; another was the sentimental comedy of an American abroad, *The Man from Home*, by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson, which made the character actor, William Hodge, a star; a third was *A Gentleman from Mississippi*, by Harrison Rhodes and Thomas Wise; and a fourth was *Salvation Nell*, a drama of the New York slums, by Edward Sheldon, with Mrs. Fiske in the title role.

On the melodic side the principal offerings were *The Soul Kiss*, a "musical entertainment" produced by Ziegfeld, with book and lyrics by the prolific Harry B. Smith; two musical comedies by George M. Cohan—*Fifty Miles from Boston*, and *The American Idea*, neither of which created much of a stir; *The Queen of the*

Moulin Rouge, with book by Paul M. Potter; and the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1908*, which managed a longer run (120 performances) than its 1907 counterpart, and whose cast included, among other variety artists, the dynamic and appealing Nora Bayes.

Postscripts: From New Orleans came word of the organization of the Dixieland Jazz Band. The Biograph motion picture company announced that it was making longer pictures, and that its new production, *The Snow Man*, would be 717 feet long—meaning approximately ten minutes of showing time.

1909

There were three repertory engagements in New York during 1909, two of them involving the veteran purveyors of classics, Robert B. Mantell and E. H. Sothern, the other representing the first American attempt to create the equivalent of the European type of national theatre.

Beginning on March 8th, and continuing for five weeks, William A. Brady presented Mr. Mantell and his company in a series of revivals which included *Richelieu*, Shakespeare's *King John*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *Richard III*. The production of *King John* was the first in New York since the early 1870s, when it had been played by Junius Brutus Booth and John McCullough. Mr. Sothern and his company began their engagement on March 29th, and continued for three weeks, presenting *Richelieu*, *Our American Cousin*, *Hamlet*, and *If I Were King*.

A PRETENTIOUS PROJECT

Of considerable historic interest is the recorded opening of the New Theatre on November 6th, for this was the first serious attempt in America to establish a permanent repertory theatre. With the backing of a number of wealthy patrons, a grandiose and excellently equipped theatre was built on Central Park West (later called the Century Theatre), a competent company of actors was engaged, and the opening production was Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, with Sothern and Marlowe (as guest stars) in the title roles, and with a supporting cast which included Ferdinand Gottschalk, A. E. Anson, Reginald Barlow, Albert Bruning, and Beatrice Forbes-Robertson.

Unfortunately the theatre proved too large for literary drama,

and the public did not show any great enthusiasm for the ambitious venture. The project was continued for two seasons, but was then abandoned, and the playhouse was taken over by commercial interests. Many explanations have been offered concerning the failure of this expensive and idealistic enterprise. Apart from the excessive size of the theatre, and its poor acoustics, the chief factors are thought to have been the mixing of the star and repertory systems (which are antithetical), and the lack of an important body of native plays. The repertory theatres of European countries have always been devoted chiefly to the exhibition of their respective national dramatic literatures, thus capitalizing on national pride. In 1909 our drama was still embryonic.

It is, nevertheless, interesting to recall the series of plays on which our first national theatre risked its fortunes. Its second production was John Galsworthy's *Strife*, a powerful drama of the eternal struggle between capital and labor; its next was Edward Sheldon's *The Nigger*, a melodramatic and yet honest treatment of the color problem in the South; the fourth was Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, with Grace George, Rose Coghlan, and Louis Calvert; and the fifth was *Don*, by the British playwright, Rudolph Besier, with Matheson Lang in the leading role. These five productions (only one of them representing American playwriting) carried the New Theatre to the end of the year.

There were, however, a number of native plays which attracted attention in the commercial theatres. If none of them exemplified either brilliance or profundity we need not be too greatly surprised. The American playwright of the early years of this century was seldom more than a hack.

THRILLS, TEARS, AND SMILES

On January 19th Eugene Walter's melodrama of life in the metropolis, *The Easiest Way*, was launched with Frances Starr in the leading role, and it went on to a successful run of 157 performances. The following week saw the premiere of Frances Hodgson Burnett's sentimental *The Dawn of a Tomorrow*, with Eleanor Robson, and this, too, found popular favor. On February 1st two hits opened: *The Girl from Rector's*, a comedy adapted by Paul M. Potter from the French of Pierre Veber; and Charles Klein's melodrama, *The Third Degree*, with Edmund Breese and Wallace Eddinger. In March came Porter Emerson Browne's

A Fool There Was, with Robert Hilliard; and in April, Edward Locke's *The Climax*. Although none of these pieces would bear re-reading—not to mention re-playing—today, all of them prospered in the first half of 1909. They are mentioned here for the purpose of indicating the trend of public taste.

The autumn was only slightly more commendable in the quality of its hits. A late August arrival was a comedy adapted from the German by Leo Ditrichstein entitled *Is Matrimony a Failure?* (a highly successful Belasco production), and at the same time Charles Frohman hit the public fancy with an American version of the French detective thriller, *Arsène Lupin*, by Francis de Croisset and Maurice Leblanc. On September 4th came the biggest hit of all—*The Fortune Hunter*, a simple and completely mechanical farce-comedy by Winchell Smith, in which John Barrymore tickled the risibilities of the bourgeoisie during a run of 345 performances.

FINALE OF FITCH

There were three serious plays successfully produced during the autumn. These were: *The Melting Pot*, by Israel Zangwill, a sincere though superficial attempt to dramatize the theme of Americanism; *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, an obvious piece of theatricality based on the Christ theme, by Jerome K. Jerome, in which Forbes-Robertson proved solemnly impressive; and Clyde Fitch's last play, *The City*, which shocked a great many theatregoers with its grim story of a small-town family's disintegration and desperate failure to survive in the great city. Fitch intended this sordid drama to be his masterpiece. He completed it in June, 1909, just before sailing for Europe. According to Quinn, he was "worn out by excessive labor and nervous tension," and "he did not rally from the operation for appendicitis which was the immediate cause of his death at Chalons-sur-Marne, September 4th." "But *The City* was produced by the cast he had selected, on December 21st . . . and was received with acclaim. . . ." This cast included Walter Hampden, Lucille Watson, Mary Nash, and Tully Marshall.

The musicals of 1909 were numerous but undistinguished. We will note, however, that one of them, entitled *Old Dutch* (book by Edgar Smith, lyrics by George V. Hobart, and music by

Victor Herbert) had in a minor role a young actress named Helen Hayes (her first appearance on Broadway).

Addenda: It was in 1909 that Ethel Barrymore was married to Russell G. Colt. And Helena Modjeska, dying in California, was given a stupendously pompous funeral in Los Angeles, preliminary to the transportation of her body to her native Poland.

1910

The first revival in the repertory of the New Theatre in 1910 was *Twelfth Night*, with Annie Russell as Viola, Louis Calvert as Sir Toby, Ferdinand Gottschalk as Sir Andrew, and Matheson Lang as Orsino. This came late in January. The February offerings were H. Wiers-Jenssen's *The Witch*, and *A Son of the People*, by Sophus Michaelis, and in mid-March came Maeterlinck's poetic drama, *Sister Beatrice* (with Edith Wynne Matthison and Pedro de Cordoba), preceded by the fourth act of Ibsen's majestic *Brand*. Later in the same month *The Winter's Tale* was revived. There were no further additions to the repertoire until October 1st, when Maeterlinck's spectacular fantasy, *The Bluebird*, was produced. Forsaking their repertory policy temporarily, the New Theatre company played *The Bluebird* continuously until November 7th, when the production was moved to the Majestic, permitting the resumption of repertory at the New Theatre. During November three productions were added: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Pinero's *The Thunderbolt*, and Maeterlinck's *Mary Magdalene* (the latter with Olga Nethersole); and in December one production: a revival of Wilhelm Meyer-Foerster's *Old Heidelberg*, with Frank Gillmore heading the cast. There was considerable criticism of the company's choice of plays.

INCLUDING BERNHARDT

The New Theatre was not without competition in the repertory field. Ben Greet and his English company opened a season at the Garden Theatre the middle of January and played for three months, presenting twelve plays, five of which were by Shakespeare, the others including this company's established success, *Everyman*, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Sheridan's *The Rivals*. Sothern and Marlowe were

active also, and during February and March offered six of Shakespeare's plays for as many weeks. At the end of the year there were two other spurts of repertory, one foreign and one native. Mme. Bernhardt opened on December 5th an engagement of four weeks, during which period she appeared in eleven of her best-known roles (Camille, Phèdre, La Tosca, Sapho, etc.). Her leading man was the handsome international matinee idol, Lou Tellegen, who at this time made his New York debut. On December 5th also William Gillette began at the Empire Theatre a series of revivals of his own plays, including *Sherlock Holmes*, *Secret Service*, *The Private Secretary*, *Too Much Johnson*, and *Held by the Enemy*.

Apart from repertory there were during the year several productions of interesting imported plays. Somerset Maugham contributed two of his suave and delightful comedies: *Mrs. Dot*, which served as a vehicle for the winsome Billie Burke, and *Smith*, to which John Drew and Sybil Thorndyke lent their polished graces. Ethel Barrymore was starred in Pinero's *Mid-channel;* Mrs. Fiske and Holbrook Blinn shared honors in Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* (though only for 16 performances), and later appeared together in Hauptmann's dream-poem, *Hannele;* Laurence Irving starred in his own translation of Brieux's penetrating study of the French marriage system, *The Three Daughters of Monsieur Dupont;* Alla Nazimova gave the first production in New York of Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* (achieving a surprising run of 48 performances of this sombre and mystic drama); David Belasco found another winner in Herman Bahr's sophisticated Viennese comedy, *The Concert*, which Leo Ditrichstein played for 264 performances; Fred Terry and Julia Neilson brought over their London production of Baroness Orczy's romantic melodrama, *The Scarlet Pimpernel;* and Louis N. Parker's charming period comedy, *Pomander Walk*, enjoyed a long run with Dorothy Parker and Lennox Pawle in the principal roles.

A WEAK SHOWING

One cannot speak with enthusiasm of the new plays by American writers presented during 1910. Two that could be considered of some literary quality were both quick failures: *The Faith Healer*, by William Vaughn Moody, and *Anti-Matrimony*, by Percy MacKaye. And actually there were only three hits: *Alias*

Jimmy Valentine, a crook play by Paul Armstrong, based on a story by O. Henry, which was performed successfully by Laurette Taylor and H. B. Warner; *Get Rich Quick Wallingford*, a farce-comedy fashioned by George M. Cohan from George Randolph Chester's popular novel; and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, a dramatization of Kate Douglas Wiggin's homey story. Fitch was dead, Thomas was dormant, and new playwrights of distinction had not arisen.

Matters were somewhat better in the world of musicals. George Ade's *The Old Town* (with music by Gustav Luders) flourished in the hands of Montgomery and Stone, and also introduced an attractive young singing actress to Broadway—Peggy Wood; *Tillie's Nightmare* did pretty well with the help of Marie Dressler, late of burlesque; the new edition of Ziegfeld's *Follies* featured Fannie Brice and Bert Williams; *Madame Sherry* (with Lina Abarbanell) set everyone to humming "Every Little Movement"; *Alma, Where Do You Live?* became the melodic question of the year; Victor Herbert came along with another solid hit, *Naughty Marietta* ("Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life"); and *The Spring Maid* filled the air with "Day Dreams."

Footnotes: During the year there were several excitements at the Metropolitan Opera House—Anna Pavlova and her ballet made their first American appearance, and "held New York spellbound"; Geraldine Farrar was a sensation in *Carmen;* Mary Garden continued to shock the city with *Salomé;* and in December occurred the world premiere of the Puccini-Belasco opera, *The Girl of the Golden West*, with Enrico Caruso.

Motion picture producers began to turn their attention from New York to Southern California, and thus gave birth to what now is known as Hollywood.

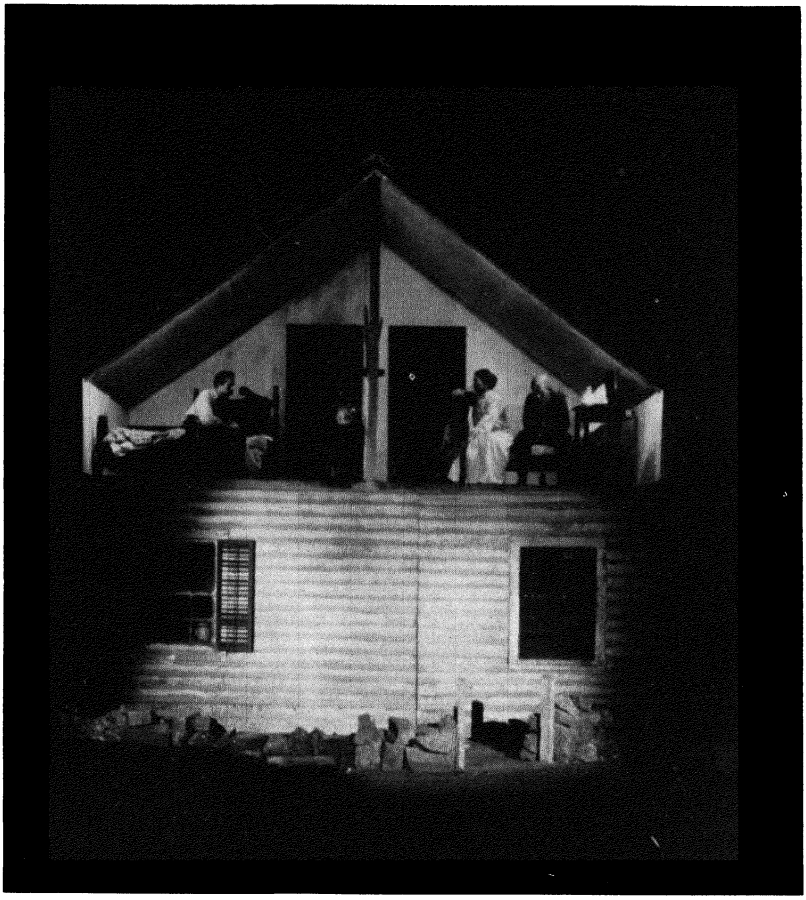
SUMMARY

From this retrospective survey one must conclude that although our theatre of the first decade of the century was active, prolific, and popular, it was for the most part lacking in artistic distinction. And such distinction as it did have, derived almost entirely from the past (in revivals of classics) or from the work of contemporary foreigners such as Ibsen and Shaw. There were many gifted actors before the public, and there were skillful producers behind the scenes, but the bulk of their efforts was ex-

pended on plays of momentary interest. Harrison Grey Fiske, Arnold Daly, Winthrop Ames, and a few others carried "the banner of the ideal," but the great majority were content to wring dollars from the sentimental or the sensational type of entertainment.

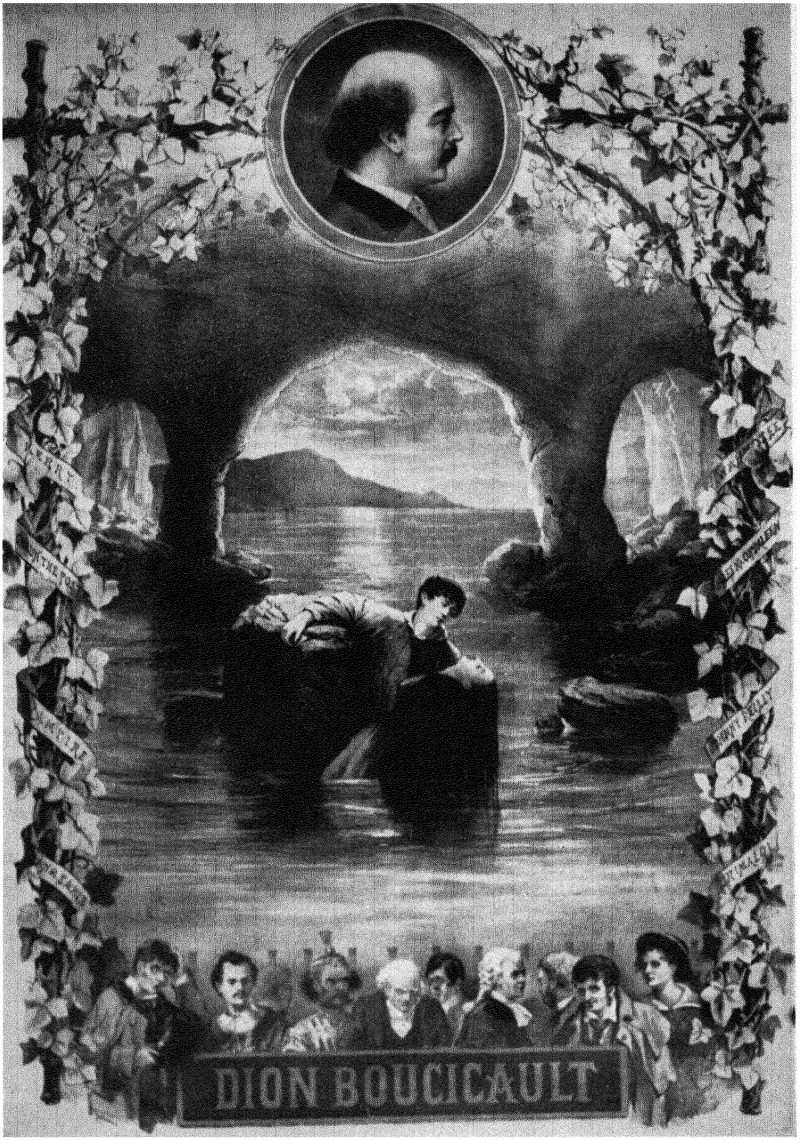
Most of the native playwrights were as meretricious as the producers. Because we have been selective in our summary, no mention has been made of the hundreds of run-of-the-mill plays contributed by scores of hack writers. The complete record is, indeed, an exhibition of industrious mediocrity, relieved occasionally by the superior craftsmanship of Fitch, Thomas, Gillette, Moody and Sheldon, and by the artistic failures of Percy MacKaye. In the work of these men lay the promise, though hardly the fulfillment, of the dream of a significant American drama.

Yet there was general satisfaction with the theatre. The theatre is, in the true sense of the word, a "popular" institution, and only a segment of it in any age can be classified with the fine arts. When it rises above mere entertainment and attains a level of intellectual and artistic nobility it does so, not because of public demand, but because of powerful impulses on the part of writers, designers, or producers. Such impulses were not numerous in the period we have just surveyed. It was a period of flourishing commercialism. Yet, for almost everyone concerned—in the theatre and out—it was a happy time.



Desire Under the Elms, by Eugene O'Neill. A scene from the original production at the Greenwich Village Theatre, 1924, with Walter Huston, Mary Morris, and Walter Abel.

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)



Dion Boucicault (1822–1890), and a galaxy of his favorite roles. No playwright of the nineteenth century contributed so prolifically or so successfully to the American stage.

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.)

Chapter XII

Art vs. Commercialism: 1910–1920

THE second decade of this century was, theatrically, a curiously confused period. It was, in fact, paradoxical. There was a great deal of capital available for theatrical enterprise, and this, in the hands of the large corporations, such as the Frohmans, the Shuberts, and Klaw and Erlanger, not only kept production at a high quantitative level, but also continued the activity in new theatre construction. Excellent playhouses were built not only in New York City, but in virtually every city of the country. It is a characteristic of American "big business," theatrical or otherwise, that in times of prosperity it generates an optimism which carries it to extremes of expansion, and such an extreme was exhibited in the decade we are considering.

In 1913 *Theatre Magazine* began to sound the warning note. In an article entitled "What's Wrong with the American Stage?", by Chester T. Calder, published in the March issue, the following reasons were given for the seemingly unhappy state of affairs: 1. Too many theatres were being built; 2. Blocks of tickets were being sold to speculators; 3. Managers were guilty of over-production; 4. There were too many invasions by foreign stars; 5. The Theatrical Syndicate was a menace; 6. The theatre was dominated by commercialism.

In addition to these complaints, all of which reflected upon the judgment and motives of the managers, the article voiced a criticism of the public. "The manager," it admitted, "is not alone to blame. The love of the new generation for extravagance and luxury, unheard of by our grandparents, has made the cost of theatre-going well nigh prohibitive. No longer is Miss Debutante satisfied to have her admirer purchase two seats and escort her modestly to and from the playhouse. She expects flowers, insists on taxicabs, brazenly suggests expensive suppers, all of which en-

tails a cost of possibly $20. for the evening's outing. Only a fat pocketbook can stand the strain. What is the result? The sensible, practical young man is hardly likely to be enthusiastic about the drama."

TRUE TO FORM

It is interesting to note that the writer of the article then harks back to the "happy days" of the American theatre, which he places roughly in the year 1875. How amusing that "happy days" are nearly always approximately forty years in the past!

There is no doubt that theatrical commercialism was at a high point of development at the beginning of this decade. But at the same time there were anti-commercial forces at work. And presently we shall indicate the nature and effectiveness of those forces. Meanwhile let us glance as briefly as possible at the so-called commercial theatre, in order to form a picture of its activity.

During the year 1911 there were 128 productions offered on Broadway, exclusive of plays presented in repertory. In 1920 there were 151 productions, and there was no repertory. The latter number is approximately double the corresponding figure for 1949.

Repertory was represented throughout the second decade by Robert B. Mantell and his company (who offered Shakespearean dramas on Broadway in 1911, 1915, 1917, and 1918), by Sothern and Marlowe (who offered similar fare, with an occasional non-Shakespearean play, such as *If I Were King*, in 1911, 1912, 1913, and, after several years of retirement, in 1919), by John E. Kellerd (Shakespeare and Sophocles, in 1911), by Herbert Beerbohm Tree and his English company (who appeared in three plays by Shakespeare in 1916), by Forbes-Robertson and Gertrude Elliott (Shakespeare, Shaw, and others in 1913); by Sarah Bernhardt and her French company (in Continental classics) in 1911, 1916, and 1917), by the Irish Players of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin (in plays by Synge, Lady Gregory, Yeats, and others, in 1911 and 1913), by Donald Robertson and his company (in plays by Ibsen, Moliere and others, in 1911), by Holbrook Blinn and his Princess Theatre Players (in a variety of modern plays by American, English, and Continental playwrights, in 1911, 1913, and 1914), by Granville Barker's English company (in plays by Shaw and

others, in 1915), by Arnold Daly's company (in three plays by Shaw, in 1915), and by Grace George and her company (in plays by Shaw, Jones and others, in 1915).

Highlights among individual productions of the decade were as follows:

1911

The Deep Purple, a melodrama by Paul Armstrong and Wilson Mizner, with Richard Bennett; *The Scarecrow*, a philosophical comedy by Percy MacKaye, which proved a box-office failure but a *succès d'estime;* Rostand's allegorical fantasy, *Chantecler*, a hit with Maude Adams in feathers; Josephine Preston Peabody's poetic prize-winning play, *The Piper*, which suffered the fate of nearly all prize plays; Augustus Thomas's pretentiously serious drama, *As a Man Thinks;* Harry James Smith's comedy, *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh*, with Mrs. Fiske; Louis N. Parker's shrewdly theatrical *Disraeli*, which proved an ideal vehicle for George Arliss; George Broadhurst's popular melodrama, *Bought and Paid For;* Belasco's sentimental treatment of the supernatural, *The Return of Peter Grimm*, with David Warfield; a dramatization of Robert Hichens' best-selling novel, *The Garden of Allah*, with Mary Mannering; and Edward Knoblock's spectacular Oriental romance, *Kismet*, with Otis Skinner.

1912

Richard Walton Tully's Hawaiian melodrama, *The Bird of Paradise*, with Laurette Taylor; Max Reinhardt's German production of the musical pantomime, *Sumurun;* Winthrop Ames' production of Galsworthy's satirical comedy, *The Pigeon*, which served to open Mr. Ames' new Little Theatre; Warner Oland's production of Strindberg's *The Father;* Bayard Veiller's enormously popular melodrama, *Within the Law*, with Jane Cowl; Granville Barker's astoundingly successful production of Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*, which achieved a run of 256 performances; *Milestones*, a study of three generations in England, by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock; *Broadway Jones*, a comedy by and with George M. Cohan; John Barrymore and six young actresses in the first New York presentation of Arthur Schnitzler's brilliant sequence of one-acts, *The Affairs of Anatol;* John E.

Kellerd's record-breaking production of *Hamlet* (102 performances); and Laurette Taylor in J. Hartley Manners' ingratiating comedy, *Peg o' My Heart,* which ran and ran and ran.

1913

A Good Little Devil, a fairy play by Rosemonde Gerard and Maurice Rostand, produced by Belasco, with Lillian Gish and Mary Pickford in the cast; Doris Keane in Edward Sheldon's *Romance;* Eugene Brieux's sermon on syphilis, *Damaged Goods,* with Richard Bennett, which was turned down by every producer on Broadway, and which aroused the ire of the nation's clerics; *Potash and Perlmutter,* a comedy by Montague Glass which exploited Jewish-Irish comedy types, and which antedated *Abie's Irish Rose* by a number of years; John Drew and Laura Hope Crews in a revival of *Much Ado About Nothing; Seven Keys to Baldpate,* a hit mystery-comedy by George M. Cohan, based on the novel by Earl Derr Biggers; Winthrop Ames' production of the poetic whimsy, *Prunella,* by Laurence Housman and Granville Barker, with Marguerite Clark; and the same producer's presentation of Shaw's early comedy, *The Philanderer,* which ran for a surprising 103 performances.

1914

Maude Adams, the incomparable Barrie heroine, in *The Legend of Leonora;* Percy MacKaye's Oriental fantasy, *A Thousand Years Ago,* which, with its modest run of 87 performances, set a Percy MacKaye success record; Margaret Mayo's farce, *Twin Beds,* which ran five times as long as *A Thousand Years Ago;* Roi Cooper Megrue's melodrama, *Under Cover;* Megrue and Hackett's tailor-made farce, *It Pays to Advertise;* Ruth Chatterton in Jean Webster's sentimental comedy, *Daddy Long-Legs;* Belasco's production of Molnar's *The Phantom Rival,* with Leo Ditrichstein and Laura Hope Crews; John Barrymore in Willard Mack's thriller, *Kick In;* Edward Sheldon's dramatization of Hermann Sudermann's novel, *The Song of Songs;* and Margaret Illington in Henry Arthur Jones's *The Lie.*

1915

Richard Bennett in his second Brieux piece, *Maternity;* Granville Barker's production of Anatole France's *The Man Who*

Married a Dumb Wife, with a setting by the brilliant young American designer, Robert Edmond Jones; Jane Cowl in Cleves Kincaid's melodrama, *Common Clay*, which was a Harvard prize play; the first productions of the Washington Square Players, who offered *The Seagull*, by Chekhov, and a number of one-act plays by Maeterlinck, Schnitzler, Bracco, and various other European and American authors; and Emanuel Reicher's production of Hauptmann's powerful naturalistic drama of capital and labor, *The Weavers*.

1916

John Barrymore in his first heavy role, that of Falder in Galsworthy's *Justice;* Percy MacKaye's poetic pageant-drama, *Caliban of the Yellow Sands*, presented at 10 performances in the Stadium of City College in celebration of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death; the second season of the Washington Square Players, which included productions of an imposing list of distinguished plays, long and short, by foreign and native authors; James Montgomery's immensely successful routine farce, *Nothing but the Truth;* the dramatization of Harry Leon Wilson's novel, *His Majesty, Bunker Bean;* Ruth Chatterton in A. E. Thomas' bourgeois comedy, *Come Out of the Kitchen;* William Faversham's production of Shaw's *Getting Married* (its first showing in New York); Mr. and Mrs. Charles Coburn's highly successful revival of the pseudo-Chinese comedy, *The Yellow Jacket*, by Hazelton and Benrimo; Bayard Veiller's melodrama, *The Thirteenth Chair;* Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, which offered a variety of long and short plays, featuring the novel and artistic work of Lord Dunsany; and Maude Adams in another irresistible Barrie whimsicality, *A Kiss for Cinderella*.

1917

William Gillette (supported by Roland Young, Estelle Winwood and Katherine Alexander) in Clare Kummer's adroit comedy, *A Successful Calamity;* Somerset Maugham's *Our Betters*, with Chrystal Herne and Rose Coghlan; John Galsworthy's *The Fugitive*, with Emily Stevens; John Barrymore in a dramatization of Du Maurier's romantic psychic novel, *Peter Ibbetson;* Alexander Carr and Barney Bernard, the popular character comedians, in *Business Before Pleasure;* Sigmund Romberg's musical, *May-*

time, which ran to almost 500 performances; Ina Claire in Belasco's production of *Polly With a Past*, by George Middleton and Guy Bolton; Leo Carillo in *Lombardi, Ltd.;* William Faversham's production of Shaw's *Misalliance;* Lenore Ulric in Belasco's production of Willard Mack's torrid melodrama, *Tiger Rose;* Comstock and Gest's elaborate production of the spectacular London musical extravaganza, *Chu Chin Chow;* Mary Shaw's revival of *Mrs. Warren's Profession;* Ethel Barrymore in a new version of *The Lady of the Camellias* (*Camille*); several topical musicals which reflected the fact of our entrance into World War I—typical of which were *Doing Our Bit*, and *Over the Top;* and an unusually intelligent American comedy, *Why Marry?*, by Jesse Lynch Williams, which was given the first Pulitzer Prize, an annual award established by the will of the famous publisher, Joseph Pulitzer, for the best native play of the year.

1918

Ruth Gordon and Gregory Kelly in a dramatization of Booth Tarkington's comedy of American adolescence, *Seventeen;* Alla Nazimova in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, *A Doll's House*, and *Hedda Gabler*, all produced by Arthur Hopkins; the first production (a group of short plays) by the Greenwich Village Players, featuring *'Ile*, a play by Eugene O'Neill; *Three Faces East*, a German-spy melodrama by Anthony Paul Kelly; *Lightnin'*, a character comedy by Winchell Smith and Frank Bacon, in which Bacon was starred, and which broke all existing long-run records with its 1291 performances; Jeanne Eagels in Belasco's production of *Daddies;* Richard Bennett in a thriller, *The Unknown Purple;* Constance Collier and Norman Trevor in a revival of Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband;* Roi Cooper Megrue's long-run comedy, *Tea for Three;* John Barrymore in a dramatization of Tolstoy's novel, *Redemption;* Charles Coburn in the English war comedy, *The Better 'Ole;* Harry Davenport and Claude Gillingwater in Austin Strong's *Three Wise Fools;* Winthrop Ames' production of Maeterlinck's fantasy, *The Betrothal;* Walter Hampden's debut as Hamlet; William Gillette and Helen Hayes in J. M. Barrie's charming absurdity, *Dear Brutus;* George M. Cohan's straight play, *A Prince There Was*, with the author as star; and Fay Bainter in the smash comedy hit with Oriental setting, *East is West.*

1919

Up in Mabel's Room, the first farce hit of the year, produced by A. H. Woods, who specialized in the lighter forms of drama; Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, returning to Broadway after three years of touring, with Dunsany still its star playwright; Mrs. Fiske in a comedy, *Miss Nelly of N'Orleans;* Henry Hull, Constance Binney, and Alison Skipworth in *39 East*, a human-interest comedy by Rachel Crothers; John and Lionel Barrymore co-starring in *The Jest*, an adaptation of the famous Italian melodrama by Sem Benelli; launching of a new producing organization, the Theatre Guild, with a production of *The Bonds of Interest*, by Spain's leading dramatist, Jacinto Benavente; the Guild's second production (more successful than their first), *John Ferguson*, by the Irish dramatist, St. John Ervine; *Civilian Clothes*, a post-war farce-comedy by Thompson Buchanan; *Adam and Eva*, a light comedy of American home life by Guy Bolton and George Middleton; Francine Larrimore and Charles Cherry in a piece of pseudo-sophistication by Cosmo Hamilton entitled *Scandal;* Booth Tarkington's homespun comedy, *Clarence*, with Alfred Lunt, Helen Hayes, Glenn Hunter, and Mary Boland; Ina Claire in an Avery Hopwood farce, *The Gold Diggers;* Ethel Barrymore in a society drama, *Déclassée*, by Zoe Akins; a Theatre Guild production of John Masefield's *The Faithful*, based on the famous Japanese legend-drama of the Forty-Seven Ronin, with designs by Lee Simonson; Edith Day in the appealing musical, *Irene;* Charlotte Greenwood in the musical, *Linger Longer Letty;* Frank McGlynn as an impressive Abraham Lincoln in the drama of that title by the British poet, John Drinkwater; Maxim Gorky's stark drama of proletarian Russian misery, *Night Lodging*, produced too gloomily by Arthur Hopkins, with a cast which included Pauline Lord and the young Edward G. Robinson; and Jane Cowl in the greatest success of her career, a tearful romantic fantasy entitled *Smilin' Through.*

1920

The powerful emotional actress, Nance O'Neil, in Benavente's hot-blooded Spanish tragedy, *The Passion Flower;* the Theatre Guild's production of Tolstoy's depressing drama, *The Power of Darkness;* Richard Bennett in Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Hori-*

zon, which was hailed as "the closest approach any native author has yet made to *the* great American play," and which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize; Walter Hampden in his own production of Percy MacKaye's "ballad play," *George Washington*, a failure, as plays dealing with the Father of Our Country always are, and as MacKaye's plays generally have been; John Barrymore in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, produced by Arthur Hopkins; Maurice Browne's production of *Medea*, by Euripides, with Ellen Van Volkenburg; *The Bat*, a mystery-comedy by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood, which ran for 847 performances; Arnold Daly in George M. Cohan's production of the burlesque melodrama, *The Tavern;* William A. Brady's production (with an English cast) of Galsworthy's biting drama, *The Skin Game;* Charles S. Gilpin (a negro actor) and the Provincetown Players in Eugene O'Neill's imaginative and gripping play, *The Emperor Jones;* the Theatre Guild's effective presentation of Shaw's *Heartbreak House;* Ruth Chatterton in J. M. Barrie's eerie and preposterous fantasy, *Mary Rose;* Lionel Atwill in Belasco's production of Sacha Guitry's poetic biographical piece, *Deburau;* and Arthur Hopkins' presentation of the English revival of John Gay's eighteenth-century ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera.*

In this brief summary we have listed only approximately ten per cent of the stage offerings on Broadway during the ten-year period. And in the ten per cent we have included almost every production of artistic importance, as well as a considerable number of popular hits which were artistically inconsequential. The remaining ninety per cent may with good conscience be ignored.

It was scarcely accidental that at the beginning of this decade there should have been in various quarters signs of revolt against the commercialism of the theatre. The nature of these manifestations will be our next consideration.

GEORGE PIERCE BAKER AND THE UNIVERSITIES

One of the most thoughtful critics of the American theatrical scene during the early years of the century was a Harvard professor of English, George Pierce Baker, who soon after beginning his academic career, reached the conclusion that the universities could and should prepare students for work in the professional

theatre. Colleges had, of course, from the time of their beginnings in the middle ages, permitted the study of classic plays, and in many instances had permitted the stage presentation of plays by student groups as an extra-curricular activity. But the offering of instruction in theatre technique, and the control of collegiate productions by an academic department, was a revolutionary concept. It was Baker's firm conviction that the study of playwriting, acting, theatre history, modern dramatic literature, and the technical arts of the theatre constituted a proper addition to the college curriculum, and, furthermore, that such study would result in the artistic betterment of our theatre. There were those who were convinced by his arguments, but they were not Baker's colleagues and administrative superiors. For more than a quarter of a century he battled for a dramatic curriculum at Harvard, but to no avail. The sole concession he won was the right to offer a course in dramatic composition (academic jargon for playwriting) which he offered as English 47, but through this course he exerted a major influence on the American theatre.

In the first decade of the century a number of young men and women were attracted to Harvard and Radcliffe colleges by English 47, and as early as 1908 one of these, Edward Sheldon, had his play *Salvation Nell* produced with great success by Mrs. Fiske. Later graduates of the course include such distinguished names as Eugene O'Neill, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Philip Barry, Percy MacKaye, Edward Knoblock, George Abbott, Hubert Osborne, and Thomas Wolfe.

THE "47 WORKSHOP" AT HARVARD

It was Professor Baker's hope that his course in playwriting would prove an entering wedge for allied courses in theatre arts. When this hope was not realized, he made the best of the situation by creating (in 1913) the "47 Workshop," which (without benefit of academic credit) provided students with an opportunity to engage in the production of plays written in the course, and through this process to learn something of acting, directing, scene design, costuming, and lighting. Among those (other than playwrights) who received the basic training for their professional careers from Baker's combination of curricular and extra-curricular activities may be mentioned such producers and directors as Winthrop Ames, Alexander Dean, Sam Hume, Irving Pichel, and

Theresa Helburn; such critics as John Mason Brown, Robert Benchley, Heywood Broun, Walter Prichard Eaton, and Kenneth Macgowan; such actors as Mary Morris and Osgood Perkins; such designers as Robert Edmond Jones, Lee Simonson, and Donald Oenslager.

THE MOVE TO YALE

In 1925 Baker left the Harvard faculty to accept a position as head of the newly organized Department of Drama at Yale University—a move involving a decision which undoubtedly was a difficult one for a true Harvard man to make. In his new post he was able to realize his dream of a quarter-century: a university theatre with a complete curriculum in theatre arts. Although by this time several other universities had established drama departments, the Yale plan was unique in that it placed all its training on the graduate level, thus paralleling professional schools in such traditional fields as law and medicine.

Professor Baker guided the department at Yale until shortly before his death in 1936. In 1939 a memorial booklet was published, in which tributes to the greatness of his personality and accomplishments were paid by Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, John Mason Brown, and various others who owed much of their success to his instruction. The idea that emerges most clearly from these tributes, and from other testimony concerning Baker, is that he himself had, and was able to instill in others, an abiding faith in the theatre. His plea was for men and women to serve the theatre with intellectual and artistic integrity.

OTHER UNIVERSITIES

Baker was not, of course, the only university professor contributing ideals to the American theatre during the first two decades of the century. At Columbia University Professor Brander Matthews was lecturing and writing on dramatic literature and stage history with immense effectiveness; at the University of Pennsylvania Dr. Arthur Hobson Quinn was taking the leadership in the interpretation of the whole range of American drama; at the University of Wisconsin Professor Thomas H. Dickinson was stimulating interest in the study of modern drama, and was acting as guiding spirit of the Wisconsin Players (organized in 1911); at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh Thomas

Wood Stevens assumed the directorship of a department of drama in 1914, and formulated the first four-year course (leading to a bachelor of arts degree) to be offered in the dramatic field; at the University of North Dakota Frederick H. Koch founded the Dakota Playmakers soon after he became an instructor in English there in 1905 (he took his own master of arts degree under Baker at Harvard in 1909), and in 1918 moved to the University of North Carolina, where he founded the Carolina Playmakers, and inspired the creation of an extensive body of folk-drama.

Later developments in the relationship of the universities to the American theatre will be considered in a succeeding chapter. At this point the intention is merely to indicate the beginnings of that relationship, and to correlate them with other aspects of the revolt against commercialism. Bringing the university into any close contact with the professional theatre was a slow and painful process, partly because of the strength of the Puritan tradition in collegiate strongholds, and partly because of the wide gap which fifty years ago existed between the academic and the artistically creative minds. That this gap has been all but closed is due in great measure to the arduous pioneering of George Pierce Baker, who spent his life opposing traditional pedantry.

PERCY MACKAYE AND THE CIVIC THEATRE

As early as 1909 Percy MacKaye, the gifted poet-playwright and son of Steele MacKaye, was publishing essays which set forth the idea that theatricals could be employed as a recreational and cultural activity for the whole community. And in his book, *The Civic Theatre*, published in 1912, he elaborated his concepts with effective persuasiveness.

In this volume MacKaye made it clear that by the term "civic theatre" he did not mean the municipally-subsidized professional theatre such as exists in many European cities; what he meant was "participation by the people" in the various forms of theatrical art—not merely as spectators but as active elements in the production. He felt that such communal activity represented "a new expression of democracy," and that it offered a solution to the problems of leisure time. He laid particular emphasis on the need for art in the lives of laborers, and he expressed his conviction that the theatre arts offered the best possibility of meeting this need. "Utterly divorced from art in their industrial labor, it is indeed no

wonder that the people are slow to conceive art as their only salvation in leisure. Yet, though they are slow to conceive this truth of themselves, they are very quick to respond to it when demonstrated by the leadership of artists. Their astonishing response to the introduction of public music and pageantry during the last five years gives ample and auspicious promise for the regeneration of their leisure."

MacKaye attacked the commercial theatre, "which recognizes art but debases it for private profit"; and, with equal vehemence, the churches and schools, which "ignore art entirely, while seeking to uplift the public without it." He also castigated the public libraries and parks for their failure to provide creative activities.

MACKAYE'S PAGEANTS

It must be said that MacKaye practiced what he preached. In 1909 he produced at Gloucester, Mass., his own pageant-drama, *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, with 1500 citizens participating in the production; in 1914 he produced, in collaboration with Thomas Wood Stevens, his *Masque of Saint Louis*, in the city of that name, with more than 7000 participants; and in 1916 he produced, first in New York City and later in Boston, his even more pretentious *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, in celebration of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. In the latter production he had as assistants some half-dozen directors, and a stupendous cast.

Although MacKaye's emphasis was on pageantry (because of its potentiality for large participation) his ideal scheme embraced the legitimate drama, music and dance festivals, and indeed all theatrical activities which might serve as an expression of community art interest. The interest which he stimulated in pageant-drama has waxed and waned during intervening years, and recently has been revived through the admirable and successful efforts of Paul Green in North Carolina and Virginia, but the impetus which he gave to community drama (standard plays presented by amateurs and semi-professional groups in their own community playhouses) has been steady and of great historical importance. What Baker did for the universities, MacKaye did for the general citizenry of towns and cities. Each of them pointed the way.

THE DRAMA LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Certainly one of the most interesting phases of the general dissatisfaction with the commercial theatre was the foundation at Evanston, Illinois, in the spring of 1910, of a national organization known as the Drama League of America. Conceived by a combination of clubwomen, college professors, and idealists of the professional theatre, its aim was to establish a chapter in every town and city of the country which would encourage the production of "good" drama, and discourage (by non-support) the "bad." Its first president was Mrs. A. Starr Best, a clubwoman of Evanston, and among its other officers were Dr. Richard Burton of the University of Minnesota, Louis K. Anspacher (professor and professional playwright), Mrs. Otis Skinner, and Percy MacKaye.

Although during the years of its active life the Drama League suffered considerably from a preponderant membership of "uplifters," whose knowledge of the theatre was elementary, it did, nevertheless, exert a wholesome influence on our dramatic development. Through its hundreds of study groups it created a wide appreciation for dramatic literature, and many of its chapters formed the nuclei of successful community playhouses. Furthermore, it sponsored the publication of *The Drama*, which began as a quarterly review in February, 1911, and became a monthly in October, 1919. During its years as a quarterly this periodical published the texts of many important plays (chiefly translations from the work of European writers), and also carried articles of critical and informative value on various phases of the theatre. During its career as a monthly (which terminated in 1931) it served as a clearing-house for news of all significant contemporary dramatic events, domestic and foreign, and its contributors included the best minds associated with the drama. Although its policy was to emphasize the artistic idealism of the non-commercial theatre, it regularly gave space to articles by leaders in the commercial field. In a single issue one found such disparate contributors as Barrett H. Clark, Oliver M. Sayler, H. Granville-Barker, Percy MacKaye, Ruth St. Denis, Walter Prichard Eaton, and Daniel Frohman.

DEFENSE OF THE CLUBWOMAN

It was inevitable that the Drama League should expire. It was born in a time when thoughtful people were rising to protect the dignity of the theatre. That many of its activities were ludicrous cannot be denied. George Kelly lampooned them in 1922 with hilarious success in his farce, *The Torch-Bearers*. But even in her most absurd moments the American clubwoman is not without merit. She battles ferociously, if at times unskillfully, for the right thing. Although the college and community theatres have relieved her of the chief responsibility in the fight against theatrical commercialism and vulgarity, she is still, individually if not collectively, a mainstay of all that is most admirable in our theatre. It is she who buys the season ticket which guarantees the existence of her community theatre, and it is she who subscribes to the touring attractions of the Theatre Guild.

INFLUENCES FROM ABROAD

In addition to native impulses toward the creation of a noncommercial theatre, there were powerful influences from abroad. As early as 1887 an amateur named André Antoine had founded in Paris an unpretentious little theatre, the Théâtre-Libre, which devoted itself to the presentation of experimental literary plays (chiefly naturalistic), and his example had been followed by others in Paris, and by groups in various European cities. Parisian successors included Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art (1891), Lugné-Poë's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre (1893), Jacques Rouché's Théâtre des Arts (1907), and Jacques Copeau's brilliant Théâtre du Vieux Colombier (1913). In 1889 August Strindberg, the Swedish genius, whose naturalistic drama, *The Father*, had been produced by Antoine, founded a little theatre in Copenhagen, which was short-lived, but in 1907 he opened his Intimate Theatre in Stockholm, where he produced many of his own plays with considerable success. In 1889 the Freie Bühne was founded in Berlin, in 1891 J. T. Grein formed an organization in London called the Independent Theatre (which produced Shaw's first play), in 1898 Stanislavsky and his associates founded the Moscow Art Theatre, in 1899 William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, and others created the Irish Literary Theatre, which in 1904 became the Abbey Theatre, in 1902 Max Reinhardt opened his Kleines

Theater in Berlin, and in 1906 his Kammerspiele, both of which were dedicated to the drama of intimacy.

In these prototypes of our own little theatres the ideals were basically similar: an intimate relationship between audience and players, the presentation of worthy plays which were new and vital, a complete freedom from the restrictive influence of commercial profit.

APPIA AND CRAIG

Another foreign influence which was felt strongly in America was the new attitude toward design in the theatre. This attitude had been brought about principally through the work of two artists: Adolphe Appia, a Swiss, and Gordon Craig, an Englishman. Appia had begun to publish his theories of stage design in 1895, and Craig had given his first public exhibitions of drawings in 1902. Both men brought new concepts of simplicity, dignity, and poetic beauty to the art of the stage. These concepts were given some circulation in American periodicals (particularly in *Theatre Magazine)* during the first decade of the century, but it was not until the publication of Craig's *On the Art of the Theatre* in 1911 that they became a recognizable force in our theatre.

It was in 1911, also, that the Irish Players of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, made their first American tour, and thereby fired the enthusiasm of several native groups toward the founding of literary theatres. In their presentation of short and long plays by Yeats, Lady Gregory, J. M. Synge, St. John Ervine, Lennox Robinson, and others, with a company which included such splendid actors as Arthur Sinclair, Sara Allgood, Cathleen Nesbit, and J. M. Kerrigan, the Irish Players left a deep impression on our young writers, actors, and directors. A second visit in 1915 reinforced this impression.

THE RISE OF OUR LITTLE THEATRES

If we omit such producing groups as those fostered by colleges and settlement-house organizations, the first little theatres in America were: the Toy Theatre, Boston, directed by Mrs. Lyman Gale; the Chicago Little Theatre, directed by Maurice Browne and Ellen Van Volkenburg; and the Little Theatre, New York

City, directed by Winthrop Ames. All three were launched in 1912.

The Toy Theatre operated on a semi-professional basis, and existed for two and a half years. The Chicago Little Theatre (a tiny playhouse seating only 91) had a life of five years. It specialized in the production of poetic drama (Maurice Browne was a young English poet who had recently come to this country), and it introduced through simplified settings and mood-lighting certain of the fundamental theories of Gordon Craig. It also contributed some of the first and most excellent marionette productions to the modern American theatre. It should be mentioned, however, that Chicago had been at least partially prepared for the new project by two earlier acting groups: the Hull House Players, who had been presenting interesting European plays since 1907, and the Donald Robertson Players, who had performed in the city and adjoining towns, also since 1907, with a repertoire of old and modern classics.

TOO LITTLE FOR BROADWAY

Of these pioneer ventures, the only one to be operated on a strictly professional basis was Mr. Ames' Little Theatre in New York, a playhouse which seated 299, and thus came under more lenient fire regulations than houses seating 300 or more. There the artistic standard of production was high, but the result was financial loss, and the theatre had to be enlarged.

With local examples to follow, many little theatre groups sprang into existence, though none of importance until 1915. In that year four historic organizations came into being: the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York City; the Provincetown Players (first at Provincetown, Mass., and later in New York); the Washington Square Players in New York; and Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, which performed first at Christadora Settlement House in New York, but which soon toured the entire country.

The Neighborhood Playhouse was an outgrowth of community drama activities in the Henry Street Settlement, and was generously financed by the Misses Irene and Alice Lewisohn. For a number of years it offered a great variety of legitimate drama, dance festivals, music, motion pictures, and revues (the *Grand Street Follies*), and, although it catered primarily to the residents

of its immediate neighborhood on the lower East Side, it attracted many patrons from all sections of the city. The playhouse seated 450, and had excellent stage equipment, including the first permanent (plaster) cyclorama to be installed in an American theatre.

Stuart Walker was a young man who had received his training in the professional theatre of Broadway, and who by his own ingenuity escaped from that *milieu* into a theatrical enterprise offering more freedom, more imagination, and more fun. With a folding theatre of his own design, with cleverly simplified settings, up-to-date lighting equipment, a company of young, enthusiastic players, and a repertoire of whimsical fantasies (written by himself, by Lord Dunsany, and others), he furnished for several seasons novel and delightful entertainment to thousands of children and adults throughout the nation.

SEASIDE EXPERIMENT

The Provincetown Players came into being as an informal organization of writers and artists who were summering at Provincetown, and who were "drawn together by chance and a common sympathy." In their absorbing and detailed history of this organization, Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau remind us that 1915 was a year of intellectual and artistic unrest. The younger generation "had been stirred by Isadora Duncan, had listened to Eugene Debs, had discovered Krafft-Ebing, and had wondered why professors of dramatic literature damned Strindberg as decadent and Schnitzler as immoral. . . . Values were being questioned; dozens of new schools and movements were springing up. Cubism was fighting it out with Futurism, and everybody wrote free verse. *The Little Review* was printing 'Ulysses' in installments, Gertrude Stein had discovered a new language, the old *Masses* was blazing away at injustice, *The New Republic* was in the first flush of its youth . . ."

Among the original Provincetowners, who decided to write and act their own plays, were Mary Heaton Vorse, George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, Hutchins Hapgood, Wilbur Daniel Steele, John Reed, and Robert Edmond Jones. Only four short plays were presented that summer, and they were given first in Hapgood's house, and later in a "deserted old fish house on a wharf." But in the summer of 1916 the Wharf Theatre was the home of a larger repertoire, including two short plays entitled *Bound East*

for Cardiff and *Thirst*, by a "shy, dark boy" who had joined the group—Eugene O'Neill.

EXCITEMENT IN GREENWICH VILLAGE

In the winter of 1916 the Provincetown Players (which now called itself the Playwright's Theatre) established their own playhouse on Macdougal Street in New York's Greenwich Village, and there they operated with dynamic creativeness until the end of 1929, when the depression put them out of business. In the course of their career they attracted a large number of talented writers, actors, and designers—including Floyd Dell, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Lawrence Langner, Mary Morris, James Light, Henry O'Neill, Jasper Deeter, Walter Huston, Cleon Throckmorton, Donald Oenslager, Kenneth Macgowan, and many others who later achieved renown. Although the Provincetown was dedicated originally to the production of new plays, it later departed from that policy, and offered plays by Strindberg, Schnitzler, Congreve, and other playwrights of the past. Its greatest achievement, however, was the discovery and advancement of Eugene O'Neill. After presenting many of his short plays, the Provincetown in the autumn of 1920 produced *The Emperor Jones* and *Diff'rent*, in 1922 *The Hairy Ape*, in 1924 *All God's Chillun Got Wings* and *Desire Under the Elms*. By the latter year O'Neill was firmly established on Broadway, and had no further need of little theatre production. Of secondary, but noteworthy, importance, was the production in 1926 of Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom*, a play which won the Pulitzer Prize, and introduced the North Carolina poet to the professional theatre.

THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS

A few months before the adventurous dreamers of Provincetown took their first step in play production, another group of amateurs rented the little Bandbox Theatre on East 57th St., New York City, and announced themselves as the Washington Square Players. In their introductory announcement they declared they had only one policy—the production of plays of artistic merit. Their first offering, a bill of one-acts, opened in February, 1915, with an admission price of fifty cents. Two of the plays were by members of the group: Lawrence Langner and Edward Good-

man; the third was Maeterlinck's *Interior*, "staged with the help of Robert Edmond Jones at a cost of $35.," which according to Walter Prichard Eaton, "laid a spell of suggestive visual beauty and haunting mood over the astonished house." Three more productions were offered before the close of the season, each production being offered two nights a week for a run of several weeks.

In their second season the Players increased their performances to three a week, and began to pay some of their actors and technical staff salaries of $25 a week. At the end of the season they gave their first full-length plays, Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine and Selysette* and Chekhov's *The Sea-Gull*. At this time, too, encouraged by their considerable success, they moved from the Bandbox to the larger Comedy Theatre, which put them in direct competition with Broadway. By this move, says Eaton, "they lost much of the amateur atmosphere, the joyous playboy spirit, which had charmed people at the Bandbox." Also, they were compelled to present stronger plays than were available in the short form which had been their mainstay. Their solution was to turn to plays of Shaw, Andreyev, and Ibsen.

The Washington Square Players gave their last performances in May, 1918, and shortly afterwards disbanded. In its four years of life the organization had produced 62 short plays, and 6 long. It had given experience and training to several talented young actors, including Roland Young, Katharine Cornell, Rollo Peters, Jose Ruben, Frank Conroy, and Glenn Hunter; it had offered plays by a number of new playwrights, such as Philip Moeller, Zoe Akins, and Lewis Beach; and it had given Lee Simonson the opportunity to establish himself as a designer. Even more important, however, it had brought together a number of able young theatre enthusiasts who were now inspired to dream of a greater enterprise, a full-scale, professional art theatre.

BIRTH OF THE THEATRE GUILD

In December, 1918, a group of the Players met and organized the Theatre Guild, and shortly afterwards elected a board of managers consisting of Rollo Peters, Philip Moeller, Helen Freeman, Helen Westley, Justus Sheffield, Lawrence Langner, and Lee Simonson. Later Theresa Helburn and Maurice Wertheim were added to the board. With a meagre $1000 pledged as working capital, the young Guild rented the Garrick Theatre, assem-

bled a company, and in April, 1919, presented its first production, Benavente's *The Bonds of Interest.* Although the artistry of its presentation was impressive, the play did not catch the popular fancy, and the outlook for the Guild's future was bleak. It was decided to put a second play immediately into rehearsal, and the choice fell on St. John Ervine's *John Ferguson.* When the latter opened on May 12, the Guild had remaining a net working capital of $19.50. This was, as Eaton says, "truly a momentous occasion," for failure would have meant not only the end of the Guild's dream, but also, "as we can see now, the setting back of the theatrical clock in America."

John Ferguson had a long and prosperous run, and the Theatre Guild went on to take its place as a major producing organization (from a literary and artistic standpoint, *the* major producing organization) in the modern American theatre.

OTHER NOTABLE PIONEERS

The year 1916 is memorable to students of the theatre for the productions of the Arts and Crafts Society of Detroit, under the direction of Sam Hume. Mr. Hume was one of the first American producers to study and employ modern techniques of production. Beginning his study at the University of California, he continued it at Harvard, with Professor Baker, and completed it at Florence, Italy, under Gordon Craig. During his Detroit engagement he put into practice, most effectively, several then-new principles of stagecraft (particularly the use of plastic-unit settings), and demonstrated an artistic standard for little-theatre production which proved decidedly inspiring.

It was in 1916 also that the art theatre received the stimulus of a new periodical, *Theatre Arts,* a quarterly magazine edited by Sheldon Cheney, one of the most ardent champions and understanding interpreters of modern aesthetic movements. Mr. Cheney was later joined in his editorial responsibilities by Kenneth Macgowan, Stark Young, and Edith J. R. Isaacs, and eventually Mrs. Isaacs became the sole editor, with Rosamond Gilder her assistant. The magazine continued as a quarterly until 1924, when it became a monthly. For more than thirty years it upheld the intellectual and artistic dignity of the theatre, and counted among its contributors the most distinguished theatrical commentators of Europe and America. In 1948, after fighting a losing financial battle,

it was sold, its format altered, and Charles MacArthur became its editor.

MC CONNELL AND BROWN

Two other events of 1916 are significant. In Cleveland a group of little theatre enthusiasts founded the Play House, whose first home was an empty house owned and donated by Mr. and Mrs. Francis E. Drury, and whose second (occupied in 1917) was a converted church building purchased with funds contributed by the Drurys and other citizens. The Play House was directed from 1916 to1921 by Raymond O'Neil, a music and drama critic who had traveled abroad and become impressed by the work of Gordon Craig and other modernists. He was succeeded by Frederic McConnell, a product of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, and former assistant director at the Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit and the Greek Theatre of the University of California. Mr. McConnell is still the guiding genius of the Cleveland Play House, and he has built it into one of the great non-commercial theatres of the country. In Pasadena a young actor named Gilmor Brown arrived at the head of his own stock company, the Savoy Players, and stayed to found two years later the Pasadena Community Playhouse Association. Mr. Brown has never regretted the failure of the Savoy Players to establish themselves in Pasadena, for this failure prompted him to create one of the most remarkable successes in the world of community theatricals. Today the Pasadena Playhouse, with its $500,000 plant (including several auditoriums, extensive workshops, and a complete school of the theatre) is known throughout the world for its broad artistic policies, for its record of hundreds of productions and thousands of participants, and for its many talented graduates.

The Cleveland and Pasadena theatres (pre-eminent in their field) are monuments to the vision, the tenacity, and the artistic integrity of individual men.

EVEN ON THE PRAIRIE

Meanwhile the little theatre idea was bearing fruit in nearly every part of the country. In Duluth, Minnesota, a community theatre had been organized as early as 1911, and in 1914 the group had acquired its own playhouse, a former Christian Science church; in 1914 Alfred G. Arvold, an instructor in the North

Dakota Agricultural College at Fargo, had founded his Little Country Theatre, which, with its production of standard and original plays (often taken on tour to neighboring towns) relieved the bleakness of prairie life; in 1915 Samuel Eliot assumed the directorship of the newly-formed Little Theatre Society of Indianapolis, and started it on a successful career which included the construction of a playhouse in 1925; and in 1916 Henry B. Vincent headed the Little Playhouse of Erie, Pennsylvania, which has grown into one of the best-established community theatres in the nation. These are outstanding examples; they by no means represent the whole development which occurred during the second decade. It is estimated that as early as 1917 there were fifty little theatres in operation. Probably this number had doubled by 1920.

Obviously there were great differences of policy and standards in these many theatres. Those in New York City had a greater store of talent and more sophisticated audiences, but those in prairie towns had an eager sincerity born of cultural hunger, which compensated for their lack of metropolitan advantages. The obvious weakness of the provincial groups was crudity; that of the metropolitan, "artiness." But both were actuated by a laudable realization of the commercial theatre's failure to satisfy the artistic needs of the nation, and both laid foundations for important future developments. It was an era of the inspired amateur.

REVOLT OF THE PROFESSIONAL ACTORS

It was not only the amateur who rose in arms against commercialism. The professional actors staged a revolt which provided more dramatic moments than many a play seen on the stage. Back in 1896 American actors had made their first attempt at a protective association with the formation of the Actors Society. But this effort had failed, and it was not until 1913 that their forces were gathered again, and that Actors Equity Association was created. For six years after its founding, Equity carried on a running fight with the producing managers, demanding fair minimum wages, a maximum of eight performances a week, a limit on free rehearsal time, no Sunday performances, compensation for transportation to and from New York, and various other reasonable protections.

For six years Equity's representatives were evaded and rebuffed by the managers. Finally, in the summer of 1919, they insisted on an agreement. It was refused. At a crucial meeting early in August, the actors' committee was met by the lone figure of Sam Harris (of Cohan and Harris), who had been deserted by other managers expected to be present, and Mr. Harris greeted them by crying out, "I won't speak to you. I won't have anything to do with you. Go away!"

"STARVE THE ACTORS OUT!"

They did go away. And, in desperation, they called a strike—the first and the only great actors' strike in the history of the American theatre. They closed practically every theatre on Broadway. The managers were aghast, but stubborn. Belasco shouted, "Starve the actors out!" The Shuberts, William A. Brady, Ziegfeld, Erlanger, Harris and Cohan—all the important managers fought to protect their interests. George M. Cohan (an actor as well as a manager) proved the most resourceful and persuasive in the fight against Equity. He took the leadership in organizing those actors who hesitated to join the strike, and the result was the Actors Fidelity League, which Cohan himself offered to finance with funds far greater than those in Equity's treasury. It was a civil war. John Drew and the Barrymores threw their weight behind Equity; E. H. Sothern was one of the notable stars who sided with the managers. There were street parades, and speeches. The public, with no shows to see in the theatres, found their drama on the sidewalks, with stars providing the entertainment. The fight lasted four weeks. The managers lost. On September 6th they signed the Equity contract, which, with modifications, has been in effect ever since. The unfair exploitation of the actor was at an end. It did not mean, however, that his future was rosy. He was to discover before many years that unemployment could be as disheartening as exploitation.

A picturesque footnote to the record of the actors' strike was provided by George M. Cohan, the temperamental and recalcitrant Irishman, who in defeat swore he would never join Actors' Equity. He never did. But Equity, with commendable magnanimity, permitted him to appear in Broadway productions whenever he chose—the only professional actor of the 1920s and 1930s without an Equity card.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

It may have surprised the reader that in this chapter only the barest mention has been made of the First World War, which began in August, 1914, and ended in November, 1918. The explanation is simply that the war had only a superficial influence on our theatre. We ourselves did not enter the war until April, 1917, and were therefore engaged actively in it for only a year and a half. The chief effect on our theatre was a slight increase in the number of musical productions (several of which had military themes) and the presentation of a few straight plays dealing with the war. The best war plays did not arrive until several years after the armistice. It was in the field of popular music that the war registered its strongest and most immediate effect. In 1917 Americans were singing "When the Boys Come Home," "When Yankee Doodle Learns to Parlez vous Français," and (most frequently) George M. Cohan's immortal "Over There." In 1918 the topical hits were "K-K-K-Katy," "Madelon," "My Belgian Rose," and "They Were All out of Step but Jim."

Stars of stage and screen, of course, did their patriotic "bit," as they always do in times of crisis. They sold war bonds at rallies, and they entertained the armed forces at military establishments. The new idols of the screen were especially active: Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, Lillian and Dorothy Gish. The intrepid Gish sisters even toured the front lines in France.

The two adverse effects of the war period on show business were the ten per cent amusement tax (which according to managers hurt box-office receipts), and the influenza epidemic of 1918, which killed half a million people and closed many theatres for short periods.

THE REAL MENACE

Such phenomena as the Actors' Strike and the First World War the theatre could take in its stride. Not so easy to take, however, was the growing menace of the motion picture. What in 1905 had been looked upon as a frivolous novelty, had become by 1910 a real danger to the prosperity of the legitimate theatre. In the latter year there existed 9000 motion picture houses. Most of them, to be sure, were small and unimpressive—converted store-buildings and other make-shift establishments with a seat-

ing capacity of two or three hundred. But by 1920 the number had grown to nearly 15,000, and the newer theatres were not only attractive, but they seated between 500 and 1000. Furthermore, the price of admission had advanced from five and ten cents to as much as half a dollar. In 1920 fifty cents was a not inconsiderable sum to spend for entertainment. That people would pay this much for screen-plays was significant.

In 1910 pictures were still of one- and two-reel length. But presently the Italians created the feature-length film, and with a series of spectacular productions which included *Quo Vadis* (1912) and *Cabiria* (1914) they not only astonished the public, but at the same time struck fear in the hearts of legitimate theatre managers. Then the first American genius of film art, D. W. Griffith, produced *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, a Civil-War melodrama in twelve reels, which cost the then-staggering sum of $100,000, and which provided such a thrilling evening in the theatre that there was no longer any question as to the serious and artistic values of motion-picture entertainment. This film, incidentally, was exhibited regularly for at least fifteen years, during which time it earned a gross income of nearly $20,000,000.

THE PROPHETS

In 1915 *Theatre Magazine* devoted considerable space to a discussion of the threat of the motion picture to the legitimate stage. It quoted William A. Brady (a representative Broadway producer) as saying that the movies meant the death of the theatre. But it also quoted Daniel Frohman (the Dean of Broadway) to the effect that the movies could never supplant stage plays, and that the legitimate theatre would endure as long as there was civilization. We know now that both prophets were *almost* right. And we are reminded of Dostoevsky's statement that life is never quite as wonderful or quite as terrible as one expects it to be.

Chapter XIII

Boom and Crash: 1920–1930

THE decade of the 1920s represents a climactic period in the history of the commercial theatre in America. Not only did the legitimate stage during that decade reach the zenith of its development, but the period also brought into existence two mechanical mediums of entertainment which proved of major importance—radio and sound films.

Although there was a minor post-war depression in the years 1920–22, this was followed by a boom which increased yearly until its bubble burst with the stock-market crash of October, 1929. And the financial condition of the country is reflected fairly accurately in the record of Broadway productions. During the 1920–21 season, for example, there was a total of 157 productions in New York. But in 1923–24 the number had increased to approximately 200. The next season it leaped to 230; the next to 260; and during 1927–28 reached an all-time high of 280. Of this total, 200 productions were of new plays. The final season of the decade reflected, in its second half, the financial panic, and showed a decline to 240 productions. Thereafter the decline was drastic.

It is interesting to note that in 1927–28 there were nearly three and one-half times as many productions on Broadway as there were in 1947–48. And of course there were more theatres, also. In the late twenties there were nearly eighty houses available for stage shows; in the late forties there were only thirty-odd.

With more than 2000 productions (for the decade) to consider, it is impossible to do more than indicate their general nature, and specify items of unusual significance. Before we undertake such a summary, however, it seems appropriate to mention several facts which contribute to the theatrical picture of the era.

DEATH BY DEGREES

Although business conditions were stimulating to Broadway production (there has for long existed a close connection between Wall Street and Broadway), the prosperity of the stage outside New York declined steadily throughout the 1920s. Whereas there were available nearly 1500 legitimate theatres in the country in 1920 (road-show and stock company houses), by 1930 there were less than 500. The reason for this shocking decrease, was, of course, the drastic encroachment of motion picture business. Not only were many legitimate theatres converted to motion-picture use, but thousands of new picture theatres were constructed. As the decade progressed, road-show business died, stock companies disappeared, and vaudeville withered. In the early days of motion pictures vaudeville had been hospitable to them, and had included them (as short novelties) on their bills. Then, when feature-length films were produced, and public interest demanded their showing, vaudeville houses had adopted the policy of a combination film-and-stage-show program. Gradually the number of stage acts was diminished, and by 1930 circuit vaudeville was beaten. Its deathknell was sounded in 1932 when the Palace Theatre in New York (the "mother church" of the two-a-day) went off its straight vaudeville policy.

THE LAVISH ZIEGFELD

The decade of the 1920s was one of great theatrical excitement and speculation. A good deal of fluid capital moved into the motion picture and radio field, but a large amount remained available for Broadway production. And, as in all lush times, the more frivolous types of entertainment flourished extravagantly. It was the great era for revues, both intimate and spectacular—the golden age of Ziegfeld, who had begun modestly with his *Follies* back in 1907, but who twenty years later was anything but modest. In her recently published reminiscences, Billie Burke (Mrs. Ziegfeld) recalls the colorful details of her husband's activities in the late twenties, and one carries away from her account an impression of fantastic luxury involving unlimited quantities of roses, champagne, and the world's most beautiful young women. She notes that the pre-production cost of the 1927 *Follies* amounted to nearly $300,000, of which $123,000 was

spent on costumes. Such splendid excesses remind one of the court spectacles of the Italian Renaissance and of the opera-ballet extravagances of pre-revolutionary Russia.

Florenz Ziegfeld undoubtedly was the most lavish of revue producers, as well as the most aesthetic, yet he was by no means without rivals in that field. In competition with the *Follies* during the twenties were Earl Carroll's *Vanities* and *Sketch Books*, George White's *Scandals*, the Shuberts' *Artists and Models*, Hammerstein's *Nine O'Clock Revue*, various editions of the *Music Box Revue*, the *Greenwich Village Follies*, and various other attractions of this *genre* concocted by Hassard Short, John Murray Anderson, and other revue masters. Never before in New York (nor even in Paris, the cradle of revues) had so many productions of this sort been offered to a spendthrift public. It was a great and happy splurge, brought to an end by the 1929 crash, which *Variety* epitomized in its classic headline, WALL ST. LAYS AN EGG. And by the time Broadway had recovered from the depression, the Warner Brothers and their "talkies" had taken over the field of sumptuous girl-and-music shows.

Not all the easy money of the twenties, however, was spent on the frivolous. While Ziegfeld was "glorifying the American girl," the Theatre Guild and other "art theatres" were glorifying the modern literary drama. The Guild, in fact, after its modest and hesitant start in 1919, achieved such remarkable success with its productions during its first few seasons that by 1925 it was able to build its own million-dollar theatre. And the record of its productions during the first ten years of its life (which Walter Prichard Eaton has treated so interestingly in print) forms an impressive monument to the artistic integrity and business acumen of the organization.

VIRTUOUS YOUTH OF THE THEATRE GUILD

Actually the Theatre Guild between 1919 and 1929 offered to theatregoers a comprehensive and palatable education in the modern drama. Although its emphasis was on European plays, it was by no means remiss in its obligation to native playwrights. Out of a total of 62 productions, 15 represented the work of Americans. That seems a fair proportion. And included in this group were such historic pieces as John Howard Lawson's *Pro-*

cessional, Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord*, and *They Knew What They Wanted*, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, S. N. Behrman's *The Second Man*, Dorothy and DuBose Heyward's *Porgy*, Arthur Richman's *Ambush*, and Eugene O'Neill's *Marco Millions*, *Strange Interlude*, and *Dynamo*.

The British were best represented, with twenty plays, of which ten were by George Bernard Shaw. With these productions the Guild in fact became Shaw's official American interpreter. In rapid succession it presented *Heartbreak House*, *Back to Methuselah*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Saint Joan*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Arms and the Man*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Pygmalion*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, and *Major Barbara*. Several of these, of course, were revivals, but some were new. Most sensational of the latter group was *Back to Methuselah*, which because of its inordinate length was presented in three parts in as many evenings, Part One being played for a week, Part Two the following week, and Part Three the next. Then the whole process was repeated.

Eight German plays were produced, including Georg Kaiser's expressionistic *From Morn to Midnight*, Stefan Zweig's *Volpone*, Ernst Toller's *Man and the Masses*, and Franz Werfel's *Goat Song*. Russia was represented by Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness*, Andreyev's *He Who Gets Slapped*, and Evreinoff's *The Chief Thing;* Scandinavia by Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and Strindberg's *The Dance of Death;* France by Claudel's *The Tidings Brought to Mary*, Lenormand's *The Failures*, Pagnol and Nivoix's *Merchants of Glory*, Courteline's *Boubouroche*, Amiel and Obey's *The Wife With a Smile*, and Copeau's dramatization of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov;* Czecho-Slovakia by Karel Capek's *R.U.R.;* Belgium by Verhaeren's *The Cloister;* and Hungary by Ernest Vajda's *Fata Morgana* and three plays by Ferenc Molnar: *Liliom*, *The Guardsman*, and *The Glass Slipper*.

It is scarcely disputable that by offering a series of beautifully mounted and intelligently acted productions of such distinguished international plays, the Theatre Guild brought a new artistic sophistication into the American theatre. And at the same time it established a prestige for itself which has carried it successfully, if not always justifiably, through later and more difficult times. Our theatre had long borrowed from foreign playwrights, but usually its borrowings had been of popular rather than artistically important material. The Guild boldly, and sometimes with finan-

cial loss, threw its talent and resources into the exploitation of dramatic masterpieces.

EVA LE GALLIENNE'S VENTURE IN REPERTORY

Perhaps less important than the Theatre Guild (and certainly less successful) but nevertheless significant and admirable was the Civic Repertory Theatre established in the autumn of 1926 by Eva Le Gallienne. Miss Le Gallienne had starred in the Guild's highly successful production of *Liliom*, and later in Gilbert Miller's production of another Molnar hit, *The Swan*. But she was not happy to continue with long-run plays; she had first-hand acquaintance with the Comédie Française and other European repertory theatres, and she was determined to give New York a theatre of this sort, with famous plays presented in alternation. She was determined also to operate her theatre at a low admission price, in order that her offerings might be available to all classes of theatregoers.

By leasing an old theatre off Broadway, in Fourteenth Street, and by engaging chiefly young and idealistic actors, like herself, Miss Le Gallienne was able to keep her overhead expense at a modest level, and with comparatively small capital she managed to maintain her repertory policy for six seasons. Had it not been for the depression which followed the crash of 1929, she might have enjoyed many more seasons. But, when she concluded her venture at the end of 1932, she could set down with justifiable pride a record of 34 distinguished plays which she had presented for a total of 1581 performances. Two of the plays were by Shakespeare, one by Molière, one by Goldoni, three by Ibsen, four by Chekhov, and others by Benavente, the Quinteros, Sierra, Schnitzler, Dumas, and similarly representative European playwrights. It was definitely a foreign repertory, but it was a good one. And it came the nearest to success of any such attempt made in New York during the present century.

WALTER HAMPDEN'S CONTRIBUTION

It was during the 1920s also that Walter Hampden, an American actor who had spent some years in England preparing himself for a career in Shakespearean roles, established his own theatre in New York, and presented a succession of literary dramas, chiefly poetic, which brought him great distinction. Among his notable

successes were *Hamlet*, *Othello*, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, and Arthur Goodrich's *Caponsacchi*, which was a dramatization of Browning's poem, *The Ring and the Book*. These plays and others he not only presented in New York but also took on nation-wide tours. Mr. Hampden, however, did not operate—as did Miss Le Gallienne—on a strict repertory basis. It is true that occasionally, and usually when touring, he offered several plays on alternate nights of a single week, but for the most part he permitted each play to have a long run, after which it could be revived for additional shorter runs.

It must not be assumed, however, that the presentation of classics and modern foreign plays of distinction during this decade was dependent solely upon the efforts of such organizations as the Theatre Guild, the Civic Repertory Theatre, and the various "little theatre" groups. The so-called commercial managers were fully alive to the growing American interest in the artistic products of the European theatre, and they contributed their full share of enterprise in this field. Outstanding productions were made by Winthrop Ames, by Arthur Hopkins, by Brock Pemberton, and by Gilbert Miller, who in 1921 became manager of Charles Frohman, Inc. These four producers were especially responsive to modern trends; but there were also notable imported offerings by the Shuberts, by William A. Brady, Sam H. Harris, David Belasco, and various other managers customarily identified with popular but artistically unimportant plays.

Undoubtedly the 1920s saw a richer assortment of world drama and theatre technique than has any other decade in our history. For, not only did Broadway managers prepare domestic productions of an enormous number of imported pieces, but they also sponsored the visits of a great many foreign acting companies. The following selections from "commercial" offerings of the period will serve to illustrate this point.

1920–21

Galsworthy's *The Skin Game*, with an English company; Sven Lange's *Samson and Delilah*, with Ben-Ami, Pauline Lord, Sam Jaffe and Edward G. Robinson; St. John Ervine's *Mixed Marriage*, with Augustin Duncan and Margaret Wycherly; Sacha Guitry's *Deburau*, with Lionel Atwill; John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, with an English company; William Archer's *The Green*

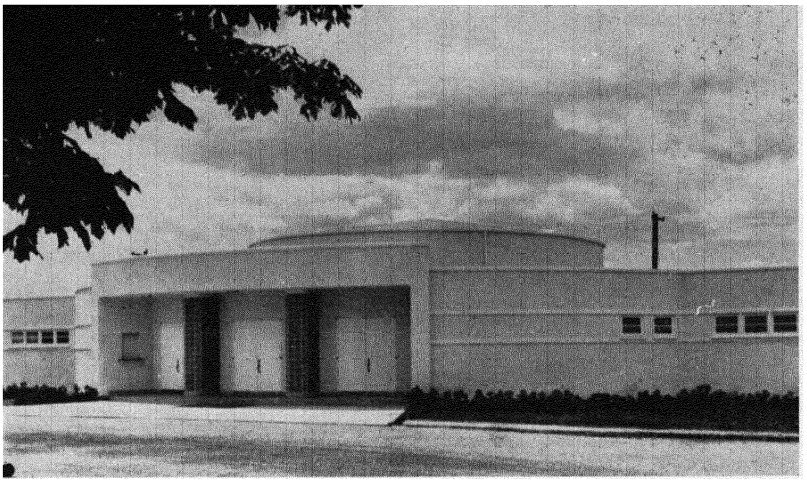
Goddess, with George Arliss; Harold Chapin's *The New Morality*, with Grace George; Johann Sigurjonsson's *Eyvind of the Hills*, with Margaret Wycherly; and John Drinkwater's *Mary Stuart*, with Clare Eames.

1921–22

Henri Bataille's *L'Homme à la Rose* (re-titled *Don Juan*), with Lou Tellegen; Somerset Maugham's *The Circle*, with John Drew and Mrs. Leslie Carter; Lennox Robinson's *The White-Headed Boy*, with the Irish Players; Clemence Dane's *A Bill of Divorcement*, with Charles Waldron, Janet Beecher, and Katharine Cornell; Henri Bernstein's *The Claw*, with Irene Fenwick and Lionel Barrymore; Harley Granville Barker's *The Madras House*, with Whitford Kane, Aline MacMahon, and Warburton Gamble; Peretz Hirshbein's *The Idle Inn*, with Louis Wolheim and Mary Shaw; A. A. Milne's *The Dover Road*, with Charles Cherry and Winifred Lenihan; Henning Berger's *The Deluge*, with Lester Lonergan and Edward G. Robinson; and *The Chauve-Souris*, Nikita Balieff's Russian vaudeville, with a company from Moscow.

1922–23

Henri Bataille's *La Tendresse*, with Henry Miller and Ruth Chatterton; Gerhart Hauptmann's *Rose Bernd*, with Ethel Barrymore; John Galsworthy's *Loyalties*, with the London company; *Malvaloca*, by the Quinteros, with Jane Cowl and Rollo Peters; Josef and Karel Capek's *The World We Live In* (The Insect Comedy) with Robert Edeson and Kenneth MacKenna; Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, with Moffat Johnston, Margaret Wycherly, and Florence Eldridge; John Barrymore's record-breaking run in *Hamlet;* Emile Augier's *L'Aventurière*, with Cecile Sorel and her company of players from the Comédie Française; Clemence Dane's *Will Shakespeare*, with Otto Kruger, Winifred Lenihan, and Katharine Cornell; the Moscow Art Theatre in a repertory of plays which included Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, Turgenev's *The Lady from the Provinces*, and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Three Sisters*, and with its first-line players, including Stanislavsky, Katchaloff, Moskvin, Knipper-Chekhova, and Ouspenskaya; Sacha Guitry's *Pasteur*, with Henry Miller; Leonid Andreyev's



Penthouse Theatre, University of Washington, 1940. First theatre ever designed and built for presentation of standard plays in arena style.

(Courtesy of the School of Drama, University of Washington.)

Anathema, with Ernest Glendinning; and Gogol's *The Inspector General*, with an undistinguished American cast.

1923–24

Lorenzo de Azertis' *Casanova*, with Lowell Sherman and Katharine Cornell; Pirandello's *Floriani's Wife*, with Margaret Wycherly; Molnar's *Launzi*, with Pauline Lord; the Grand Guignol Players from Paris, in a repertory offering of twenty-four short plays, chiefly thrillers; Molnar's *The Swan*, with Eva Le Gallienne, Basil Rathbone, and Philip Merivale; Sir John Martin-Harvey and his company in a repertory engagement which offered the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, Maeterlinck's *The Burgomaster of Stilemonde*, and *Hamlet;* a return engagement of the Moscow Art Theatre; Eleonora Duse in a farewell series of performances, including *The Lady from the Sea*, *Ghosts*, and several Italian plays; Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande*, with Jane Cowl and Rollo Peters; Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound*, with Leslie Howard, Alfred Lunt, and Margalo Gillmore; Andre Charlot's *Revue of 1924*, with Jack Buchanan, Beatrice Lillie, and Gertrude Lawrence; Karl Vollmoeller's spectacular legend, *The Miracle*, as staged by Max Reinhardt, with Lady Diana Manners, Rosamond Pinchot, Werner Krauss, and Rudolph Schildkraut; and Hauptmann's *The Assumption of Hannele*, with Eva Le Gallienne and Basil Rathbone.

1924–25

Luigi Chiarelli's *The Mask and the Face*, with Willian Faversham and Catherine Willard; Eden Phillpotts' *The Farmer's Wife*, with Charles Coburn and Mrs. Coburn; Mme. Simone and her French company in Rostand's *L'Aiglon* and several other French and Italian plays; a revival of Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, with Ethel Barrymore; Firmin Gemier and his company from the Théâtre National de l'Odéon in Paris, in a repertory of classic and modern French plays; Galsworthy's *Old English*, with George Arliss; Molnar's *Carnival*, with Elsie Ferguson and Tom Nesbitt; a return of Balieff's *Chauve Souris;* Laszlo Fodor's *The Stork*, with Katherine Alexander and Geoffrey Kerr; Frank Wedekind's *Erdgeist* (called *The Loves of Lulu*) with Margot Kelly and Ullrich Haupt; Galsworthy's *A Bit of Love*, with Chrystal Herne and O. P. Heggie; and The Players' revival

of Pinero's *Trelawny of the Wells*, with John Drew, Laurette Taylor, and an all-star cast.

1925–26

Noel Coward's *The Vortex*, with Auriol Lee, Lillian Braithwaite, Leo G. Carroll, and Noel Coward; the same author's *Hay Fever*, with Laura Hope Crews, Harry Davenport, and Frieda Inescourt; Brieux's *Accused*, with E. H. Sothern; Melchior Lengyel's *Antonia*, with Marjorie Rambeau and Lumsden Hare; Ashley Dukes's *The Man with a Load of Mischief*, with Ruth Chatterton and Robert Loraine; John Van Druten's *Young Woodley*, with Glenn Hunter and Helen Gahagan; *Hamlet* in modern dress, with Basil Sydney; Frederick Lonsdale's *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney*, with Ina Claire and A. E. Matthews; Ludwig Thoma's *Moral*, with Edwin Nicander and John Craig; a touring revival of *The School for Scandal*, with O. P. Heggie and Henrietta Crosman; Noel Coward's *Easy Virtue*, with Jane Cowl and Halliwell Hobbes; the Moscow Art Theatre Musical Studio's presentations of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, of Lipserkoff and Bizet's *Carmencita and the Soldier*, and several other operatic productions; Dario Niccodemi's *Stronger than Love*, with Nance O'Neil and Ralph Forbes; Karel Capek's *The Makropoulos Secret*, with Helen Menken; a revival of Sudermann's *Magda*, with Bertha Kalich, Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, with Reginald Owen, Clare Eames, and Margalo Gillmore; a revival of Sem Bennelli's *The Jest*, with Basil Sydney; Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, with Augustin Duncan; Franz Werfel's *Schweiger*, with Ann Harding and Jacob Ben-Ami; and a revival of Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*, with Helen Hayes.

1926–27

Edouard Bourdet's *The Captive*, with Helen Menken, Norman Trevor, and Basil Rathbone; T. C. Murray's *Autumn Fire*, with Una O'Connor; Molnar's *The Play's the Thing*, with Holbrook Blinn; Pirandello's *Naked*, with Augustin Duncan; Sacha Guitry's *Mozart*, with Irene Bordoni; Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife*, with Ethel Barrymore; the Habima Players of Moscow in Ansky's *The Dybbuk* and other representative Hebrew dramas; a revival of Arnold Bennett's *The Great Adventure*, with Reginald Pole and Spring Byington; a revival of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, with

Mrs. Fiske; Jacques Deval's *Her Cardboard Lover*, with Jeanne Eagels and Leslie Howard; and the Spanish Art Theatre in several modern Spanish plays, including Martinez Sierra's *The Cradle Song* and *The Romantic Young Lady*.

1927–28

Eden and Adelaide Phillpotts' *Yellow Sands*, with an English company; Somerset Maugham's *The Letter*, with Katharine Cornell; A. A. Milne's *The Ivory Door*, with Henry Hull and Linda Watkins; *The Taming of the Shrew* in modern dress, with Basil Sydney and Mary Ellis; John Galsworthy's *Escape*, with Leslie Howard; Noel Coward's *The Marquise*, with Billie Burke and Arthur Byron; a series of Max Reinhardt productions, with his German company, including Alexander Moissi, Paul Hartmann, Hans Thimig, and Tilly Losch, the principal offerings being *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Von Hofmannsthal's version of *Everyman*, and Buechner's *Danton's Tod;* Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, with the Irish Players; a revival of Sophocles' *Electra*, with Margaret Anglin; a revival of Rostand's *L'Aiglon*, with Michael Strange; George Arliss in *The Merchant of Venice;* Alfred Neumann's *The Patriot*, with Leslie Faber and Madge Titheradge; Bruno Frank's *12,000*, with Basil Sydney and Mary Ellis; Mrs. Fiske and Otis Skinner in *The Merry Wives of Windsor;* another revival of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, with the English company; George C. Tyler's all-star revival of *She Stoops to Conquer*, with Lawrence D'Orsay, Lyn Harding, Mrs. Leslie Carter, Fay Bainter, and Patricia Collinge; and a similar production by Mr. Tyler of Sardou's *Diplomacy*, with Tyrone Power, William Faversham, Cecilia Loftus, Margaret Anglin, Frances Starr, and Charles Coburn.

1928–29

Molnar's *Olympia*, with Fay Compton, Laura Hope Crews, and Ian Hunter; Noel Coward's revue, *This Year of Grace*, with Beatrice Lillie and Mr. Coward; George C. Tyler's production of *Macbeth*, with Lyn Harding and Florence Reed; Somerset Maugham's *The Sacred Flame*, with Clare Eames and Robert Harris; a revival of Tolstoy's *Redemption*, with Alexander Moissi; A. A. Milne's *The Perfect Alibi*, with Harry Beresford and Leo G. Carroll; Molnar's *The Red Mill* (re-titled *Mima*), with Lenore

Ulric; Martinez Sierra's *The Kingdom of God*, with Ethel Barrymore; another season of the Chauve Souris; R. C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*, with Colin Keith-Johnston and Leon Quartermaine; Stephen Phillips' *Paolo and Francesca*, with Jane Cowl and Philip Merivale; Lili Hatvany's *The Love Duel*, with Louis Calhern and Ethel Barrymore; and the Freiburg *Passion Play*, imported from Germany by Morris Gest, with the German cast, including the Fassnacht family.

1929–30

Patrick Hamilton's *Rope's End*, with Robert Milton; Siegfried Geyer's *Candle Light*, with Gertrude Lawrence and Leslie Howard; *A Hundred Years Old*, by the Quinteros, with Otis Skinner; Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*, with the company of the Irish Theatre, Inc.; Noel Coward's operetta, *Bitter Sweet*, with Evelyn Laye; A. A. Milne's *Michael and Mary*, with Edith Barrett and Henry Hull; St. John Ervine's *The First Mrs. Fraser*, with Grace George and A. E. Matthews; Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, presented by the Irish Theatre; *Josef Suss*, the adaptation by Ashley Dukes of Lion Feuchtwanger's novel, *Power*, with Maurice Moscovitch and the English company; Marcel Pagnol's *Topaze*, with Frank Morgan; Norman MacOwan's *The Infinite Shoeblack*, with Leslie Banks; Mei Lan-fang, China's foremost actor, and his company in a repertory of Chinese classics; Michio Ito's Players from Japan in native repertory; G. B. Stern's *The Matriarch*, with Constance Collier and Jessica Tandy; Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, produced by Jed Harris, with Lillian Gish, Osgood Perkins, and Walter Connolly; Ibsen's *The Vikings*, with Blanche Yurka and Charles Waldron; and Gilbert Seldes' adaptation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, with Violet Kemble Cooper, Miriam Hopkins, Sydney Greenstreet, and Ernest Truex.

No claim is made that each item on the foregoing list represents a masterpiece, but the list considered as a whole does indicate a rather remarkable variety of international drama made available to Americans by commercial managers during the 1920s. And, when it is added to the foreign offerings of the Theatre Guild, the Provincetown Playhouse, the Civic Repertory Theatre, the American Laboratory Theatre, the Actors' Theatre, and other organizations dedicated to artistic production, one reaches the inevitable

conclusion that this decade ushered our theatre into a new era of cosmopolitanism.

Even more remarkable, however, was the rise, during this period, of the native playwright. In the preceding chapter we noted the encouragement given young American playwrights—notably Eugene O'Neill—by the "little" theatres and the universities between 1915 and 1920. Between 1920 and 1930 this encouragement bore abundant fruit, for not only did a large number of talented young writers achieve excellent results, but a good many commercial managers accepted their work and presented it successfully. The first two decades of the century had seen the development of approximately a dozen able craftsmen among American playwrights, and most of them continued work during the 1920s—George Ade, George M. Cohan, Rachel Crothers, Edward Sheldon, Avery Hopwood, Winchell Smith, A. E. Thomas, David Belasco, Owen Davis, Edward Knoblock, Percy MacKaye, and Booth Tarkington—but during the third decade these were joined by more than a score of talented new writers, some of whom brought to our dramatic literature a power, a depth, and an artistic integrity which raised it to a higher level than it had ever before attained.

THE NEW PLAYWRIGHTS

Zoe Akins (1886–) achieved her first success with *Déclassée*, which Ethel Barrymore helped to make one of the hits of the 1919–20 season, and which indicated its author's flair for the handling of romantic situations in a sophisticated manner. This was followed in 1921 by *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* and *The Varying Shore*, and in 1923 by *The Texas Nightingale* and *A Royal Fandango*. Although, because of miscasting, it failed on Broadway, *The Texas Nightingale* is considered her best play because of the superiority of its dialogue and characterization. Miss Akins' plays have little social or intellectual importance, and they are more credible in the theatre than on the printed page, but they are worthy examples of their *genre*.

POET FROM DAKOTA

Maxwell Anderson (1888–), a scholar and a poet who has become one of the major dramatists of the century, had his first play produced on Broadway in 1923. This was *White Desert*, a

grim tragedy of the North Dakota plains, where Anderson had spent his youth. The play failed, but its power attracted attention to the author. Anderson then entered into a period of collaboration with Laurence Stallings (a colleague of his on the staff of the New York *World*), and in 1924 their war play, *What Price Glory?* was produced with outstanding success. This was the first American drama to portray modern war and modern soldiers in a realistic way, and although its profaneness shocked many, its rowdy humor and penetrating truth carried it to immense popularity. *First Flight* and *The Buccaneer*, both written with Stallings, and both produced in 1925, were failures, and neither is of artistic importance. *Outside Looking In*, also produced in 1925, was a dramatization by Anderson of Jim Tully's autobiographical novel, *Beggars of Life*, an episodic treatment of hobo existence. *Saturday's Children* (1927), was Anderson's first attempt at domestic drama, and it proved a highly sympathetic treatment of young love and early married life. *Gods of the Lightning* (1928) was written with Harold Hickerson, and dealt passionately, too passionately, with the then recent Sacco-Vanzetti case, in which the two principals were condemned to death. Seven years later Anderson was to make use of the same story more poetically and much more effectively in his powerful *Winterset*. Although this playwright has during his career worked with a great variety of themes, and has employed many techniques, his fundamental aim has been to restore poetry to the stage—partly through the use of verse, but mainly through the application of the poetic spirit. Considering the predominance of the prosaic in modern life, he has succeeded remarkably well.

A TALENT FOR POLITE COMEDY

Philip Barry (1896–1949) received his undergraduate education at Yale University, and then studied playwriting under George Pierce Baker at Harvard. In 1922 he won the Harvard Prize with his comedy, *You and I*, and this was produced in New York in 1923. It revealed unmistakably to both critics and public a talent of the first order in the field of polite comedy, and the promise which it gave of a genuine American comedy of manners has been amply fulfilled. Although his second Broadway production, *The Youngest* (1924) did not mark any particular advance in his development, *In a Garden* (1925) exhibited a subtlety which

hurt the play's popularity but at the time impressed the critical. In 1926 *White Wings* carried Barry into the realm of whimsical satire, but the cleverness of the piece was discernible to only a few, and it failed. In 1927 *John* proved "a brave but unsuccessful attempt to dramatize the life of John the Baptist," but in the same year *Paris Bound* scored a hit, and signalized the author's return to his natural field—sophisticated and witty comedy with a serious underlying theme. *Cock Robin* (1928), a mystery comedy written as a summer pastime in collaboration with Elmer Rice, proved amusing but unimportant. But *Holiday* (1929), written for Hope Williams, and played by her with immense success, opened a story vein which not only yielded immediate gold, but which Barry has worked from time to time since, and always with artistic as well as monetary profit. In this dramatic tale of the bored, rich, sophisticated American girl who finds happiness, he discovered the ideal vehicle for his combination of brittle wit and warm human understanding. Some years later he was to rework this theme for Katharine Hepburn, first in *The Philadelphia Story* and then in *Without Love*, and Hepburn became as perfect an image of the Barry heroine as Maude Adams had several decades previously become the Barrie heroine.

METROPOLITAN SOPHISTICATION

S. N. Behrman (1893–) proved to be another adroit fashioner of the comedy of manners. After a not-too-impressive beginning as a collaborator with Kenyon Nicholson on a minor piece entitled *Love Is Like That*, he hit his stride in a subtle psychological comedy, *The Second Man*, dealing with the dual personality of a writer, which was successfully produced by the Theatre Guild. This was followed by a skillful dramatization of the novel, *Serena Blandish* (1929), a highly artificial work with limited appeal. Then, later in the same year, came *Meteor*, a study of the rise to power of a ruthless financial genius, who defeats his enemies only to lose his wife, and with her his personal happiness. The play was timely because of the money fever which swept the nation during the late twenties, and the crash which climaxed that fever toward the close of 1929. Although *Meteor* is not a comedy of manners, Behrman was to return to that type shortly afterwards.

SATIRE AND WHIMSY

Marc Connelly (1890–) began his career as a playwright in association with a fellow newspaper man, George S. Kaufman. Of the five plays resulting from this collaboration, four were hits. The first was *Dulcy* (1921), which exploited the dumbness of a female character, a young married woman known as Dulcinea, originally created by Franklin P. Adams in his New York *Tribune* column. It was this role which elevated Lynn Fontanne to stardom. *To the Ladies* (1922) featured a young wife the exact opposite of Dulcy, and who by her cleverness saves her stupid husband's reputation and position. It was Helen Hayes who sparkled in this role. Both comedies dealt with familiar aspects of American life, domestic and economic, and both were written with freshness, charm, and sharp but inoffensive satire. *Merton of the Movies* (1922), was a dramatization of a novel by Harry Leon Wilson, one of the earliest satires on the movies. The role of Merton, the mid-western store clerk who takes correspondence lessons in motion-picture acting, and who suffers a comic yet pathetic disillusionment in Hollywood, was performed admirably by Glenn Hunter. *The Deep Tangled Wildwood* (1923), was a satire on the ready-made, "Winchell Smith" type of American play, and was a failure. *Beggar on Horseback* (1924), marked the high point as well as the finale of the collaboration. A dream-play which satirizes the mechanization of American life, including the assembly-line production of art, it employs the technique of German expressionism, and creates one of the most hilarious of stage nightmares. Connelly's first play written alone was *The Wisdom Tooth* (1926), a tender and moving fantasy of a clerk who suffers from an inferiority complex. It was in *The Green Pastures* (1930), however, that this sensitive and imaginative playwright achieved his finest artistic results and his greatest popular success. Based on a book of negro Bible stories by Roark Bradford, *Ol' Man Adam and His Chillun*, the play presented sacred characters and legends with the wholesome *naïveté* of the medieval miracles, and proved a delight for several seasons. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for 1929–30.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

Zona Gale (1874–1938) was not primarily a playwright, but a novelist who successfully dramatized several of her own novels. Miss Gale had remarkable ability in the delineation of commonplace characters, and in the creation of sympathetic understanding of their hopes and frustrations. *Miss Lulu Bett* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for 1920–21, and *Mr. Pitt* (1924) proved an excellent vehicle for the impressive acting of Walter Huston. In the first it is a woman who rebels against the drabness of life; in the second it is a man. Neither is entirely successful, but in the struggle of each is expressed the author's own idealism and her realistic humanitarianism.

THE UNCONVENTIONAL INTELLECTUAL

Susan Glaspell (1882–1948) was a novelist and playwright also. She and her husband, George Cram Cook, were leading spirits in the founding of the Provincetown Players in 1915, and her first plays, some in one act and others full-length, were written for presentation by that experimental group. Most famous of the short plays is the tense drama, *Trifles* (1916); the long ones include *Bernice* (1919), *The Inheritors* (1921), and *The Verge* (1921). The first of the latter group is a psychological drama depicting the effects which the death of a woman has on her husband and other characters; *The Inheritors* is a study of liberalism vs. conservatism in a mid-western college; *The Verge* is concerned with the progress of insanity in a neurotic woman. Miss Glaspell was indifferent to popular theatrical themes and techniques. Her chief appeal was to unconventional intellectuals. Yet in 1930 she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her *Alison's House*, a subtle study of the American poet, Emily Dickinson.

NORTH CAROLINA POET

Paul Green (1894–) was one of the first students to enroll in Frederick H. Koch's course in playmaking after it was established at the University of North Carolina in 1918. Before the arrival of the dynamic Koch, Green's chief interest had lain in the field of philosophy, but he was soon won over to the drama, and although several gifted writers of folk-drama have been developed through the activities of the Carolina Playmakers, he has

emerged as the most gifted of all. For several years he confined himself to one-act plays, many of which were produced in Chapel Hill, and most of which have been published. These include such excellent pieces as *The Last of the Lowries*, *The No 'Count Boy*, *The Lord's Will*, and *White Dresses*. His first professional production was of the full-length tragedy, *In Abraham's Bosom*, which was presented at the Provincetown Theatre in December, 1926, and which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for that season. The play is a gripping story of a young negro of mixed blood, who strives to rise above the conflicts within himself and above the race-prejudices which surround him, but who fails and meets disaster. In *The Field God* (1927), Green turned from the negro to the poor white of eastern North Carolina. Although powerful, the play proved too depressing for popular approval. Although during the 1930s Green contributed several plays to Broadway, his heart has never belonged to that street. He is basically a poet, and his two sources of poetic inspiration are the life of the common people—white and black—in his own North Carolina, and the significant events of early American history. He is probably the best of our regional dramatists—the one who has extracted the most warmth and richness from our humble folk; and recently he has become our principal dramatic interpreter of basic American ideals through his pageant-dramas of Colonial and Revolutionary days: *The Lost Colony*, *The Highland Call*, and *The Common Glory*.

HEADSTRONG CALIFORNIAN

Sidney Howard (1891–1939) was a graduate of the University of California who had taken advanced work in playwriting with Professor Baker at Harvard, and then had spent considerable time in Europe, where he acquired a deep interest in, and considerable knowledge of, the modern European, and particularly the French, drama. Although this interest resulted in a number of excellent adaptations of foreign plays for our stage, it was in certain respects an obstacle in Howard's career, for it diverted him from original work. Between 1920 and 1930 he had fourteen Broadway productions, of which seven were adaptations. These included *S.S. Tenacity*, by Charles Vildrac (1922); *Casanova*, from the Spanish of Lorenzo de Azertis (1923); *Sancho Panza*, from the Hungarian of Melchior Lengyel (1923); *Michel Auclair*,

by Charles Vildrac (1925); *The Last Night of Don Juan*, by Edmond Rostand (1925); *Moral*, by Ludwig Thoma (adapted in collaboration with Charles Recht, 1925); and *Olympia*, by Molnar (1928). The first of his original plays to be produced in New York was *Swords*, an heroic play in blank verse (1921), which failed, but not without attracting favorable attention to the author. His next was *They Knew What They Wanted*, a well-made play with a warm and touching story of an elderly wine-grower of Northern California, a young waitress whom he woos by mail, and a handsome helper named Joe, who comes between them. Helped by the performances of Pauline Lord, Richard Bennett, and Glenn Anders, the play not only became a popular hit but also won the Pulitzer Prize.

Lucky Sam McCarver (1925), and *Ned McCobb's Daughter* (1926) were both powerful realistic plays with rough but appealing characters. Only Eugene O'Neill has surpassed Howard in the delineation of such American types as bootleggers, sea-captains, nightclub operators, and hard-bitten but noble women. More refined characters, however, appeared in *The Silver Cord* (1926), which dealt brilliantly with the theme of over-possessive mother love, and in which Laura Hope Crews achieved a major success. *Salvation* (1928) was written in collaboration with Charles MacArthur, and dealt with the career of an evangelist; *Half Gods* (1929) had to do with psychoanalysts and brooding wives. Both were failures. Howard's work was always vigorous and biting, but frequently it was repellent. At times, too, it lacked form and compactness. He was a headstrong writer, and his enthusiasms were apt to carry him beyond the bounds of dramatic propriety.

THE MAGIC TOUCH

George S. Kaufman (1889–) has for long enjoyed a reputation as the wittiest of American playwrights. He is also one of our most skillful stage directors, and is by far our most famous collaborator. These roles combine significantly, for when Kaufman takes a hand in another writer's play, adds his wit, then develops it and shapes it during rehearsals, it usually becomes a synthetic masterpiece. We have already noted the auspicious beginning of his career as the partner of Marc Connelly. In 1924 he collaborated for the first time with Edna Ferber, the fiction writer,

on *Minick*, a dramatization of the latter's short story, *Old Man Minick*, and the play proved one of the hits of the year. In 1925 he surprised his public, and perhaps himself, by writing a play alone—*The Butter and Egg Man*, a farce filled with theatrical characters, and which enjoyed great popularity. Having proved his solo ability, he joined at once with Herman J. Mankiewicz in the composition of another farce, *The Good Fellow* (1926), which was a quick failure; and shortly thereafter collaborated again with Miss Ferber on *The Royal Family*, a richly human comedy-drama of theatrical life suggestive of the Barrymores, which restored the Kaufman prestige and fortune.

In 1928 Kaufman made his first venture into musical comedy by writing, with Morrie Ryskind, the book for *Animal Crackers*, the production of which was enlivened by the ebullient Marx brothers. He then contrived, with the aid of Alexander Woollcott, a comedy entitled *The Channel Road* (1929), which was based on Maupassant's famous story, *Boule de Suif*. This was followed by *June Moon* (1929), a collaboration with Ring Lardner, which was a machine-made, wise-cracking comedy having to do with the denizens of Tin-Pan Alley and their profession of popular-song writing.

By the end of the decade Kaufman had established himself in a secure position on Broadway. During the 1930s he was to achieve his most brilliant successes, carrying with his several collaborators, notably Moss Hart, who first teamed with Kaufman on *Once in a Lifetime* (1930). Probably more accurately than any other playwright, Kaufman symbolizes the spirit of Broadway. He is the essence of slickness.

PORTRAITIST OF WOMEN

George Kelly (1887–), after some experience as an actor and as a writer of vaudeville sketches, had his first full-length play, *The Torch-Bearers*, produced in 1922. This hilarious satire on the little theatre movement was appreciated because it was timely and because it was written with a sure knowledge of theatrical effect. Kelly's next production, however, depended less on topical interest and more on careful character portrayal. This was *The Show-Off*, a domestic comedy laid in North Philadelphia, with a central character, Aubrey Piper, whose name became a byword and a synonym for youthful brashness. And even more penetrat-

ing satire was embodied in *Craig's Wife* (1925), a fascinating study of the petty, domineering housewife. This play won Kelly the Pulitzer Prize. His next three plays were also studies in feminine character: *Daisy Mayme* (1926), *Behold the Bridegroom* (1927), and *Maggie the Magnificent* (1929). But their increasing subtlety prevented a wide appeal, and by the end of the decade Kelly in discouragement withdrew for a time from the field of playwriting. His later work has indicated no special change in either his technique or his popularity. He has had few hits, but none of our playwrights has proved more deft than he in the portraiture of women.

MIGHTIEST AND MOST SOMBRE

Eugene O'Neill (1888–) has held first place among American playwrights since his Broadway debut in 1920 with *Beyond the Horizon*. Son of the famous actor, James O'Neill, he had spent his youth in adventurous pursuits, principally at sea, during which he acquired a wealth of knowledge concerning human nature in general, and its rougher aspects in particular. In 1912 his health failed, and during a forced six-month period of confinement in a sanatorium, he began to write of his experiences. At his father's suggestion he spent the winter of 1914–15 studying playwriting with Professor Baker at Harvard, and in the summer of 1916 he joined the newly-organized Provincetown Players group. As we have noted elsewhere, it was this group which produced nearly all of O'Neill's early plays—first at Provincetown, and later in New York.

Beyond the Horizon, it will be recalled, won O'Neill the Pulitzer Prize and established him immediately as the most powerful writer in our theatre. When *The Emperor Jones* was produced later the same year (1920), it became apparent to everyone that he was not only powerful but versatile, for one play was as realistic as the other was imaginative. The former dealt with the frustrated dreams of a familiar American type—a man who longs for wide horizons and is tied to his farm and family; the latter, in a series of thrilling, nightmarish episodes, depicts the psychological breakdown of a negro fleeing through the jungle.

At the very close of 1920 came *Diff'rent*, a sombre Strindbergian study of sexual repression, which failed with the public. This was followed by *Gold* (1921), a rather melodramatic story

of men on a desert island in the Pacific, and the violence generated among them by their lust for treasure. This play, too, was a quick failure. But there was no dampening of O'Neill's enthusiasm. He was writing prolifically, reworking old plays and conceiving new ones. In the fall of 1921 he had two New York productions—*The Straw*, a tragic love story laid in a tuberculosis sanatorium, which had only a short run; and *Anna Christie*, a gripping and noble study of a woman's regeneration in the atmosphere of a waterfront saloon. The role of Anna was created with extraordinary effectiveness by Pauline Lord, and the play brought O'Neill his second Pulitzer Prize. Within a short time *Anna Christie* was being acclaimed in the theatres of London, Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, and every other important theatrical city of the world.

The year 1922 brought two more O'Neill plays to the stage: *The First Man*, which dealt with the pettiness and unhappiness of a small-town New England family, and which failed; and *The Hairy Ape*, a technically daring and symbolically provocative drama of class differences in American life. Yank, the protagonist, is a rough, powerful ship's stoker, who suddenly is impelled to question and investigate the forces and meanings of social strata. In the exciting episodes of his blundering, philosophical adventure, he finds only bewilderment and defeat. In this play, as in others of O'Neill, one finds the strong influence of Strindberg—an influence which has been readily acknowledged by the author.

The prolific O'Neill had four plays presented in 1924: *Welded*, a relentless analysis of the tortures of marriage, and the terrifying struggle of man and wife to maintain their individuality in spite of their passionate union; *The Ancient Mariner*, a dramatization of Coleridge's poem; *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, a tragedy of miscegenation, in which a superior negro fails to make a success of marriage with a white woman who is his inferior intellectually; and *Desire Under the Elms*, a passionate and deeply moving drama of illicit love and infanticide with a New England setting. As the elderly man who takes a young wife, only to have her bear a child by his son (and later kill the child because of her sense of guilt) Walter Huston created a memorable portrait. The play shocked the public, and its run was interrupted by court action, but through the efforts of critics, fellow-playwrights, and others

who testified as to its artistic validity, its legal right to continue was established.

The only new O'Neill play to see production in 1925 was *The Fountain*, a poetic romance based on the character of Ponce de Leon, which in spite of its lyrical beauty failed. And his only new play staged in 1926 was *The Great God Brown*, his most symbolic work, and the most difficult to comprehend. In depicting their dual personalities (those the world knows and those which represent their concepts of themselves) the four principal characters of the play employ masks, which they don and remove alternately. Produced by the triumvirate of O'Neill, Kenneth Macgowan, and Robert Edmond Jones, the play proved a surprising success, and achieved 171 performances. Even those whom it mystified were powerfully impressed by its philosophical implications and by the novel technique of its production.

Of the three O'Neill plays brought forth in 1928, one appeared at the western extreme of the continent. In California, at the Pasadena Playhouse, Gilmor Brown produced *Lazarus Laughed*, a fantasy of striking originality and strength, in which the Biblical character Lazarus returns from the dead to exult in life. In New York the Theatre Guild (tardily taking O'Neill to its embrace) produced *Marco Millions* and, three weeks later, *Strange Interlude*. The former is a romantic satire, using the thirteenth-century merchant-adventurer, Marco Polo, as a symbol of destructive materialism, and in a sequence of barbarically gorgeous episodes, telling a story of universal and timeless significance. *Strange Interlude* marked a high point in O'Neill's career, for not only did it enjoy an extraordinary success (432 performances in New York, followed by a long road tour), and win him his third Pulitzer Prize, but it also represented the triumphant culmination of his consistent search for a technique that would effectively convey the contrast between external and inner reality. With its morbid but fascinating story of a neurotic woman, and the men who revolve about her, the play makes elaborate and skillful use of "asides" to reveal the thoughts of its characters. Although the aside is by no means a modern invention—it was commonly employed in older periods—it had never before been used with such consistency and psychological brilliance. Because of its extraordinary length, the play was begun at five o'clock in

the afternoon, was recessed for dinner from seven forty-five to nine, and resumed from nine to eleven.

In the O'Neill record, 1929 is an anti-climax to 1928, for it offered only one new play, *Dynamo*, and that was a failure in spite of its interesting theme and some very good writing. The piece has to do with the conflict in a sensitive boy's soul between conventional religious beliefs and the worship of modern science. But the conflict fails to arouse audience interest, and there are climaxes in the play which verge on the absurd.

Certainly no other playwright has ever contributed to our stage in a single decade such a rich and diversified body of plays as these of O'Neill. And never before had an American playwright exhibited such a bold fusion of grim reality and poetic exaltation. O'Neill's work has many faults, but they are out-weighed by its virtues. And one conclusion is inescapable—that he brought our dramatic literature to maturity.

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MANHATTAN

Elmer Rice (1892–) was trained for the legal profession, but following the great success of his courtroom melodrama, *On Trial,* which introduced the motion-picture device of the "flash-back" to legitimate drama, he forsook law for playwriting. In 1921 he collaborated with Hatcher Hughes on a domestic comedy, *Wake Up, Jonathan,* which Mrs. Fiske turned into a moderate success; and in 1923 he contributed one of the earliest and most successful examples of American expressionism, *The Adding Machine*, which was given a notable production by the Theatre Guild. Although Professor Quinn takes a patronizing attitude toward the latter work, and remarks that it "for a short time deceived some critics as to its importance," it cannot be denied that with the exception of one or two of O'Neill's plays, and *Beggar on Horseback*, by Kaufman and Connelly, *The Adding Machine* represents the most effective American employment of the post-war German expressionist technique. This method, with its high tension and patterned exaggeration, was derived partly from Strindberg, and in the case of O'Neill, the original source is evident. With Rice, however, the German influence is direct and unmistakable.

In 1924 Rice collaborated with Dorothy Parker on an unimportant comedy, *Close Harmony;* and in 1928 with Philip Barry

on a mystery comedy, *Cock Robin*. In 1929 he had three plays presented in New York; *The Subway*, a pathetic story of a feminine filing clerk whose drab life drives her first into an unhappy love affair and finally to suicide beneath the wheels of a subway train; *See Naples and Die*, a sophisticated but not very successful comedy with a European setting; and *Street Scene*, a realistic melodrama of New York tenement life, which, in spite of its stereotyped characters and its lack of literary distinction, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. In nearly all his work Rice manifests a strong social consciousness, and his characters often are more the symbols of racial and social groups than individuals. In the 1930s he was to present a series of plays which were frankly propagandist, and which therefore suffered from a lack of genuine theatrical appeal.

PROMISE TO BE FULFILLED

Robert E. Sherwood (1896–) began his theatrical career as a critic, but in 1927 became a successful playwright with the production of a rather bawdy farce, *The Road to Rome*, which travestied the life of the ancient Carthaginian general, Hannibal, and provided a field day for the talents of Philip Merivale and Jane Cowl. The same year he offered a weak comedy entitled *The Love Nest*, based on a story by Ring Lardner; but in 1928 was luckier with *The Queen's Husband*, a lively comedy of domestic life in a Central European royal household, in which Roland Young attained great popularity as the meek husband of a domineering queen. His first serious play, *Waterloo Bridge*, was presented in 1930, and told the story of an idealistic American soldier in England, who meets a street-walker, falls in love with her, but is refused because the girl does not wish to destroy his illusions concerning women. Although the play had only a short run, it served to indicate Sherwood's ability to write plays of genuine human sympathy. Actually this playwright contributed very little of merit to the theatre of the 1920s. During the next decade, however, his artistic importance increased rapidly.

BRIEFER MENTION

The foregoing appear to be the most important of American playwrights who came into prominence during the 1920s. Yet there were many others who, in this first great period of native

playwriting, contributed work of outstanding quality. These include: George Abbott, co-author (with James Gleason) of *The Fall Guy* (1925), of *Broadway* (1926, with Philip Dunning), and of *Coquette* (1927, with Ann P. Bridgers); Lewis Beach (*The Goose Hangs High*, 1924); Gilbert Emery (*The Hero*, 1921, and *Tarnish*, 1923); Martin Flavin (*Children of the Moon*, 1923, and *The Criminal Code*, 1929); Arthur Goodrich (*So This Is London!*, 1922, and *Caponsacchi*, 1926); Du Bose and Dorothy Heyward (*Porgy*, 1927); Hatcher Hughes (*Hell-Bent for Heaven*, 1924, and *Ruint*, 1925); John Howard Lawson (*Roger Bloomer*, 1923, and *Processional*, 1925); Kenyon Nicholson (*The Barker*, 1927); Samson Raphaelson (*The Jazz Singer*, 1927); Arthur Richman (*Ambush*, 1921, and *The Awful Truth*, 1922); Dan Totheroh (*Wild Birds*, 1925); and Lula Vollmer (*Sun-Up* and *The Shame Woman*, 1923).

FOR THOSE TIRED BUSINESSMEN

Now, lest the impression be given that our theatre of the twenties was devoted primarily to foreign and domestic plays of serious purpose and artistic significance, let us note some of the typical popular hits of each season, without attempting to evaluate them.

1920–21: *The Bat*, by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood; *The Bad Man*, by Holbrook Blinn and Porter Emerson Browne; *Enter Madame*, by Gilda Varesi and Dolly Byrne; *Welcome Stranger*, by Aaron Hoffman; and *Three Live Ghosts*, by Frederick Isham. Musicals: *Sally* and *The Last Waltz*.

1921–22: *Abie's Irish Rose*, by Anne Nichols; *Captain Applejack*, by Walter Hackett; *The Cat and the Canary*, by John Willard; *Six-Cylinder Love*, by William Anthony McGuire; and *Kiki*, by David Belasco after the French of André Picard. Musicals: *Blossom Time* and Ed Wynn's revue, *The Perfect Fool*.

1922–23: *Shore Leave*, by Hubert Osborne; *The Old Soak*, by Don Marquis; and *Seventh Heaven*, by Austin Strong. Musicals: *The Gingham Girl* and *Sally, Irene and Mary*.

1923–24: *The Nervous Wreck*, by Owen Davis: *White Cargo*, by Leon Gordon; *Spring Cleaning*, by Frederick Lonsdale; and *The Whole Town's Talking*, by John Emerson and Anita Loos. Musicals: *Little Jessie James* and *Kid Boots*.

1924–25: *Ladies of the Evening*, by Milton Herbert Gropper;

Dancing Mothers, by Edgar Selwyn and Edmund Goulding; *Is Zat So?*, by James Gleason and Richard Taber; *Pigs*, by Anne Morrison and Patterson McNutt; and *The Best People*, by David Gray and Avery Hopwood. Musicals: *Rose-Marie* and *The Student Prince*.

1925–26: *Cradle Snatchers*, by Russell Medcraft and Norma Mitchell; *The Enemy*, by Channing Pollock; *The Green Hat*, by Michael Arlen; and *Lulu Belle*, by Edward Sheldon and Charles MacArthur. Musicals: *No, No, Nanette* and *The Vagabond King*.

1926–27: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, by Anita Loos and John Emerson; *Chicago*, by Maurine Watkins; and *Tommy*, by Howard Lindsay and Bertrand Robinson. Musicals: *Countess Maritza* and *The Desert Song*.

1927–28: *Burlesque*, by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins; *The Trial of Mary Dugan*, by Bayard Veiller; *The Shannons of Broadway*, by James Gleason; and *Dracula*, by Hamilton Deane and John Balderston. Musicals: *A Connecticut Yankee* and *Showboat*.

1928–29: *Little Accident*, by Floyd Dell and Thomas Mitchell; *The High Road*, by Frederick Lonsdale; *The Front Page*, by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur; and *This Thing Called Love*, by Edwin Burke. Musicals: *The New Moon*, and Noel Coward's revue, *This Year of Grace*.

1929–30: *It's a Wise Child*, by Laurence E. Johnson; *Strictly Dishonorable*, by Preston Sturges; *Berkeley Square*, by John L. Balderston; and *The Last Mile*, by John Wexley. Musicals: *Fifty Million Frenchmen* and *Sons o' Guns*.

It is obvious that among these hits are several of artistic excellence; but it is equally obvious that public taste had not been so altered by the "art movement" that there no longer was a place on Broadway for the frivolous and the sensational.

THE NEW DESIGNERS

The experimental theatres of 1910–20 had accomplished much more than the incubation of a new generation of playwrights—they had provided inexpensive laboratories for the development of modern stage designers. And, although the general public is curiously indifferent to scenic effect—save when it is startlingly novel or spectacular—it is indisputable that much of the artistic

excellence and dignity of our theatre of the twenties was due to its stagecraft.

Much of the inspiration for the new concepts of setting and lighting came from Europe, but there was nothing slavish in the work of our designers. Craig and Appia had defined the principles; young American artists proceeded to apply them, modify them, and project them in terms of their own talent and our theatre's needs. They achieved variety, compelling beauty, and in the best sense of the word, modernity.

With the upsurge in production which occurred during the twenties there was opportunity for many designers. Among those who made outstanding contributions were Joseph Urban (1872–1933), a Viennese artist and architect whose forte was the flamboyant, and who specialized in operas and revues; Robert Edmond Jones (1887–), whose most brilliant productions were Shakespearean; Lee Simonson (1888–), who for many years was designer-in-chief to the Theatre Guild; Rollo Peters (1892–), who was also a popular romantic actor; Norman Bel Geddes (1893–), visionary designer and architect whose massive and poetic concepts have not always been realized concretely; Cleon Throckmorton (1897–), whose career led him from the Provincetown Playhouse to the Theatre Guild, to the Group Theatre, and to Broadway in general; and Donald Oenslager (1902–), who did not begin designing until the middle twenties, but who soon thereafter became one of the most admired of his profession.

Several of these men are more than designers; they are aesthetic philosophers of the theatre. Jones and Simonson in particular have proved themselves effectively articulate in a literary way, and have elucidated the intellectual and spiritual processes which work not only in themselves, but in all artists who take seriously the visual arts of the theatre.

THE NEW CRITICS

Startling as was the sudden development of American playwriting during the twenties, it was scarcely more so than the rise of American criticism. During the early years of the century our professional dramatic criticism was dominated by two men who were holdovers from the nineteenth century, and who carried into the modern period the prejudices and aesthetic limitations of

Victorianism. One of the two was J. Ranken Towse (1845–1933), English born, who came to the United States in 1869 and became dramatic critic for the New York *Evening Post* in 1874. The other was William Winter (1836–1917), who served as dramatic editor and critic of the New York *Tribune* from 1865 to 1917, and who has been called by H. L. Mencken "the greatest bad critic who ever lived."

There were, of course, during the first two decades of this century a few liberal and enlightened critics in the academic world, and their lectures and writings were of inestimable value in the dramatic education of the younger generation. One of these was George Pierce Baker of Harvard, whose influence we have already noted. Another was Brander Matthews (1852–1929), of Columbia, whose urbane scholarship made a lasting impression on many young men. A third was Arthur Hobson Quinn (1875–), of the University of Pennsylvania, whose indefatigable labors in the field of American drama resulted in our definitive history of this subject, the first volume of which appeared in 1923 and the second and third volumes in 1927. Still others include: Richard Burton (1861–1940), of the University of Minnesota, whose *The New American Drama* was published in 1913; Frank W. Chandler (1873–), of the University of Cincinnati, whose *Aspects of Modern Drama* appeared in 1914; Thomas H. Dickinson (1877–), of the University of Wisconsin, author of *The Case of American Drama* (1915), and *Playwrights of the New American Theatre* (1925), and editor of the first anthology of important modern plays, *Chief European Dramatists* (1915); Archibald Henderson (1877–), of the University of North Carolina, author of *European Dramatists* (1913), *The Changing Drama* (1914), and later of the official biography of George Bernard Shaw; Ludwig Lewisohn (1883–), who from 1911 to 1919 was on the faculty of the Ohio State University, during which time he published *The Modern Drama* (1915), and who later became a regular contributor of dramatic essays and reviews to *The Nation;* and William Lyon Phelps (1865–1943), of Yale, who for many years contributed to *Scribner's* magazine a column entitled *As I Like It,* which often contained dramatic criticism.

THE GREAT HUNEKER

Yet, admirable as were the labors of the professors, the most important influence on American dramatic criticism came from the work of James Gibbons Huneker (1859–1921). Huneker was a Philadelphian who studied first for the law, then for a musical career. After studying piano in Philadelphia, he continued this study in Paris, and for twelve years taught piano in New York. He began writing musical and dramatic criticism for the New York *Recorder* in 1891, changed to the *Morning Advertiser* in 1895, and from 1900 to 1917 was music, drama, and art editor of the New York *Sun*.

Huneker was a profound aesthete, and a man of the most cosmopolitan tastes. His years spent in Europe had given him a close acquaintance with Continental music and drama, and this background he used to excellent advantage in his critical writings. His book of essays, *Iconoclasts*, published in 1905, which contained brilliant analytical studies of such figures as Ibsen, Strindberg, Gorky, Hauptmann, and other major figures of the European drama, was by far the most lucid and penetrating volume of dramatic criticism which had up to that time been produced by an American, and it is still one of the most valuable interpretative references in its field. Huneker's combination of sensitivity, erudition, sophistication, and virility created an entirely new atmosphere of aesthetic judgement in the Broadway area, and in that atmosphere was bred a generation of younger critics who have exerted a profound influence on American theatrical taste and understanding. Huneker, however, was not a crusader. As his bosom friend, H. L. Mencken, says: "No man could have been less a reformer by inclination, and yet he because a reformer beyond compare. He emancipated criticism in America from its old bondage to sentimentality and stupidity, and with it he emancipated all the arts themselves."

It is not intended to suggest that all the critical writers who came into prominence in this country during the second and third decades of the century were conscious disciples of Huneker. Some of them owed little or nothing to him. But the fact remains that after Huneker the critical climate of America was entirely different from what it had been before.

A survey of the critics who emerged during the twenties, or

shortly before, reveals a startling array of able men, many of whom still are arbiters of dramatic taste. One can mention nearly a score.

FOUR HARVARD MEN

Brooks Atkinson (1894–) was educated at Harvard, and barely escaped an academic career. After one year of college teaching, however, he chose the journalistic field, and became assistant to the dramatic critic of the Boston *Transcript*. In 1922 he was made literary editor of the New York *Times*, and four years later became its dramatic critic—a post he has held ever since, except during the war, when he was abroad as a correspondent. Although little of his dramatic writing has been republished in book form, his carefully considered and forthright reviews and special articles are widely read in the *Times*, and carry great weight. He is never flippant but he is often stern. In his rigid devotion to critical principles he is almost professorial, and actually, with his pipe and tweeds and speculative mind (he is an authority on Thoreau), he would fit perfectly into the collegiate atmosphere of elms and ivy.

Robert Benchley (1889–1945) also was educated at Harvard. In 1920 he became drama editor of the old *Life* magazine (which was devoted to humor, not to photographs), and continued in that capacity until 1929, when he joined the staff of *The New Yorker*. Benchley possessed a captivating and distinctive wit, which permeated all his critical reviews. One of the most personal of reviewers, he was one of the best-loved.

Heywood Broun (1888–1939), another Harvard man, began his newspaper work as a reporter for the New York *Morning Telegraph* in 1908, moved to the *Tribune* in 1912, and in 1921 became dramatic critic for the *World*. Broun never limited himself to the field of drama; he was a columnist, and his column covered a great variety of interests: sports, politics, social problems, and literature in general. He was a brilliant, hard-hitting journalist, with independent views and a devoted following.

John Mason Brown (1900–) is also a Harvard product. After an apprenticeship on newspapers in Louisville and Boston, followed by a year in Europe, he served as associate editor and dramatic critic of *Theatre Arts Monthly* from 1924 to 1928. From 1929 to 1941 he was dramatic critic for the New York *Evening*

Post, then for the *World-Telegram*, and, beginning in 1944, for *The Saturday Review of Literature*. He is the author of many books, principally theatrical, and he does a great deal of lecturing on the drama. Tolerant, penetrating, and cultivated, his writing is esteemed as much for the validity of its judgements as for the charm of its style.

MAKERS OF BOOKS

Sheldon Cheney (1886–) was educated at the University of California, acted as dramatic and art critic for various newspapers from 1910 to 1916, and in the latter year founded *Theatre Arts Magazine*, which he edited for five years. He is the author of numerous books and articles dealing with the arts, several of them specifically with theatre and drama. His work is scholarly but human, and is notable for its intelligent idealism and its lucidity.

Barrett H. Clark (1890–) was educated at the University of Chicago and in Paris. After a short term as actor and stage manager with Mrs. Fiske he devoted himself to a literary career as dramatic editor, translator, and critic. His published books, which began to appear in 1914, are numerous and varied, and include many translations of French plays, anthologies of world drama, interpretative essays in American and foreign dramatic literature, the only complete handbook of modern drama, and the first critical biography of Eugene O'Neill. From 1918 to 1936 he was editor for Samuel French Inc., the play publishers, and after that director of the Dramatists Play Service, a publishing and play-leasing agency established and maintained by the Dramatists Guild of the Authors League of America. During the twenties he was dramatic editor of *Drama Magazine*. He has proved a devoted friend and able promoter of new American playwrights, and has served with extraordinary effectiveness as a *liaison* man between the professional and amateur theatres. Above all, he has stood consistently for artistic and moral integrity in a field that always needs such champions.

FRIEND OF THE TRIBUTARIES

Robert Coleman (1900–) was educated at the University of Georgia and at Columbia University. In the early twenties he

was employed by the old *Morning Telegraph*, to which he contributed feature stories, a humorous column, a Broadway news column (one of the first of its kind), play reviews, and a series of Sunday articles dealing with the work of the little theatres, community and otherwise. Among Broadway critics he appears to have been the first to take serious cognizance of the amateur stage. In 1924 he joined the staff of the newly founded *Mirror*, where he established its drama and motion-picture departments. He has been with this newspaper ever since as drama editor and critic, and for a quarter-century has manifested a more active interest in new theatrical developments throughout the country than have any of his Broadway colleagues. In addition to his assiduous observation of the summer theatres, and the college and community theatres, Coleman has sanely and industriously reported the Broadway scene. His reviews are free of literary pretension or affectation, and his sincerity is as unmistakable as are his alertness and enthusiasm.

Walter Prichard Eaton (1878–) is a Harvard graduate who began his career as a dramatic critic on the staff of the New York *Tribune* in 1902, served later on the *Sun*, and from 1909 to 1918 on *American Magazine*. Thereafter he concerned himself with articles for various periodicals, and with books of dramatic history and criticism. His excellent work, *The Actor's Heritage*, was published in 1924, and his chronicle of the first ten years of the Theatre Guild was published in 1929. His writing is distinguished for its mellowness, its feeling for tradition, and its affection for the theatre.

Clayton Hamilton (1881–1946) was a graduate of Columbia University who served as dramatic editor of *The Forum* from 1907 to 1909, of *The Bookman* from 1910 to 1918, and of *Vogue* from 1912 to 1920. Thereafter he contributed articles and reviews to various periodicals. He was the author of a number of books dealing with the arts of drama and fiction, and these are distinguished by skillful exposition and warmth of appreciation. *Seen on the Stage* appeared in 1920, and *Conversations on Contemporary Drama* in 1924. Hamilton was remarkably successful in combining academic theory with popular criticism.

IMPECCABLE SCHOLARSHIP

Joseph Wood Krutch (1893–) was educated at the University of Tennessee and at Columbia University. Bearer of a Ph.D. from the latter institution, he is one of our most learned critics. In 1924 he became dramatic critic for *The Nation*, and has continued with that weekly periodical ever since. In recent years he has held the Brander Matthews Professorship of Dramatic Literature at Columbia. He is the author or editor of numerous books, and has exhibited a special brilliance in the field of Restoration comedy. His writing is characterized by its impeccable scholarship and by its intellectual austerity.

Kenneth Macgowan (1888–) has been mentioned previously as a producer and also as one of the editors of *Theatre Arts Magazine*. It should be noted also that from 1919 to 1923 he was dramatic critic for the New York *Globe*, and from 1920 to 1924 for *Vogue*. He was one of the few critics of the period who combined an excellent academic background with first-hand experience in the theatre. His book, *The Theatre of Tomorrow* (1921), provided serious thinkers and idealists with one of their most inspiring and enlightening treatises.

Burns Mantle (1873–1948) began his critical career in Denver in 1898, continued it in Chicago during the years 1901–10, and then settled in New York, where he served as dramatic editor of the *Evening Mail* until 1922, and of the *Daily News* from 1922 to 1943. In 1920 he launched the first of his extremely useful and now-famous *Best Plays* volumes, in which he included condensed versions of ten plays of the season, together with chronological and statistical records of all Broadway productions. He continued this series until his retirement, when the editorship passed to other hands. He was one of the kindest of critics.

Montrose J. Moses (1878–1934) was a careful and indefatigable essayist, historian, and anthologist specializing in the field of American drama. His book of studies, *The American Dramatist*, published first in 1911, and revised in 1917 and 1925, was one of the earliest and most readable surveys in its field, and the anthology, *The American Theater as Seen by Its Critics, 1752–1934*, which he edited in collaboration with John Mason Brown, furnished modern students with an illuminating and unique panorama of native dramatic criticism.

THE IRREVERENT DEAN

George Jean Nathan (1882–) is a graduate of Cornell University who immediately after his graduation went into newspaper and other journalistic work in New York. He has served as dramatic critic, and often as dramatic editor, for many magazines, including *Smart Set*, *Judge*, *The American Mercury*, *Vanity Fair*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, and *The American Spectator*, and for the daily newspaper, the New York *Journal-American*. In the cases of *Smart Set* and *The American Mercury* he was also general co-editor with H. L. Mencken, the *enfant terrible* of American letters. His close friendship with James Gibbons Huneker was an important influence on his critical point of view, and he may be considered to have carried on the Huneker tradition. In his early years as a dramatic critic he shocked a great many readers with his irreverent attacks on American sentimentality, provincialism, and general ignorance in the realm of aesthetics. But gradually, by lavish use of his mordant wit and his devastating theatrical erudition, he wore down the Puritan opposition, and acquired an extensive nation-wide following. This reader-audience has made feasible the publication of many volumes of his collected criticisms. Since the first of these, *Another Book on the Theatre*, was issued in 1915, Nathan has missed hardly a year in offering such a collection. In 1943, evidently weary of inventing titles for his volumes, he adopted a standard one, *The Theatre Book of the Year*, which he has employed annually. As dean of the critical circle, he bears the deanship lightly, and is as happy to write of ankles as of Aeschylus.

Oliver M. Sayler (1887–) is a journalist and press-agent who during the twenties performed a signal service to the American public by writing several accurate and highly informative books on the European and American theatres. He was the first of our critical observers to make a first-hand study of the Russian Theatre, and the first to present in English a complete report on the historically important activities of Max Reinhardt in Germany.

Gilbert Seldes (1893–) was during the early twenties dramatic editor of *The Dial*, a magazine which enjoyed only a short life, but which during its time achieved an enviable record in the field of literature and the other arts. Later in the decade he acted

in a similar capacity for the New York *Evening Graphic*. A cultivated writer of catholic taste, he is particularly noted for his vitality of expression, and for the general soundness of his critical approach. Popular and effective was his book of essays, *The Seven Lively Arts*, published in 1924.

A MAN OF LEGEND

Alexander Woollcott (1887–1943), a graduate of Hamilton College, was dramatic critic for the New York *Times* from 1914 to 1922, for the *Herald* in 1922, and for the *World* from 1925 to 1928. Thereafter he contributed dramatic reviews and literary essays to various periodicals, lectured, and conducted a radio program. Two volumes of his collected criticisms published during the twenties attained wide popularity. These were *Shouts and Murmurs* (1922), and *Enchanted Aisles* (1924). Woollcott was one of the most personal and idiosyncratic critics of his time, and his writings presented a curious mixture of sentiment and acrimony, passionate likes and dislikes, whims and anecdotes. A bachelor, he was given to platonic actress-worship, beginning with Mrs. Fiske and concluding with Katharine Cornell. He tried his hand occasionally at both playwriting and acting, but was not very successful at either. His personality inspired the creation of the leading character in Kaufman and Hart's comedy, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. His favorite writer was Charles Dickens, and he himself was picturesque enough to have come out of a Dickens novel.

Stark Young (1881–) was educated at the University of Mississippi and at Columbia. He became an English instructor at the former institution in 1904, served on the faculty of the University of Texas from 1907 to 1915, and at Amherst from 1915 to 1921. In the latter year he joined the editorial staff of *The New Republic*, and at the same time became an associate editor of *Theatre Arts Magazine*. For a short period (1924–25) he was dramatic critic for the New York *Times*. During the twenties he had several volumes of theatrical essays published, including *The Flower in Drama* (1923), *Glamour* (1925), and *Theatre Practice* (1926). These represent probably the most subtle and aesthetically sensitive treatment of drama and acting which the decade produced. His preciosity has, naturally, limited his audience.

THEY ALSO SERVED

The foregoing men would seem to have provided the chief critical opinions in America between 1920 and 1930. Yet it is difficult to omit mention of many others of this large fraternity—for instance: John Anderson (1896–1943), author of *Box-Office* (1929), who became dramatic critic for the *Evening Post* in 1924, and for the *Journal* in 1928; Howard Barnes (1904–), made dramatic editor of the *Herald Tribune* in 1928; John Chapman (1900–), who became dramatic editor of the *Daily News* in 1929; Robert Garland (1895–), who learned his trade in Baltimore, and became dramatic critic for the *World-Telegram* in 1928; Percy Hammond (1873–1936), who came to New York from Chicago in the early twenties as critic for the *Herald Tribune;* Ward Morehouse (1898–), who began his career in Georgia, and in 1926 became a roving reporter and theatrical columnist on the *Sun;* and Richard Watts, Jr. (1898–), who, beginning in 1924, served as motion-picture critic for the *Herald Tribune*, and twelve years later became dramatic critic for the same newspaper. Most of these men were to establish themselves during the thirties and forties as important Broadway critics. In the twenties they were in the early stages of their professional careers.

The rise of critics to a powerful position in the American theatre world is a comparatively recent development, and a very significant one. It implies an increasing dependence of the public on expert opinion, it establishes a critical court with virtually life-or-death power over plays, and thereby affects vitally the artistic and economic life of the theatre. During the past two decades more than one playwright has cried out against the fatal mandates of Broadway critics—notably Elmer Rice, who in the middle thirties lost his temper and called the critics some very nasty names, and Maxwell Anderson, who ten years later castigated the same arbiters with approximately equal vehemence. It is the playwright's contention (and the manager's) that the public should be encouraged to judge plays for themselves, and that eight or ten men should not be in a position to slay overnight a production which represents the energy and devotion of writer, director, designer, actors and technicians, as well as the producer's investment of perhaps $100,000. It is the critic's reply, naturally, that

he is paid to render honest judgements, that he considers himself competent to do this, and that, after all, some plays do succeed or fail against his judgement. It is an argument which neither side can win, but the seriousness of the issue can hardly be overestimated.

THE DRAMATISTS' GUILD

In the preceding chapter we noted the success of the actors in establishing, through Actors Equity Association, an effective union for the guarantee of their professional rights. The actors fought their battle in 1919; six years later it was the turn of the playwrights. Although the Dramatists' Guild was established in 1912 as a division of the Author's League of America, it remained for some years a weak organization, with no real power to protect its members. In December, 1925, more than thirty leading playwrights met secretly to discuss their grievances and to plan a course of action toward their redress.

Early in the spring of 1926 the producing managers were notified of the playwrights' intentions and demands, and a series of joint meetings was held between representatives of the two groups. Although there were many disagreements to be settled, none proved insurmountable, and at the end of March virtually all the leading managers agreed to sign the contract (called the Minimum Basic Agreement) which had been prepared by the playwrights. This contract has been renewed every five years since, with certain revisions each time, and has (particularly in its present form) placed the American dramatist in an extremely favorable position. It guarantees him, among other things: permanent ownership of his play (that is, for the full period of copyright); minimum royalties of five per cent on the first five thousand dollars gross weekly box-office receipts, seven and one-half per cent on the next two thousand, and ten per cent on all over seven thousand; a monthly payment of either one hundred or one hundred and fifty dollars during the time his play is under option; a maximum of twelve months for the option period; complete control of revisions in the script; and sixty per cent of the amount paid for motion-picture rights.

The Guild, unlike Actors' Equity and the so-called stage hands' union (the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees), is not affiliated with any labor union. It does, however, func-

tion in much the same manner as any trade union. And, although technically it is not a "closed shop," in effect it is. One does not need to have been a member of the Guild to have a play accepted for Broadway production, but before the play is actually produced it is necessary that the playwright join the Guild and sign the Minimum Basic Agreement.

THE AMATEUR THEATRE

The impetus given to college and community theatricals by various individuals and groups between 1910 and 1920 brought about a remarkable growth of these activities during the twenties. Several hundred colleges and universities introduced dramatic courses into their curricula, and a number went so far as to establish complete departments of drama, though in many instances these were subdivisions of English or speech departments. Yale, North Carolina, Northwestern, Cornell, Wisconsin, Indiana, Minnesota, Louisiana, Iowa, Stanford, and the University of Washington at Seattle—these are but a few of the institutions which came forward with strong dramatic programs.

Community theatres, inspired by pioneers such as Cleveland and Pasadena, sprang to life in every state of the union. The most important of these appeared in Dallas, Birmingham, Omaha, Chicago, New Orleans, Memphis, San Antonio, Shreveport, Rose Valley (Pennsylvania), Santa Barbara, and Berkeley (California).

During the winter and spring of 1928–29, Kenneth Macgowan, under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Foundation, made a fourteen-thousand mile tour, surveying the amateur theatre. His published report, *Footlights Across America* (1929), constitutes the first systematic attempt to tabulate and evaluate this phenomenon, and it brought the whole picture into clear view. It pointed out that at the end of the decade there were approximately 1000 college and community producing organizations in the country—many of them with well-equipped theatres. And, furthermore, it noted that at least 7000 high schools had introduced definite courses in dramatics, and that in these schools "hundreds of thousands of young actors, designers, stage-hands, and managers" were producing plays for an audience that ran into the millions.

Although much of this prolific amateur activity was on a low plane of artistry, its significance for the future of the American theatre was obviously very great. It was implanting a love of the

theatre in a generation that was to be faced with the problem of keeping the theatre alive when it fell upon evil days.

RADIO AND THE MOVIES

From 1910 to 1920 the motion picture had encroached steadily, and, toward the end of the decade, alarmingly, on the business of the legitimate theatre. Now, in 1920, a second form of mechanized entertainment appeared. In that year the *Detroit News* began operation of a "radiophone" called WWJ, and in Pittsburgh the Westinghouse Company launched KDKA, which broadcast returns from the Harding-Cox presidential election. In 1922 came the first "commercial" over the air—from WEAF in New York City; and in 1925 there was placed on the market the first all-electric receiving set, which eliminated "a cabinet full of batteries or the earlier crystal sets rigged up with headphones." From that time forward the radio audience grew fantastically.

In 1927 Warner Brothers released the first feature-length talking film, *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson, and the public reaction was so terrific that within two years there was scarcely a film theatre in the country not wired for sound. This was the final blow to most of the legitimate theatres. Stock companies and vaudeville houses went into eclipse; road shows all but disappeared; and except on Broadway the professional legitimate drama was dead. The stock market crash of October, 1929, could hardly have been timed better to complete the disaster.

It was a fantastic decade: one which brought our theatre to the pinnacle of creative activity and prosperity, and which also brought it to sudden and alarming failure. The Roaring Twenties, as they were called, ended, as T. S. Eliot says the world does, "Not with a bang but a whimper."

Chapter XIV

The Unhappy Days: 1930–1940

THE theatre of the thirties was affected in more ways than one by the financial depression which overtook the country at the very beginning of the decade, which was severely felt for three years, and which persisted to a degree until 1939. Empty theatres, bankrupt producers, unemployed actors, death of stock and vaudeville, near-death of road shows—these represented one effect; another was the flowering of the drama of social protest, partly in the hands of established playwrights, and partly in those of vigorous new talents nourished at the fount of Marxism; a third effect was the entrance of the government into show business through its relief project, the Federal Theatre.

There was a great deal of anger in the country, and some of it was bound to find expression in the theatre. In every theatre, from the days of Aristophanes to the present, there have been playwrights who have employed the drama as an instrument of protest and propaganda. American audiences during the first two decades of this century had become accustomed to the reasoned sermons of Ibsen, the sparkling vituperance of Shaw. And, during the twenties, they had felt the impact of such socially-conscious plays as O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, *The Hairy Ape*, and *Marco Millions*, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, Kaufman and Connelly's *Beggar on Horseback*, and John Howard Lawson's *Processional*. Such pieces, however, had been relatively few in number, and had been overbalanced by the hundreds of happier, less disturbing works which the prosperity of the twenties had brought before the public. Now there was a difference. A host of violent young men, with one ear cocked in the direction of Soviet Russia, cried out their hatred of capitalism, their scorn of American bourgeois smugness, their love of the proletariat, their hatred of war (which they linked with capitalism), and their demands for a change in the economic pattern.

During the decade several leftist groups in New York were organized into producing units. These included the Theatre Union, Labor Stage, the Theatre of Action, the New Theatre League, Social Stage, Workers' Laboratory Theatre, Theatre Collective, and the Group Theatre. Some of them were too amateurish to achieve importance; most were short-lived. An exception was Labor Stage—an activity of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union—which gained fame and fortune through its production of a lively satirical revue entitled *Pins and Needles*, which so caught the public fancy that it ran steadily for three years; and another was the Group Theatre, whose history is by far the most significant.

THE GROUP THEATRE

The Group Theatre was a brain-child of Harold Clurman, New York born, son of an East Side physician, who had spent three years in Paris studying at the Sorbonne, and who in the mid-twenties had worked with the Provincetown Players, and later as minor actor and play-reader for the Theatre Guild. During the winter of 1930–31 he conceived the idea of a permanent company composed of himself and other impatient, idealistic intellectuals of the theatre. The idea was favorably received by many of his friends—several of whom were fellow-apprentices at the Guild, and the Guild itself lent encouragement (as well as a small working capital) to the project. Twenty-eight actors and three directors made up the Group, which in the summer of 1931 established itself as a colony at Brookfield Center, Connecticut, for a rehearsal period. The actors included Stella Adler, Clifford Odets, Franchot Tone, Morris Carnovsky, Elia Kazan, J. Edward Bromberg, and Mary Morris; the directors were Cheryl Crawford, Lee Strasberg, and Clurman.

Because of limited financial backing, members of the Group received only board and room as compensation for the summer period. Meanwhile the Theatre Guild had released to them the rights to Paul Green's play *The House of Connelly* and this became their first production on Broadway. The play opened, under the auspices of the Guild, in September, got excellent reviews (although Brooks Atkinson in the *Times* warned the actors that they may have "forced their souls too much") and ran for a satisfactory 91 performances. The Group's excitement over its first

success suffered a sharp set-back, however, from the reaction to its second presentation, a bitter panorama of social protest entitled *1931—*, by Claire and Paul Sifton, which opened in December and closed nine days later. According to the *Times*, "Seldom has a bad play stunned an audience quite so completely," and the critical comments in other journals were not more favorable.

Evidently, however, it was the ineptness of the play itself rather than its philosophy which mitigated against the popularity of *1931—*, for in the autumn of 1932 the group produced John Howard Lawson's savage denunciation of the capitalistic system, *Success Story*, and the production enjoyed a run of 121 performances. The Group needed a success, for it was now on its own, the Guild having decided in the previous spring that its protegée was now able to fly alone, and having thereupon cast the fledgling—with its parental blessing—into the dangerous air-currents of Broadway. The Group's first independent venture had been the production of Maxwell Anderson's poetic drama of Mexican War days, *Night Over Taos* (March, 1932), which had proved a quick failure.

The early financial struggles of the Group were really ended, however, with the production of Sidney Kingsley's powerful melodrama of the medical profession, *Men in White*, which opened in September, 1933, made an instant hit, won the Pulitzer Prize as the best American play of the season, and achieved a run of 351 performances.

DISCOVERY OF ODETS

In January, 1935, the Group discovered that one of its secondary actors was a talented playwright. At a special benefit performance given on a Sunday afternoon, was presented a short play by Clifford Odets entitled *Waiting for Lefty*. This revolutionary little piece, based on the New York taxicab strike of 1934, revealed a remarkable technique and an ability on the part of the young writer to inflame an audience. The result was that Odets was encouraged to write other plays (he was scarcely diffident), and presently he became the Group's principal playwright. In quick succession came *Awake and Sing*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Till the Day I Die*. Odets was the talk of Broadway—the white-headed boy of the social drama. Presently he was offered lucrative employment in Hollywood, which he was quick to accept,

and during the remainder of the decade he divided his allegiance between the capitalistic splendors of the movie studios and the Marxist disciplines of the Group. In 1937 his *Golden Boy*, the least violent of his plays, and the most sympathetic in story and characterization, proved an outstanding commercial success; his *Rocket to the Moon* was a moderate success in 1938; but his *Night Music* was a sudden failure in 1940, and his *Clash by Night* no better in 1941. The production of the latter marked, as a matter of fact, the end of the Group Theatre as a producing organization.

The Group did not, of course, limit itself to plays by Odets. It brought out the work of a good many playwrights, including Paul Green's powerful anti-war play, *Johnny Johnson* (1936), Irwin Shaw's *The Gentle People* (1939), Robert Ardrey's philosophical fantasy, *Thunder Rock* (1939), and William Saroyan's first play, *My Heart's in the Highlands* (1939). The Saroyan piece proved an immediate artistic sensation, and resulted in the production of his next play, *The Time of Your Life*, the following autumn by the Theatre Guild.

There were several reasons why the Group Theatre ceased activity in 1941. These are all stated in detail by Harold Clurman in his reminiscent record, *The Fervent Years*. The chief reason was, of course, that the binding element among members of the Group was youthful unrest and radical dissatisfaction with the social order. In 1941 the members were older than they had been in 1931; times had changed from depression to comparative prosperity; and several members of the Group had risen to fame and fortune in Hollywood and on Broadway. Natural developments place a time limit on fervency.

THE FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT

Perhaps the most interesting, and certainly the most provocative theatrical phenomenon of the thirties was the Federal Theatre Project, our federal government's first and only venture into show business.

The project was, of course, born of the depression, and was one of the many divisions of the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration), a huge relief program for the unemployed of the nation. Although there were various relief agencies and programs at work as early as 1933, W.P.A. was not set up until April, 1935. Inasmuch as thousands of professional theatrical people were un-

employed at the time, it was natural that there should be a demand for a project in their field.

As early as the summer of 1934 Mr. Harry Hopkins, head of the relief program, and close adviser of President Roosevelt, had discussed with various persons the idea of a theatre project, and had asked Hallie Flanagan, director of plays at Vassar College, to consider taking charge of it. Mrs. Flanagan had at that time demurred, but when the same offer was made a year later, she accepted. She was a natural choice for the job. She and Hopkins had been undergraduate friends at Grinnell College in Iowa; she had spent 1926–27 in Europe on a Guggenheim Fellowship studying the European theatre, which to a very great extent is state-subsidized; she was social-minded, idealistic, incorruptible, and fearless. And she had the blessing of both the President and Mrs. Roosevelt, who knew of her work in the Experimental Theatre at Vassar.

Mrs. Flanagan was sworn in at the end of August, 1935, and immediately launched a series of conferences in Washington and New York, to which she invited outstanding representatives of both professional and amateur theatre. These included playwrights Elmer Rice, Sidney Howard, and Paul Green; Broadway producers William A. Brady, Brock Pemberton, Lee Shubert, Dwight Deere Wiman, and Lawrence Langner; the presidents of various theatrical unions; and college and community theatre leaders such as Gilmor Brown, E. C. Mabie, Frederic McConnell, Jasper Deeter, Frederick H. Koch, and Thomas Wood Stevens.

By October the project was organized on a regional basis, the rules were drawn up, and the machinery for its operation was set in motion. The motion was not rapid at first, for governmental red tape was everywhere. Gradually, however, production units were set up in large cities throughout the nation (a half-dozen of them in New York City), and for the first time in our history, Uncle Sam became a theatrical producer.

RED TAPE AND RADICALISM

Red tape was not the only obstacle to the project's smooth operation. There was constant quarreling among the project's personnel. Directors resigned, dissatisfied actors picketed the theatres in which they were supposed to be performing, Actors' Equity Association complained that amateurs were being employed when

professionals were starving, commercial managers accused the government of interfering with private enterprise, politicians protested against the radicalism of many of the project workers, and the radicals protested against practically everything. One of the first resignations came from Elmer Rice, who in September had accepted the directorship of the New York City regional set-up, and who in January quit because the first example of his pet idea, the Living Newspaper, was censored by Washington authorities.

Mrs. Flanagan, however, was undaunted by the troubles that poured in upon her. With boundless energy and optimism she kept the project going and growing, and within a year she had Federal Theatre units at work in thirty-one states of the union and in the District of Columbia. By May, 1936, she had more than 12,000 people on her payroll (nearly half of these were in New York City), and her companies were playing to hundreds of thousands of people. Inasmuch as the project was set up strictly on a relief basis, there had been at first no intention of earning an income from admissions. Eventually it was decided to charge low admission fees to some of the productions, and by the spring of 1939 (after three and one-half years of operation) the project had earned approximately $2,000,000. This amount was applied to production costs, such as expenditures for scenery, costumes, and lighting. Meanwhile the government had spent $42,000,000 for labor (salaries), and more than $4,000,000 for production and other purposes.

The entertainment offered by the Federal Theatre was as varied as theatrical entertainment can be. Standard stage plays were the principal offering, but there were also presentations of dance dramas, pageants, musical comedies, operas, puppet shows, radio dramas, vaudeville shows, revues, and even a circus. In New York and other large cities there were foreign-language performances of plays in German, Spanish, and Yiddish; there were children's plays, both musical and literary; and there were negro plays with all-colored companies. Altogether, 1000 plays were produced—including ancient and modern classics, as well as many original and experimental scripts.

SINCLAIR LEWIS HELPS

Of plays given their first presentation by the Federal Theatre the most notable was *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis'

stirring attack on fascism. This play was used to demonstrate the potentiality of the Federal Theatre's network as a true national theatre with a regional structure, and to this end a nation-wide series of simultaneous premieres was held on the evening of October 27th, 1936, with 21 theatres in 17 states participating. Although the demonstration was impressive, it was not repeated, chiefly, it seems, because other new plays of equal strength were not made available. Which is to say that the professional playwrights still preferred standard Broadway production.

From an artistic point of view the Federal Theatre's most admired achievements were the imaginative productions in New York conceived and directed by two young men named Orson Welles and John Houseman. One of these was an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, and the other was Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, adapted for and presented by a negro company. It was these productions which first brought Orson Welles to critical and public attention. And it was their success which emboldened him to withdraw from the Federal Theatre in the summer of 1937 and to found, with Houseman, his own producing organization, the Mercury Theatre. The specific stimulus for his withdrawal was, however, the refusal of authorities in Washington to permit the Federal Theatre presentation of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, which was thought to be subversive. With this play the Mercury Theatre launched its career.

The most original contribution of the project, undoubtedly, was the *Living Newspaper*, a sort of March of Time dramatization of current events, with stimulating comment on controversial social and political issues. Elmer Rice conceived the form as a means of making use of the hundreds of actors attached to the New York City projects. He could not think of any way in which enough standard plays could be produced to keep them all busy. The most effective "editions" were *Triple-A Plowed Under* (1936), and *One-Third of a Nation* (1938). These two, and most of the others, followed the line of the New Deal, and were certainly propagandist, although the authors and directors thought of them purely as honest and patriotic presentations of vital ideas.

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WEEPING SENATORS

Political opposition to the Federal Theatre project grew steadily throughout its life. In November, 1938, the Dies Committee (on un-American activities) launched an investigation, and the directors of the project were called for hearings. Mrs. Flanagan was accused of being under Russian influence (she had visited the theatres in Russia and other European countries during 1926–27), the Federal Theatre was accused of presenting Communistic plays (there was little foundation for this charge), the personnel of the project was accused of being heavy with Communists (there certainly were some on the payroll), and it was charged that many of the plays presented were immoral (this complaint was virtually groundless). The most amusing example of ignorance displayed by Committee members was the question of one of them as to the identity of Christopher Marlowe. The questioner asked if he was a Communist.

The Dies Committee investigation was only the beginning. In the late spring of 1939 matters came to a climax. The Senate Committee on Appropriations held a hearing on the subject, and debates were held in the House of Representatives. A group of Broadway critics, headed by Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times*, sent a telegram urging the continuation of the project as one "of great value to the life of the community," hundreds of individuals wired their congressmen in the same vein, Actors' Equity Association and other theatrical unions held mass meetings, and Tallulah Bankhead flew to Washington with a "supporting cast" to appear before the Senate Committee and voice a dramatic plea which is said to have been so moving as to have brought out senatorial handkerchiefs.

The Senators may have wept, but they killed the Federal Theatre, as of June 30, 1939. Some of their reasoning had a sensible foundation; a good deal of it had not. But the decision was final, and Uncle Sam was out of show business.

THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY

The most lamentable aspect of the Federal Theatre's life was its failure to lay greater emphasis on the building of a permanent foundation for a national theatre. It was, of course, an emergency project, and its immediate purpose was to put 10,000 unemployed

persons on a subsistence wage. Admittedly, too, it was hampered by cruelly restrictive regulations. Yet a study of its history does not convince one that sufficient effort was made to strengthen the already-existing community theatres, and to help them achieve a professional status. Had the five thousand actors and technicians on the New York City projects, many of whom did little or nothing for weeks and months, been dispatched to Atlanta, Omaha, Seattle, and twenty other provincial cities, the theatres in those communities would have taken on new life, and so would the refugees from Broadway.

There were a few lasting results of the project—besides the hundreds of volumes of prompt-scripts, press-clippings, photographs, etc., which repose in the files of the Library of Congress. One is a magnificent collection of scale models of historic theatres (Greek, Oriental, Renaissance, and Eighteenth Century) constructed for the School of Drama at the University of Washington in Seattle; another is Paul Green's pageant-drama, *The Lost Colony*, which is still performed annually as a summer attraction, on Roanoke Island, North Carolina, in an outdoor theatre constructed largely with W.P.A. funds.

The W.P.A. served the theatre in several instances apart from the Federal Theatre Project. In Charleston, North Carolina, for example, it re-created the historic Dock Street Theatre (which had opened its doors in 1736), and turned it over to the Carolina Art Association, which has operated it as a community theatre with signal success. And at the opposite extreme of the continent, it furnished the labor for the construction of two unique laboratory theatres at the University of Washington in Seattle—the Showboat and the Penthouse—the latter being the first theatre ever designed and built for the presentation of drawing-room plays in arena style.

BROADWAY SURVEY

1930–31

This first full season of the depression showed a drop in the total number of new productions on Broadway to 190, as compared with the 240 of 1929–30. Chief excitement at the start of the season was a concerted fight against ticket speculators, led by three producers: Arthur Hopkins, Brock Pemberton, and

Gilbert Miller. Result of their activities was the formation of the League of New York Theatres, whose membership included accredited ticket brokers as well as producing managers, and for a time speculation appeared to be under control. It was not long, however, until the control broke down, and speculation resumed its happy course.

Business at the box-office was uneven, but there were plenty of hits. The Theatre Guild was unlucky, with only one of its six productions attaining the hit class. The big successes were: *Once in a Lifetime*, by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman; *The Greeks Had a Word for It*, by Zoë Akins; *Elizabeth the Queen*, by Maxwell Anderson (produced by the Guild); *Grand Hotel*, from the German of Vicki Baum; *Tonight or Never*, by Lili Hatvany; *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, by Philip Barry; *Private Lives*, by and with Noel Coward; *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, by Rudolf Besier, and with, of course, Katharine Cornell; *As Husbands Go*, by Rachel Crothers; and *Five Star Final*, by Louis Weitzenkorn.

Interesting failures or moderate successes included: *Precedent*, a labor play by I. J. Golden; *As You Desire Me*, by Luigi Pirandello; *Alison's House*, a play based on the life of Emily Dickinson by Susan Glaspell, which won the Pulitzer Prize; and two regional plays by Lynn Riggs, *Roadside* and *Green Grow the Lilacs*, the latter known best today in its musical form under the title of *Oklahoma!*

Two of the hit musicals of the season were *Three's a Crowd*, a revue by Howard Dietz; and *Sweet and Low*, a revue with music by Billy Rose, who produced the piece himself as his first Broadway managerial venture. Burns Mantle notes that *Sweet and Low* placed "greater dependence upon the low features than upon the sweet," but (or perhaps therefore) it enjoyed a long run with Fanny Brice (Mrs. Billy Rose), George Jessel, and James Barton among the performers.

1931–32

Although approximately the same number of productions were made this season as in the preceding one, business in general was worse, and Broadway was cluttered with bankruptcies and foreclosures. Most impressive among the bankrupts was the Shubert corporation, with the Erlanger interests pressing them close for

this distinction. Yet some good came from the debacle, for in their common misery the two corporations came to an amicable agreement concerning control of the "road," over which they had fought for many years, and which they had virtually closed to other producers. Now they agreed to co-operate and to relax their tyranny, with the result that the Theatre Guild at once launched plans for touring its hit shows, the first of which was *Elizabeth the Queen.*

This season, as Mr. Mantle notes, the usual average of one successful production to three failures was reduced to the ratio of one to four. What constitutes a hit on the score-cards of Broadway statisticians is a play which runs for at least 100 performances.

Among the hits we find: *The Left Bank,* by Elmer Rice (the first of several of his plays to be produced by himself); *Mourning Becomes Electra,* Eugene O'Neill's tremendous reworking of the Aeschylean trilogy, which required six hours to perform; *Counsellor-at-Law,* the Elmer Rice drama which made Paul Muni a star; S. N. Behrman's *Brief Moment,* with Alexander Woollcott in the cast; Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in Robert Sherwood's *Reunion in Vienna;* Helen Hayes in Ferenc Molnar's *The Good Fairy;* and Leslie Howard in Philip Barry's *The Animal Kingdom.*

A near-hit was Paul Green's *The House of Connelly* (maiden effort of the Group Theatre); distinguished failures included Strindberg's *The Father,* with Robert Loraine, and *The Roof,* by John Galsworthy. Brightest of the musicals was *Of Thee I Sing,* a political satire by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind, with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Ira Gershwin. Considerable surprise (though little dissatisfaction) was caused by the award of the Pulitzer Prize to this work as the best American play of the year. Another hit musical of the season, though of a more conventional sort, was *The Cat and the Fiddle,* by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach.

1932–33

This season the number of new productions dropped to one hundred eighty, the percentage of failures rose, half the theatres of Broadway were empty, many managers revived recent hits rather than risk new plays; and box-office prices were drastically

reduced. So pervasive was the spirit of depression that Burns Mantle in his annual summary stated positively: "The day of $3, $4, $5 and $6 theatre is about over." He thought the change was for the better—that lower prices would mean a healthier and more popular theatre.

Hits of the season: *Dinner at Eight*, by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber; *Dangerous Corner*, by J. B. Priestley; *The Late Christopher Bean*, Sidney Howard's adaptation of a play by René Fauchois; Ina Claire in S. N. Behrman's *Biography;* Noel Coward's sophisticated triangle, *Design for Living*, with himself and Lunt and Fontanne; James Hagan's *One Sunday Afternoon;* and Maxwell Anderson's dissection of federal politics, *Both Your Houses*, which won the Pulitzer Prize.

Interesting non-hits: André Obey's *Lucrece*, with Katharine Cornell; *We, the People*, by Elmer Rice; *Girls in Uniform*, an adaptation by Barbara Burnham of the German play by Christa Winsloe; and *The 3-Penny Opera*, an American adaptation of the German operetta by Bert Brecht, with music by Kurt Weill, which the German author had based on John Gay's famous eighteenth-century English work, *The Beggar's Opera.*

Representative musical hits: *Music in the Air*, by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern; *Gay Divorce*, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter.

Imported novelty: *Teatro dei Piccoli*, the Italian marionette troupe of Vittorio Podrecca, which gave its flesh-and-blood rivals real competition with a run of 129 performances.

1933–34

The bottom of the depression had now been reached, and hope for a brighter future was filling many a breast. Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the White House, a relief program had been started for the unemployed, and in December, 1933, came repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, thus ending fourteen years of Prohibition, speakeasies, bath-tub gin, bootleggers, and other unpleasant phenomena. With the prospect of a boom in legalized night-clubs and floor-shows as a result of repeal, unemployed vaudeville performers took heart.

Although legitimate stage production on Broadway reached a new and shocking low level of 139 productions, there was optimism even on that street. The reasoning of the optimists was that

the percentage of failures had decreased, that a lot of reckless and incompetent producers had been "washed out" of show business, leaving it in the hands of reliable and experienced men, and that we were now to have a theatre of quality.

Two "quality" producers deserted Broadway this season for tours of the country: Miss Le Gallienne trouped with her repertory company, leaving her Civic Theatre to be taken over by the Theatre Union; and Miss Cornell covered 75,000 miles with three plays—*Romeo and Juliet*, *Candida*, and *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*.

There was an upsurge of hit plays on Broadway: *Peace on Earth*, by George Sklar and Albert Maltz, a pro-labor and anti-war drama which attracted all the leftists; *Stevedore*, by Paul Peters and George Sklar, a melodramatic portrayal of white injustice toward the negroes; Sidney Kingsley's drama of the medical profession, *Men in White*, which won the Pulitzer Prize; Elizabeth McFadden's adroit melodrama, *Double Door; Sailor, Beware!*, a rowdy comedy by Kenyon Nicholson and Charles Robinson; Eugene O'Neill's nostalgic comedy of youth, *Ah, Wilderness!*, with George M. Cohan; *The Pursuit of Happiness*, a comedy about "bundling" in Colonial America, by Lawrence Langner and Armina Marshall Langner; *The Green Bay Tree*, by Mordaunt Shairp, a sophisticated import from England, with Laurence Olivier; *Her Master's Voice*, an innocuous comedy by Clare Kummer; *She Loves Me Not*, dealing with high-jinks at Princeton, by Howard Lindsay; Helen Hayes in Maxwell Anderson's distinguished period romance, *Mary of Scotland;* Sidney Howard's dramatization of Sinclair Lewis' novel, *Dodsworth;* and Jack Kirkland's *Tobacco Road*, which almost failed, then (after additional injections of profanity) rallied and went on to a record-breaking run of seven years.

Esteemed failures: *Days Without End*, a modern miracle play by Eugene O'Neill; Philip Barry's *The Joyous Season*, with Lillian Gish, a warm and tender drama of spiritual regeneration in a Boston family; *Yellow Jack*, a drama of the heroic fight against yellow fever, by Sidney Howard and Paul de Kruif; and *Moor Born*, a play about the Brontë sisters, by Dan Totheroh.

Top musicals: *As Thousands Cheer*, by Irving Berlin and Moss Hart; *Roberta*, by Otto Harbach, with music by Jerome Kern.

Musical novelty: *Four Saints in Three Acts*, an opera by Ger-

trude Stein, with music by Virgil Thomson, described by Burns Mantle as "An unintelligible libretto set to a pleasant musical score, sung and spoken by a colored cast in a cellophane setting representing a visionary Spain."

1934–35

The optimism of the preceding season was carried over into 1934–35, but was dimmed somewhat by a further decrease in the number of productions (110), and by the general inferiority of the new plays. Out of the dozen positive hits, three or four at most could lay claim to artistic distinction. This forced the critics to the rather melancholy conclusion that less quantity did not inevitably mean more quality.

The hits: *The Distaff Side*, a pleasant comedy by John Van Druten; *Merrily We Roll Along*, a chronologically inverted drama of American life by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart; *Personal Appearance*, a satirical comedy about a flashy Hollywood actress, by Lawrence Riley; *Within the Gates*, a symbolic drama by the powerfully imaginative Irish writer, Sean O'Casey; *The Children's Hour*, a shocking tragedy of scandal in a girls' school, by Lillian Hellman; *Post Road*, a crook play by Wilbur Daniel Steele and Norma Mitchell; *Accent on Youth*, a witty comedy by Samson Raphaelson; *The Petrified Forest*, Robert Sherwood's potent mixture of philosophy and melodrama, which starred Leslie Howard and brought Humphrey Bogart to public attention; *The Old Maid*, a dramatization by Zoë Akins of the novel by Edith Wharton, which won the Pulitzer Prize; *Three Men on a Horse*, a boisterous and cleverly contrived farce by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott; *Awake and Sing*, Clifford Odets' vivid portrayal of Jewish-American life in the Bronx, with an integrated attack on capitalism; and *Kind Lady*, an absorbing thriller by Edward Chodorov from a story by Hugh Walpole.

Near-misses: *Judgement Day*, Elmer Rice's angry version of European treason trials; James Bridie's *The Sleeping Clergyman;* Ethel Barrymore and Eva Le Gallienne in Rostand's *L'Aiglon;* Noel Coward's romantic comedy, *Conversation Piece*, a failure despite the talents of Pierre Fresnay and Yvonne Printemps; the same author's *Point Valaine*, with Lunt and Fontanne; *Valley*

Forge, Maxwell Anderson's noble attempt to make George Washington a dramatic hero; Katharine Cornell in *Romeo and Juliet;* Ina Claire in *Ode to Liberty*, Sidney Howard's adaptation of a play by Michel Duran; and *Noah*, a charming Biblical fantasy adapted by Arthur Wilmurt from the French of André Obey.

Notable importations: the famous D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London, in a repertory of eleven operas by Gilbert and Sullivan; the Abbey Theatre Players of Dublin in a repertory of a dozen Irish plays.

Outstanding musicals: *The Great Waltz*, adapted from various libretti by Moss Hart, and with music by Johann Strauss, father and son; *Anything Goes*, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter.

Picturesque note: The Nudist Theatre Guild presented a play at the Sutton Theatre on April 16th.

1935–36

Broadway was still shrinking. This season brought forth only 102 new productions. Yet there was little lamentation on the part of critical observers, for the feeling was that the offerings made up in excitement what they lacked in numbers.

The principal innovation of the season was, of course, the invasion of Broadway by the forces of the Federal Theatre. Uncle Sam was a novelty among producers.

Another innovation, which caused anger in certain quarters, was the new provision in the Minimum Basic Agreement (between Dramatists' Guild and Producing Managers) which gave playwrights the major portion of money received for film rights in plays, and which furthermore stipulated that in future the financial backing of Broadway productions by motion-picture companies would not automatically give these companies the picture rights in the plays. In other words, a play was to be thrown on the open picture market for competitive bids, regardless of who financed its stage production. Although this provision elicited loud cries and threats from Hollywood, the prediction was that motion-picture money would continue to be available on Broadway.

In October, 1935, the New York Drama Critics' Circle, which for some time had been moribund, came to life with a plan to offer an annual award for the best new play written by an Ameri-

can playwright and produced in New York. And at the end of the season the first award (symbolized by a silver plaque) was bestowed upon Maxwell Anderson for his play, *Winterset.*

A unique incident of the autumn of 1935 was the picketing by two playwrights of a theatre in which Elizabeth Bergner was appearing in the English production of *Escape Me Never.* The protestants were Virgil Geddes and Paul Sifton, and their protest was directed against the Theatre Guild, which had taken over management of the production. Both Geddes and Sifton had had plays accepted for production by the Guild, and they considered it unfair of the Guild to present foreign attractions when they had obligations to native playwrights.

The season's palpable hits: *The Night of January 16*, a courtroom melodrama by Ayn Rand; *Winterset*, Maxwell Anderson's imaginative and poetically powerful reworking of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair; Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in a joyous revival of *The Taming of the Shrew; Mulatto*, a tragedy by Langston Hughes; *Dead End*, Sidney Kingsley's gripping drama of life along the East River in New York City; Helen Jerome's dramatization of Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, produced in a distinguished manner by Max Gordon; *First Lady*, a comedy of political intrigue in Washington by Katharine Dayton and George S. Kaufman; *Boy Meets Girl*, a superior comedy about Hollywood, by Bella and Samuel Spewack; Helen Hayes in an impressive Gilbert Miller production of *Victoria Regina*, by Laurence Housman; *Ethan Frome*, a dramatization by Owen and Donald Davis of the novel by Edith Wharton; *Call It a Day*, an English comedy by Dodie Smith; and *Idiot's Delight*, Robert E. Sherwood's exciting attack on munition-makers and international skulduggery, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

Moderate successes or failures: *Grand Guignol Horror Plays* (George K. Arthur's futile attempt to imitate the program of the famous Grand Guignol theatre in Paris); *Paths of Glory*, Sidney Howard's dramatization of Humphrey Cobb's anti-war novel; *Let Freedom Ring*, proletarian propaganda laid in North Carolina, by Albert Bein; *Mother*, as adapted by Bert Brecht from the novel by Maxim Gorky, and translated from the German by Paul Peters; *Paradise Lost*, by Clifford Odets; *Russet Mantle*, by Lynn Riggs; *Lady Precious Stream*, a charming retelling of an old

Chinese dramatic tale, by S. I. Hsiung; *Murder in the Cathedral*, a poetic drama dealing with the martyrdom of Thomas à Becket, by T. S. Eliot; and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, a tough and ironic drama by James M. Cain.

Representative musicals: *Jubilee*, by Moss Hart and Cole Porter; *Jumbo*, a spectacular show by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, with music and lyrics by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, produced at the Hippodrome by Billy Rose, with the aid of clowns, a ballet, an elephant, and Paul Whiteman's orchestra.

1936–37

There seemed to be no way to stop the shrinkage of Broadway. For the first time (in recent decades) the number of new productions fell below a hundred. Among the contributing factors mentioned by observers was the reluctance of motion-picture money to get behind New York stage productions, for reasons previously mentioned.

Of the dozen or so hits, two were Shakespearean: John Gielgud's performance in *Hamlet*, which was seen 132 times (an all-time American record for this play); and Maurice Evans' amazing revival of *Richard II*, a play which had not been seen in New York since Edwin Booth played it in 1878, and which now achieved the sensational success of 133 performances. Modern pieces that scored most heavily were: Jacques Deval's comedy of Russian aristocratic refugees in Paris, *Tovarich*, which Robert E. Sherwood adapted for our stage; George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's appealing *Stage Door;* Noel Coward's brilliant assortment of nine short plays, played three at a time, entitled *Tonight at 8:30*, which provided him and Gertrude Lawrence with three field-days; *You Can't Take It With You*, a timely and riotous farce by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, which aimed to console those who had lost their money, as well as those who never had any to lose; *Brother Rat*, a breezy farce by John Monks, Jr. and Fred F. Finklehoffe, set within the grounds of Virginia Military Institute; Clare Boothe's diverting and cynical exposé of her own sex, *The Women;* Arthur Kober's comedy of life in a summer camp, *Having Wonderful Time;* Maxwell Anderson's fantastic *mélange* of history and the present, of prose and poetry,

High Tor; and Franz Werfel's Biblical spectacle, *The Eternal Road,* adapted by William A. Drake from Ludwig Lewisohn's translation, with music by Kurt Weill.

The Pulitzer Prize Committee settled on *You Can't Take It With You;* the Critics' Circle disagreed, and awarded their plaque to *High Tor.* Both had slim picking in the search for a significant new American play. Shakespeare was not eligible.

Also-ran entries: *Spring Dance,* Philip Barry's ingratiating college comedy; *Night Must Fall,* a British psychological thriller, by and with Emlyn Williams; *Daughters of Atreus,* Robert Ardrey's commendable reworking of the Agamemnon-Clytemnestra legend; Leslie Howard's restrained interpretation of *Hamlet;* Paul Green's anti-war play, *Johnny Johnson;* E. P. Conkle's dramatic treatment of the Matanuska, Alaska, colonization project, entitled *200 Were Chosen;* Ruth Gordon in a revival of Wycherley's bawdy Restoration comedy, *The Country Wife;* and two tragedies by Maxwell Anderson: *The Wingless Victory,* with Katharine Cornell, and *The Masque of Kings,* with Pauline Frederick and Henry Hull.

Choice musicals: *White Horse Inn,* adapted by David Freedman from the German of Hans Mueller, with lyrics by Irving Caesar and music by Ralph Benatsky; *Babes in Arms,* by Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers.

Novelty of the season: Orson Welles's adaptation of *Macbeth* for a colored cast, produced by the Federal Theatre.

1937–38

The most discussed phase of New York theatricals during 1937–38 was the increasing importance of the Federal Theatre. Now in its third year, this governmental experiment had hit its stride, and was offering to the public at extremely low prices a number of productions which compared favorably with the more expensive commercial attractions. Its Living Newspaper technique was applied effectively to the theme of public housing under the title of *One-third of a Nation;* it presented E. P. Conkle's soundly composed play of Abraham Lincoln's youth, *Prologue to Glory;* it produced Shaw's *On the Rocks,* and an interesting historical drama by William Du Bois entitled *Haiti,* dealing with the revolt of Haitian natives under Christophe.

Even more excitement was caused, however, by the Mercury

Theatre production of *Julius Caesar* in modern dress on a scenery-less stage. This was the work, of course, of Orson Welles and John Houseman, who had resigned from the Federal Theatre after a tiff with the censors in Washington, and who had founded their own theatre, the Mercury. Not only did the novel staging arouse widespread comment; there was much controversy also over the manner in which the play was given a topical significance. It became, in effect, as Burns Mantle said, "a CIO conspiracy to make way with a dictator of the Mussolini type." The production had a run of 157 performances.

Other hits: Maxwell Anderson's fantastic *tour de force*, *The Star-Wagon*, with Lillian Gish and Burgess Meredith; *Susan and God*, by Rachel Crothers, which might have been called Gertrude Lawrence and the Oxford Movement; *Amphitryon 38*, the witty Parisian hit by Jean Giraudoux, adapted by S. N. Behrman, produced by the Theatre Guild with Lunt and Fontanne disporting themselves as Jupiter and Alkmena; *Golden Boy*, most successful and least propagandist of Clifford Odets' plays; John Steinbeck's terrifying and startlingly profane tragedy, *Of Mice and Men;* Ruth Gordon in Thornton Wilder's acting version of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*—a surprise hit; *The Cradle Will Rock*, by Marc Blitzstein, the anti-capitalism piece presented by the Mercury Theatre after it had been refused an O.K. by the Federal Theatre censors; *Shadow and Substance*, Paul Vincent Carroll's powerful study of spiritual conflict among the Irish; Ian Hay's wholesome and tender comedy of English school life, *Bachelor Born;* Paul Osborn's philosophical whimsicality, *On Borrowed Time;* Thornton Wilder's enormously skillful and imaginative treatment of life and death in an American small town at the beginning of the century, *Our Town;* Clifford Goldsmith's high school comedy, *What a Life;* and Ethel Barrymore in *Whiteoaks*, a dramatization by Mazo de la Roche of her own novel, *Whiteoaks of Jalna.*

The Pulitzer Prize went to *Our Town.* The Drama Critics' Circle Award went to *Of Mice and Men.* Also, for the first time, the Critics bestowed a citation on the season's best play of foreign authorship. It went to *Shadow and Substance.*

Shorter runs: The Abbey Theatre Players of Dublin in their usual repertory; Tallulah Bankhead in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (5 performances!); the Guild's production of *Madame*

Bovary, the play by Gaston Baty based on Flaubert's novel, adapted by Benn W. Levy; Sidney Howard's study of liberalism in America, *The Ghost of Yankee Doodle;* the Mercury Theatre's revival of the Elizabethan classic, Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday; Time and the Conways*, one of J. B. Priestley's experiments with people and chronology; the English production of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral;* Lunt and Fontanne in Stark Young's new translation of Chekhov's *The Seagull;* and Grace George, Bramwell Fletcher, and Tallulah Bankhead in a revival of W. Somerset Maugham's *The Circle.*

Musical events: *I'd Rather Be Right*, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, with music by Richard Rodgers and lyrics by Lorenz Hart, in which George M. Cohan impersonated, charmingly and in excellent taste, President Franklin D. Roosevelt; *Pins and Needles*, the refreshingly impolite revue presented by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Players, with amateur and semi-professional performers, which ran for three years; *I Married an Angel*, by Rodgers and Hart.

The season showed a slight drop from the preceding one in the total number of productions, but no one seemed discouraged. They were getting used to the idea.

1938–39

Certainly there was no expansion of the Broadway scene during 1938–39. With a total of 80 new shows, plus a small number of revivals and holdovers, the season offered a minimum of excitement. The Theatre Guild, which had been in the doldrums for several years, during which time it had lost control of its playhouse (the Guild Theatre), had further reason for discouragement now. Out of the five productions it offered its subscribers, in lieu of a promised six, only one was a hit—*The Philadelphia Story*, Philip Barry's most successful treatment of the "poor little rich girl" theme, which proved a perfect vehicle for the mannered Katharine Hepburn.

The most interesting development of the season was the formation of the Playwrights' Company, a producing corporation composed of Robert E. Sherwood, Maxwell Anderson, Sidney Howard, S. N. Behrman, and Elmer Rice, the purpose of which was to produce plays by members of this group. The new venture got off to a happy start with the production of Sherwood's *Abe Lin-*

coln in Illinois, which turned out to be the smash hit of the season. This was followed by two lesser hits: *Knickerbocker Holiday,* Maxwell Anderson's jovial comedy of early New York history, with music by Kurt Weill; and S. N. Behrman's brittle *No Time for Comedy,* which sparkled in the hands of Katharine Cornell and Laurence Olivier. The fourth offering was Elmer Rice's *American Landscape,* which had to do with American integrity, and made use of ghosts from the past. Forty-three performances sufficed.

There were a dozen other dramatic hits on the Great White Way: *Kiss the Boys Goodbye,* Clare Boothe's highly-colored satire on a Hollywood talent search, which she insisted was intended as an exposé of Southern Fascism—an explanation which was more discussed than believed; *Oscar Wilde,* dealing with the downfall and death of the Irish wit, by Leslie and Sewell Stokes, with Robert Morley superb in the Wilde role; Maurice Evans' full-text production of *Hamlet,* for which the curtain rose at 6:45, the play recessing from 8:15 to 8:45, and concluding at 11:15; *Rocket to the Moon,* a drama of dentists and middle-aged romance, by Clifford Odets; a revival of Sutton Vane's 1924 fantasy hit, *Outward Bound;* Irwin Shaw's *The Gentle People,* in which some honest, simple people do away with a racketeer; *Mamba's Daughters,* the tortured story of a colored woman's misfortune and persecution, by Dorothy and DuBose Heyward; *The White Steed,* Paul Vincent Carroll's powerful adaptation of an old Irish legend to modern life; *The American Way,* a patriotic spectacle drama by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart; *The Little Foxes,* Lillian Hellman's gripping drama of greed and family strife, with Tallulah Bankhead in her most successful role; and *Family Portrait,* by Lenore Coffee and William Joyce Cowen, the chief novelty among the season's plays because of its unusual treatment of the story of Jesus.

Less popular: *The Fabulous Invalid,* a sympathetic play about the theatre, by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman; *Danton's Death,* translated from the German of Georg Büchner by Geoffrey Dunlop; *Here Come the Clowns,* Philip Barry's philosophical drama of the search for spiritual truth in the muddled modern world; Maurice Evans as Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV,* Part I, which had not been popularized on the New York stage since the late nineteenth century, but which in the hands of Mr.

Evans achieved an admirable run of 74 performances; Stefan Zweig's sombre Biblical tragedy, *Jeremiah*, produced by the Theatre Guild in a translation by Eden and Cedar Paul, the acting version prepared by John Gassner and Worthington Miner; and William Saroyan's first play, *My Heart's in the Highlands*, which introduced a lively and appealing note in American drama.

Outstanding musicals: *Hellzapoppin*, a vaudeville revue in two acts assembled and produced by Ole Olson and Chic Johnson; *Leave It to Me*, a musical comedy by Bella and Samuel Spewack, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter; and *The Boys from Syracuse*, a musical comedy based on Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, by George Abbott, with lyrics by Lorenz Hart and music by Richard Rodgers.

The Pulitzer Prize went, almost inevitably, to *Abe Lincoln in Illinois;* The Drama Critics' Circle voted *The White Steed* the best foreign play, but came to an *impasse* in their balloting on the best American play of the season. *The Little Foxes* had six votes, and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* five. Inasmuch as the Circle's rules required that its award be on the basis of a three-fourths vote of the membership, no award was made. Shortly afterwards the rules were amended to permit the award on a basis of a simple majority vote, provided no play had received a three-fourths vote after five ballots.

1939–40

Broadway had now found a level of production from which it has deviated only slightly ever since—80 new shows, and approximately a dozen revivals or holdovers. Mr. Mantle, in reviewing the season for his year book, was not unhappy. His verdict: "Fewer productions, more hits. Fewer performances, heavier receipts." He notes, however, that the beginning and the end of the season were both harmed noticeably by the competition of the New York World's Fair, which ran through the summer and early autumn, and was reopened in May.

First of the legitimate hits was an unimportant farce-comedy entitled *See My Lawyer*, by Richard Maibaum and Harry Clork, which was produced by the knowing George Abbott. The next was Samson Raphaelson's sophisticated comedy, *Skylark*, in which Gertrude Lawrence displayed her virtuosity. Then came the smash hit, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, by Moss Hart and

George S. Kaufman, which drew on the somewhat fabulous personality of Alexander Woollcott for its principal character, and which launched the bearded Monty Woolley on his starring career.

It was a season of comedies, frivolous and otherwise: William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*, which mixed saloon atmosphere and philosophical whimsy with such success that it won both the Drama Critics' Award and the Pulitzer Prize—the first play to achieve this double distinction; *Life with Father*, the dramatization by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse of various reminiscences by Clarence Day, which was destined to set a new record for long runs on Broadway; J. B. Priestley's ingenious comedy of domestic dilemma, *When We Are Married; The Male Animal*, a bright and realistic college play by James Thurber and Elliott Nugent; *My Dear Children*, a thin piece by Catherine Turney and Jerry Horwin, which owed its success to the unconscionable antics and "ad-libbing" of John Barrymore; and *Separate Rooms*, a superficial and risqué work by Joseph Carole, Alan Dinehart, Alex Gottlieb, and Edmund Joseph.

There were only four serious plays which attained the hit class: Clare Boothe's melodrama, *Margin for Error*, first successful anti-Nazi play to reach the New York stage; *Ladies in Retirement*, a mystery drama by Reginald Denham and Edward Percy; Maxwell Anderson's *Key Largo*, a play inspired by the Spanish war; and *There Shall Be No Night*, Robert E. Sherwood's touching drama of intellectual patriotism in Finland during the Russo-Finnish war, which Lunt and Fontanne played with outstanding success.

There were a half-dozen *succès d'estimes: Thunder Rock*, Robert Ardrey's philosophical fantasy; Elmer Rice's comedy of Manhattan, *Two On An Island*, which barely missed being a hit; George Bernard Shaw's satirical review of European politics, *Geneva; The Fifth Column*, Ernest Hemingway's drama of violence and romance in war-torn Spain; William Saroyan's *Love's Old Sweet Song*, which, despite the combined efforts of the Theatre Guild, Eddie Dowling (co-producer), and an excellent cast, could not sell its playful eccentricity to the general public; and Sidney Kingsley's *The World We Make*, a drama concerned with mental instability and World War II, based on Millen Brand's novel, *The Outward Room*.

Musical highlights: *Too Many Girls,* by George Marion, Jr., with lyrics by Lorenz Hart and music by Richard Rodgers; *Du Barry Was a Lady,* by B. G. De Sylva and Herbert Fields, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter; *Louisiana Purchase,* by Morrie Ryskind, with music and lyrics by Irving Berlin.

It was an interesting season for ballet. The well-established Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo introduced several new items, including a surrealist opus by Salvador Dali entitled *Bacchanale,* and *Ghost Town,* an American folk ballet based on Mark Twain's *Roughing It;* a new organization calling itself Ballet Theatre opened its first season in New York, and offered world premieres of such varied works as Saroyan's *The Great American Goof,* with choreography by Eugene Loring, Adolph Bolm's interpretation of Prokofieff's *Peter the Wolf,* and Anthony Tudor's *Jardin aux Lilas.*

An important artistic event of the winter was the recital of Angna Enters, who had begun her career as a mime fifteen years earlier, and who meanwhile had earned a place for herself as the most original and most finished pantomimic performer in America.

SUMMER THEATRES

Summer theatres, operating in resorts for the entertainment of vacationers, are by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon. They were known in England as early as the eighteenth century, and in this country during the nineteenth. But it was not until the early thirties of this century that they attained wide popularity, and the impetus in their development was the depression. Hundreds of professional actors, seeking escape from the heat and unemployment of New York, installed themselves in makeshift playhouses (remodeled barns, churches, etc.), and eked out a living for themselves during July and August.

At the same time, a number of amateurs, chiefly from college drama departments, got the same idea. In some cases the two groups joined forces, a small number of professionals forming the nucleus of a company, and the amateurs supplying the support. Frequently the managers of these mixed enterprises found it profitable to combine instruction with performance—in other words, to conduct a school for actors and technicians, charging each apprentice a fee, and offering him practical experience in production in lieu of salary. Needless to say, there were instances

of unfair exploitation of the amateur, but gradually, under the watchful eye of Actors' Equity Association, these became the exception rather than the rule.

Probably the most picturesque and ingenious of the summer theatres was one founded in Abingdon, Virginia, by Robert Porterfield, a young actor who, during the dark depression year of 1933, conceived the idea of a Barter Theatre, where patrons would pay their admission with edible produce or professional services. The town barber cut hair, housewives brought cakes, and farmers offered vegetables, chickens, and—in one famous instance—a young pig. The idea worked. The actors ate, and the Barter Theatre flourished. After a time it was emboldened to tour the state. Many of the young actors who got their start in this theatre have gone on to Broadway or Hollywood fame—Gregory Peck, Hume Cronyn, Lizabeth Scott, and Jeffrey Lynn. Eventually the State of Virginia was impelled to recognize the Barter as a state theatre, and recently it has received an annual subsidy of $10,000. This is a unique instance in America of state financial support of theatricals.

The summer theatres spread along the Eastern Seaboard from Maine to Maryland, and westward into Pennsylvania and Ohio. And, as their operation became standardized, they formed a circuit over which top-ranking Broadway and Hollywood stars traveled, appearing in former successes, and playing each week with a different resident stock company. By the end of the decade there were more than 80 summer theatres in existence—most of them open for a season of ten weeks, and offering a new play each week. Many of the plays presented were new scripts, and these productions offered the hopeful playwright an inexpensive tryout of potential Broadway material. Referred to as "strawhats" and "cowbarns" by the theatrical profession, the summer theatres have in the past twenty years assumed an important place in the national theatrical picture.

CENTRAL CITY OPERA HOUSE

Although most of the summer theatre activity occurred along the Atlantic Coast, the western state of Colorado made a picturesque contribution. This state already had a summer theatre tradition, for Elitch's Gardens in Denver had been operating since the 1890s. But in 1932 a group of local drama enthusiasts, descendants

of pioneers, formed the Central City Opera House Association, and restored to its former crystal and red-velvet glory the historic opera house in Central City, an all-but-deserted mining town forty miles from Denver. This playhouse had been built in 1878, and its boards had been trod by Salvini, Bernhardt, Joseph Jefferson, Adelaide Ristori, and many other stars of the period. The house was reopened in the summer of 1932 with a production of *Camille*, directed by Robert Edmond Jones, and starring Lillian Gish. The following year Jones produced *The Merry Widow*, with Gladys Swartout and Richard Bonelli, and in 1934 Walter Huston was starred in *Othello*. In 1935 Jed Harris and Richard Aldrich presented Ruth Gordon in *A Doll's House*. Each succeeding summer has seen a colorful attraction at Central City, and a large tourist business has been attracted to this mountain town.

THE NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

By the beginning of the thirties the amateur theatre, whether of the college or community variety, was no longer a novelty. Its life was precarious, and often short, but in many localities it surmounted the inevitable hazards, and grew to hardy maturity. For every group that succeeded in taking root, probably three or four withered and died, but the number of survivors steadily increased. A survey made in 1939 shows a total of 105 well-established community theatres, as compared with the 69 of ten years before, and the college theatres offering regular public performances were numbered in the hundreds.

The chief problem facing the community theatre was, of course, the matter of financial security. Actual production costs could usually be met by box-office receipts, but salaries for directors could seldom be provided from this source. The result was that much of the direction and supervision of the theatre had to be placed on a voluntary basis, and this was inimical to the maintenance of artistic standards. Because of its essentially amateur nature, the community theatre cannot command admission prices anywhere near equal to those of the professional theatre, even when quality of production warrants such equality. The professional theatre, particularly when it presents "name" actors, enjoys a prestige almost unrelated to merit. The amateur organization, therefore, must in some way be subsidized. The college theatre has the advantage of a directorial staff which is paid for its in-

structional services, and which can therefore devote its energies to play production without making demands on box-office receipts. The community theatre, unless it sets up a school of its own, as the Pasadena Playhouse and a few other larger theatres have done, is severely hampered by the lack of funds for salaries. An obvious solution is the subsidizing of the theatre by the city through taxation, and such support is in perfect harmony with the city aid given to public libraries, parks, art museums, and playfields; yet during the thirties only one city in America assumed financial responsibility for its local theatre, and this was Palo Alto, California. There were instances of private philanthropy, but for the most part the community theatres fought their own financial battles, and frequently died in the struggle.

PIONEER ARENA THEATRE

In the college field probably the most significant development was the experiment carried on at the University of Washington in Seattle, where the arena method of production was applied to modern realistic drama, particularly to drawing-room comedy, with extraordinarily successful results. Although this method had been discussed by theorists for a number of years, and had been tentatively employed by Gilmor Brown in his private Playbox in Pasadena, the University of Washington group was the first to standardize the technique. Offering their first arena productions (with the audience seated on four sides of an acting area) in a large penthouse drawing-room atop a hotel near the campus, they soon outgrew the limitations of this room, and removed to the ballroom of the same hotel. A year later they rented a disused lodge-room in the vicinity, and transformed it into a theatre where they performed nightly every week. Their novel presentations gained such popularity that eventually they designed and built the Penthouse Theatre on the University campus, the first playhouse of its sort in the world. Opened in May, 1940, this arena-type theatre has not had a dark week since its dedication, and it has been imitated widely throughout the country. Its economy of operation (no scenery, and simple lighting), commends it from the practical point of view, and its artistic validity—particularly in the case of plays which depend upon dialogue, characterization, and story value rather than scenic background or technical effects, commend it aesthetically.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE

As early as 1931 it was apparent to forward-looking men that the non-commercial theatre deserved and needed a national organization. Under the leadership of Kenneth Macgowan, the groundwork for such an organization was laid at a conference in Evanston, Illinois, and at a later conference held at the University of Iowa (February, 1932), the organization was completed. The National Theatre Conference, whose members represent the leading college and community theatres of the country, has helped materially in strengthening the position of these theatres, in correlating their programs, in promoting tryout productions of new plays, in providing scholarships for talented actors, playwrights, and technicians, and in creating a *liaison* between the professional and non-professional theatre. Through substantial subsidies from the Rockefeller Foundation, it has been able to carry on these various activities, and also to publish an informative and inspiring quarterly bulletin.

MECHANICAL ENTERTAINMENT

During the year 1939 American motion picture studios produced 483 feature pictures, and over 700 short subjects. The same year 278 foreign features were released in this country. These pictures were exhibited in 17,000 theatres to an average weekly attendance of 85,000,000.

At the close of 1939 it was estimated that 28,700,000 homes were equipped with radios, and that the total number of sets in operation (counting portables and automobile radios) was more than 43,000,000.

All during the thirties experiments in television were carried on at great expense, chiefly by the Radio Corporation of America, the Dumont Laboratories, and by the Don Lee Broadcasting System. From time to time the public was informed that television was about to be made generally available. In 1939 RCA-NBC in New York City telecast a considerable number of programs to the pioneer set-owners in that vicinity, and announced that commercial television was imminent. The Federal Communications Commission, however, took the stand that the experimental stage was not yet passed, that further laboratory development should take place before commercialization, and therefore refused to

license any commercial stations. This restriction, followed by the outbreak of World War II, which diverted technical research and production into military channels, delayed the popularization of television until the latter half of the next decade. Meanwhile the radio world and the motion-picture world were left to speculate on the potentialities of this threat to their security as leaders in the field of popular entertainment. The professional legitimate theatre had little to fear; it had already shrunk to proportions that seemed the irreducible minimum.

Chapter XV

The Fight For Survival: 1940–1950

THE fifth decade of the century presents, theatrically, a special problem of evaluation, not only because of our closeness to it, but also because during its first half the theatre was given abnormal stimulation by World War II. A portion of the stupendous amount of money put into circulation during the war inevitably found its way into box-offices, and the mass migration of workers to war-industry cities created larger audiences for road shows than had existed for a long time. Many thousands of workers, excited by large wages and a metropolitan atmosphere, patronized stage attractions for the first time in their lives. After 1945 this audience began slowly to diminish, and by 1949 managers were showing caution in launching road ventures. In the most favorable position toward the road was the Theatre Guild, which during the decade had extended its season-subscription plan to thirty cities (including distant ones on the Pacific Coast), and had a guaranteed audience of 200,000 subscribers. It was noticeable, however, that more and more the Guild came to depend on productions which they themselves had not originated, but of which they took the sponsorship after the popularity of the productions had been proved.

The effect of the war on Broadway was to raise fantastically the cost of production, and, correlatively, prices of admission; to create a box-office pressure in the case of hit-plays which resulted in a shocking wave of ticket speculation; and to further the recent tendency toward excessively long runs. This boom brought great prosperity to a few producers, playwrights, actors, designers, and technicians, and it gave a general air of prosperity to the whole world of the theatre. But it was still a little world, and the rosy glow that enveloped it was ephemeral. No signs are evident that permanent, or far-reaching, gains were made, or that the profes-

sional theatre's health has been improved. No new commercial playhouses were built in New York (or elsewhere, for that matter), no repertory companies succeeded in establishing themselves on a firm basis, unemployment among members of Actors' Equity Association continued at the rate of approximately ninety per cent of the membership, and only two new American playwrights of distinction were discovered during the entire decade.

There were a few individuals aware of the true situation, and some attempts were made in the forties to provide for the theatre's future security, artistic and economic. Although some progress along this line was made, particularly by the American National Theatre and Academy, an organization which will be discussed later in the chapter, this progress amounted chiefly to plans rather than accomplishment. Meanwhile at the close of the decade, 149,000,000 Americans were being served by approximately 150 professional legitimate theatres (roughly one to a million population), of which 38 were in New York City, and the remainder of which were one by one going out of use, either through obsolescence, lack of sufficient stage attractions, or rental to more profitable enterprises, such as religious revival meetings, lectures by popular psychologists and health faddists, foreign-language films, and music and dance recitals.

Sheer size of population, combined with theatrical interest or tradition, account for the survival of a few theatres in such cities as Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and in the case of the first two mentioned there is also the opportunity of housing many of the tryout productions for Broadway; but nearly all other cities of the nation are reduced to one standard theatre or none.

LAISSEZ-FAIRE

One of the most lamentable aspects of the situation is that so few people are disturbed by it. The public, notoriously the victim of habits, good or bad, seems on the whole satisfied with mechanical entertainment, and even the professional critics are for the most part content to rule their little kingdom, unmindful of its shrinkage. Certain Broadway critics have been known, indeed, to express gratification over the fact that they now have only a few plays to review. When they run short of new plays to discuss, they revisit those they have already reviewed, justify-

ing themselves with the philosophical explanation that second thoughts are often valuable. As for their interest in the road—that is slight indeed. The road is out of their province.

There was a time in this country when American cities had resident stock companies. Yet, even then, they looked to New York for star productions. And they were willing to pay more for them than for stock company shows. Fifty years ago there were a great many stage stars who could tour regularly and profitably. Today there are so few stars that they could not, even if they wished to do so, keep the theatregoers of the nation entertained with any reasonable degree of frequency. The theatre is a habit, and this habit is not kept strong by five or six productions a season. It is true that profitable tours can be made by the Lunts, by Helen Hayes, Katharine Cornell, Maurice Evans, or Tallulah Bankhead—but it is difficult to think of extensions to the list. And the day has passed when a production which is simply "a Broadway show," will command a provincial audience at admission prices of three and four dollars. The occasional exception is a popular musical, which sells melody and color in lieu of stars, but which sometimes has trouble (with its typical large company and elaborate staging) in meeting the staggering costs of present-day transportation and union stage operation.

The answer to the dilemma lies, obviously, in subsidization. Our college theatres are by their very nature the products of subsidy; a few of our community theatres have been subsidized to a limited extent; but we remain the only important country of the world without a subsidized professional theatre. How soon we will have it no one can say. What form it should take is still a subject for debate. Later in this chapter we will pursue the topic. Meanwhile, let us survey the activity on Broadway during the forties.

BROADWAY SURVEY

1940–41

The decade started feebly, with a new low of 72 productions, including revivals. A bare half-dozen of these became "smash" hits, and their artistic merit left something to be desired. One of them, curiously enough, was the old farce, *Charley's Aunt*, which José Ferrer ran into the hit class. But if there were not many

"smashes," there were a dozen or more hits—that is, plays which achieved upward of 100 performances. And, in addition, there was the perennial holdover, *Tobacco Road*, which played through the season, and then, to the relief of many, ended its seven and one-half year run on May 31st, 1941, with a world-record total of 3182 performances.

The notable hits: *Johnny Belinda*, a harrowing melodrama by Elmer Harris, concerning the sufferings of an appealing young female deaf-mute; *George Washington Slept Here*, a farce-comedy by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, based on the occupation of a run-down, historic farmhouse in Pennsylvania; Helen Hayes and Maurice Evans in a triumphant revival of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night; The Corn is Green*, a warmly human drama by Emlyn Williams, in which Ethel Barrymore achieved a personal triumph with her portrayal of a school-teacher in Wales; *Old Acquaintance*, John Van Druten's sophisticated comedy of feminine wiles and conflicts; *My Sister Eileen*, a breezy comedy by Joseph A. Fields and Jerome Chodorov, having to do with the adventures of two nice girls in a Greenwich Village flat; *Arsenic and Old Lace*, by Joseph Kesselring, in which two sweet old ladies commit murders with the best intentions; *Mr. and Mrs. North*, a mystery-comedy by Owen Davis, based on stories by Frances and Richard Lockridge; *Claudia*, Rose Franken's skillful adaptation of her own fiction, which made its heroine the most popular married ingenue since Dulcy; Katharine Cornell in a revival of Shaw's classic lampoon, *The Doctor's Dilemma; Native Son*, a powerful (even painful) drama by Paul Green and Richard Wright, based on the latter's novel, portraying a colored boy's rebellion against white supremacy; *Watch on the Rhine*, an anti-Nazi drama of superior insight and theatrical effectiveness; and William Saroyan's capricious comedy, *The Beautiful People*, which was not enthusiastically received, but which the author (who by this time was his own producer) managed to keep going past the hundred-performance mark.

The more distinguished failures: *Journey to Jerusalem*, Maxwell Anderson's story of Jesus as a boy of twelve; *Delicate Story*, Ferenc Molnar's slight comedy of wartime romance in Switzerland; *Liberty Jones*, Philip Barry's unfortunate patriotic allegory; *The Talley Method*, S. N. Behrman's comedy about a surgeon,

an attractive patient, the surgeon's children, and a handsome refugee; and *The Cream in the Well*, a depressing Oklahoma farm tragedy by Lynn Riggs.

With music: *It Happens on Ice*, a revue assembled by Sonja Henie and Arthur Wirtz; *Panama Hattie*, a musical comedy by Herbert Fields and B. G. De Sylva, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter; *Pal Joey*, a musical comedy by John O'Hara, with music by Richard Rodgers and lyrics by Lorenz Hart; *Lady in the Dark*, a play with music by Moss Hart, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin and music by Kurt Weill; and *Cabin in the Sky*, a fantasy for colored performers by Lynn Root, with lyrics by John La Touche and music by Vernon Duke.

The Drama Critics' Circle voted *Watch on the Rhine* the best American play of the season, and *The Corn is Green* the best importation. The Pulitzer Committee outguessed the public by bestowing its Prize on Robert E. Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night*, which actually belonged to the previous season. The Committee explained that in making its annual choice it did not consider plays which opened after April 1st, and the Sherwood play had opened on April 29th.

An interesting development of the season was the inauguration of Experimental Theatre, Inc., a group sponsored by Actors' Equity and the Dramatists' Guild, of which Antoinette Perry, the producer-director, was the first president. The purpose was to discover new talent, both in acting and playwriting, and during the first year three plays were produced—an adaptation of Euripides's *The Trojan Women*, and two plays by young American writers. The project was abandoned, however, at the end of the season, because of the war, and was not resumed until 1946, when the American National Theatre and Academy became its sponsor.

1941–42

Although a few more plays were produced this season than in the preceding one, there were fewer hits, and the general quality was lower. As usual, one of the most popular playwrights was William Shakespeare, whose *Macbeth* was given a brilliant run of 131 performances by Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson; and, rather typically, two of the outstanding successes were modern importations from London—Noel Coward's extraordinarily witty and riotous comedy, *Blithe Spirit* (with Clifton Webb,

Mildred Natwick, Leonora Corbett, and Peggy Wood), and Patrick Hamilton's Victorian thriller, *Angel Street* (with Judith Evelyn, Vincent Price, and Leo G. Carroll).

Native successes: *Spring Again*, a comedy by Isabel Leighton and Bertram Bloch, given style by Grace George and C. Aubrey Smith; *Junior Miss*, a domestic comedy by Jerome Chodorov and Joseph Fields, in which young Patricia Peardon achieved fame as the adolescent Judy; *Jason*, a sophisticated comedy by Samson Raphaelson, in which a noble critic writes an honest and favorable review of a new play by an eccentric playwright (suggestive of Saroyan) even after he has found his wife in the playwright's embrace; *Guest in the House*, a tricky melodrama of neuroticism by Hagar Wilde and Dale Eunson; and *Uncle Harry*, a clever murder play by Thomas Job, in which Eva Le Gallienne and Joseph Schildkraut were teamed again after several years.

Near and far misses: Maxwell Anderson's inspiring if unexciting war-play, *Candle in the Wind*, which, with Helen Hayes in the leading role, just missed being a hit; *The Land is Bright*, by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber, which attempted to stimulate faith in American idealism, and which displayed some of the selfishness in our past; *Theatre*, a comedy about a middle-aged actress by Guy Bolton and Somerset Maugham, which starred Cornelia Otis Skinner; *Clash by Night*, by Clifford Odets, concerned with infidelity and revenge among "common" people on Staten Island; *In Time to Come*, a patriotic play by Howard Koch and John Huston, with Woodrow Wilson as the protagonist; *The Moon is Down*, a muddled drama by John Steinbeck, based on the Nazi occupation of an enemy village; *Yesterday's Magic*, a pathetic drama by Emlyn Williams, having to do with an old English actor's attempt to recapture his fame; and an all-star revival of Shaw's *Candida* (Katharine Cornell, Raymond Massey, Burgess Meredith, Mildred Natwick, Dudley Digges, and Stanley Bell), which might have run on indefinitely but for commitments elsewhere which required several of the players to withdraw. This production is thought to have been the finest ever made of *Candida* in this country, and Burns Mantle referred to it as "the happiest event of all the sad new year."

On the wings of song: *Best Foot Forward*, by John Cecil Holm, with music and lyrics by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane; *Let's Face It*, by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, with music and lyrics by

Cole Porter; and *Porgy and Bess*, a musical version of the play by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, with music by George Gershwin.

Novelties: At the end of the season Madison Square Garden housed (briefly) a musical comedy on roller skates, entitled *Skating Vanities of 1942*—a protest, one surmises, against the continuous popularity of ice shows. The Gallaudet College Dramatic Club gave a performance of *Arsenic and Old Lace* entirely in sign language.

So bad was the season on Broadway that both the Pulitzer Committee and the Critics' Circle refused to make awards to American plays. The latter group condescended only to cite *Blithe Spirit* as a meritorious importation.

1942–43

This season brought fewer plays, but more hits. War and patriotism were frequent themes, among both successes and failures. Actually, the only war play that registered a solid hit was Maxwell Anderson's sentimental *The Eve of St. Mark*, though *Tomorrow the World*, by James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau, touched indirectly on the war through its study of the psychology of a Nazi youngster transplanted to an American home. *The Eve of St. Mark*, incidentally, was written by Anderson at the request of the National Theatre Conference, for presentation in college and community theatres throughout the country, and without thought of commercial production. Following its appearance in 75 scattered amateur and semi-professional theatres, it was produced on Broadway by the Playwrights' Company, and became one of the major hits of the season. Its history is unique.

Ten other hits: Philip Barry's *Without Love*, a satisfactory vehicle for the talents and personalities of Katharine Hepburn and Elliott Nugent, but otherwise an undistinguished comedy; Thornton Wilder's brilliant and provocative philosophical fantasy, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, which drove many people out of the theatre in disgust, but which delighted many others, including Alexander Woollcott, who declared it to be the greatest play ever written by an American; a revival of Elmer Rice's legal drama, *Counsellor-at-Law*, with Paul Muni in the role he created more than a decade before; Lunt and Fontanne in *The Pirate*, an exotic comedy by S. N. Behrman, based on an old German play

by Ludwig Fulda; a memorable revival of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, with Katharine Cornell and Judith Anderson; *Dark Eyes*, a diverting comedy concerned with three captivating female Russian refugees in New York, by and with Eugenie Leontovich and Elena Miramova; *The Patriots*, Sidney Kingsley's absorbing drama of our country's birth, featuring the characters of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton, with the cards stacked a bit against the latter; *Harriet*, a sympathetic if uninspired dramatization of the life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements, which Helen Hayes ennobled with her art; *The Doughgirls*, a rough-and-tumble wartime comedy by Joseph Fields; and *Kiss and Tell*, F. Hugh Herbert's immensely popular comedy of family life, which gave the world the captivating teen-age character, Corliss Archer—played originally by Joan Caulfield.

Moderate successes: *The Damask Cheek*, a delightful romantic comedy of 1909 by John Van Druten and Lloyd Morris, in which Flora Robson won plaudits; and *Counterattack*, by Janet and Philip Stevenson, based on a Russian play by Ilya Vershinin and Mikhail Ruderman, dealing tensely with German prisoners and Russian guards on the Eastern front.

Disappointments: a bill composed of two short plays by William Saroyan—*Across the Board on Tomorrow Morning*, and *Talking to You*, produced by the author with disastrous results; Eddie Dowling's revival of G. K. Chesterton's comedy of the supernatural, *Magic;* and Irwin Shaw's *Sons and Soldiers*, a psychological and philosophical drama concerned with motherhood, war, and life in general.

THE WAR WAS TO BLAME

War never fails to stimulate musical productions—the obvious and perhaps sound assumption being that tensions of both military and civilian personnel are best relieved by such entertainment. In this particular season not only did the usual musical comedies flourish, but also there were attempts to revive vaudeville and to legitimatize burlesque.

Michael Todd assembled a burlesque revue, headed by low-comedian Bobby Clark and strip-teaser Gypsy Rose Lee, and presented it under the title of *Star and Garter*, with resounding success. A short time later Lee Shubert and his associates followed

with *Wine, Women and Song*, which was described as a revue-vaudeville-burlesque show, the company being headed by Margie Hart and Jimmy Savo, and this production was eventually forced out of existence by the police. Meanwhile Fred F. Finklehoffe had presented a vaudeville *mélange* entitled *Show Time*, which featured George Jessel, Ella Logan, Jack Haley, and other variety stars. This production prospered and ran through the bulk of the season.

Other musicals: *This Is the Army*, a military musical revue assembled by Irving Berlin, with lyrics and music by himself, and with himself as a performer—the remainder of the company being composed of men in the armed services, the producer being "Uncle Sam," and the profits going to the Army Emergency Relief Fund; *Rosalinda*, an operetta adapted from the Max Reinhardt version of the Johann Strauss *Die Fledermaus*, by Gottfried Reinhardt and John Meehan, Jr., with lyrics by Paul Kerby; *Something for the Boys*, a musical comedy by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, with songs by Cole Porter; and *Oklahoma!*, a musical comedy by Oscar Hammerstein II, with music by Richard Rodgers, based on the play, *Green Grow the Lilacs*, by Lynn Riggs. Although the last-named piece achieved immediate popularity, it could scarcely have been foreseen during the first season that this popularity would result in a new world record for a musical show.

The Pulitzer Prize, to the intense annoyance of many, went to *The Skin of Our Teeth*. The Critics' Circle Award went to *The Patriots*, and there was no citation of a foreign play.

1943–44

The war boom was felt strongly in the theatre this season, and there were twenty more productions than there had been the previous season. There were few outstanding hits, but, as Mr. Mantle said, "More poor plays sold for more good money than were ever before recorded."

Because of the improved prospects for speculative profits on Broadway, and also because of the greatly increased costs of production, there was during this period a noticeable tendency for so-called "outside" money to interest itself in play production, and for plays to be backed financially by a large number of small investors, including friends and relatives of playwright and pro-

ducer. One of the earliest examples of this practice was the great hit, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, a product of the 1941–42 season, which had twenty-three backers, each of whom is reported to have received a return amounting to approximately thirteen times his original investment.

One of the most significant developments of the 1943–44 season was the establishment of a City Center of Music and Drama by the City of New York. Early in the winter the Mecca Temple, an auditorium seating 2800 persons, reverted to the city because of unpaid taxes. Mayor La Guardia immediately conceived the idea of using the house to provide cultural entertainment at low prices for the general public, and he was able, with the help of the President of the City Council, to set up a non-profit corporation, to raise $75,000 from public-spirited citizens, to renovate and modernize the building, and finally to put it to the use he had envisaged. City Center was opened with a concert by the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Dr. Artur Rodzinski (at admission prices ranging from 55¢ to $1.65), and shortly afterwards it housed its first dramatic production, a revival of *Susan and God,* with Gertrude Lawrence, the original star of this comedy. The house has been operated successfully ever since, an inspiring example of civic sponsorship and democratic ideals applied to the arts.

SHAKESPEARE WINS

Meanwhile, at inflated prices, the Broadway hits were burgeoning: *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*, a melodramatic comedy by Martin Vale, to which Elizabeth Bergner added her own extraordinary artificiality; a revival of *Othello* with José Ferrer and Paul Robeson, skillfully directed by Margaret Webster, which achieved the amazing run of 276 performances; Moss Hart's propagandist drama of life in the U.S. Army Air Forces, *Winged Victory*, with a huge cast of service men; *Lovers and Friends*, a romantic drama by Dodie Smith, with Katharine Cornell and Raymond Massey; John Van Druten's adroit and risqué comedy, *The Voice of the Turtle*, with Margaret Sullavan and Elliott Nugent; *Over 21*, Ruth Gordon's wisecracking comedy of officers and their wives at an army training camp in Florida; *Ramshackle Inn*, a melodramatic farce by George Batson, which was aided and abetted by the wacky ZaSu Pitts; *Wallflower*, a comedy by Mary Orr

and Reginald Denham, in which the gentleman eventually prefers the brunette; *Decision*, a serious piece by Edward Chodorov, dealing with the threat of Fascism right here; *Jacobowsky and the Colonel*, a comedy adapted by S. N. Behrman from a play by Franz Werfel, dealing with the German invasion of France, and featuring Oscar Karlweis and Louis Calhern; and *The Searching Wind*, Lillian Hellman's incisive drama of war and politics.

Shorter runs: Elmer Rice's *A New Life*, a drama concerned with the conflict between individualism and conventionality, one scene of which rather startlingly portrayed the business of childbirth; *The Naked Genius*, a somewhat tawdry comedy by ex-strip-teaser Gypsy Rose Lee, in which Joan Blondell appeared; *Outrageous Fortune*, Rose Franken's courageous drama of the problems of a wealthy Jewish family, which tempted the beautiful Elsie Ferguson to come out of her retirement of many years to appear in the role of a glamorous mystic; *The Innocent Voyage*, a dramatization by Paul Osborn of Richard Hughes's imaginative and haunting novel, *A High Wind in Jamaica;* William Saroyan's *Get Away Old Man*, which was Saroyan thumbing his nose at Saroyan; and Maxwell Anderson's *Storm Operation*, an ineffectual attempt to make a play out of the North African campaign.

Melodic hits: a revival of Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, in a new musical version by Robert Stolz; *One Touch of Venus*, a musical comedy by S. J. Perelman and Ogden Nash, with music by Kurt Weill; *Carmen Jones*, an adaptation for colored performers by Oscar Hammerstein II, of Bizet's *Carmen;* and *Mexican Hayride*, a musical comedy by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter.

Evidence of the consistent weakness of the season lies in the fact that neither the Pulitzer Prize Committee nor the Drama Critics' Circle felt justified in granting awards to new American plays. The Pulitzer Committee did, however, make a special citation of *Oklahoma!* as an outstanding musical, and the Critics' Circle voted *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* best of the foreign plays.

1944–45

This season (the fourth of wartime) represents the climax of the boom. Out of 83 new productions on Broadway, 24 reached the hit class—an unusually high proportion. Box-office prices

soared—six dollars became an established price for musicals, and opening nights frequently brought as much as twelve dollars a seat. The height of extravagance was reached in the presentation of a spectacular revue entitled *Seven Lively Arts*, assembled and produced by the adventurous Billy Rose, which employed the expensive and diverse talents of Cole Porter, Moss Hart, George S. Kaufman, Igor Stravinsky, Beatrice Lillie, Bert Lahr, Benny Goodman, Alicia Markova, Anton Dolin, Doc Rockwell, and a host of other famous artists. The revue was presented in the luxurious Ziegfeld Theatre, which Rose had recently purchased and refurbished, opening night orchestra seats were priced at twenty-four dollars each, and guests at the premiere were regaled with champagne during the *entr'acte*.

It was also a season of tremendous patriotic activity among theatre folk. The Theatre Wing maintained its recreation and entertainment center in New York City for American and foreign servicemen, and dramatic troupes were dispatched to all major war areas of the world. Notable among the latter was the company headed by Katharine Cornell, which performed *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* 140 times for American troops in various parts of Europe.

It was a great season for ballet. Not only did the several ballet organizations, such as the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and Ballet Theatre, prosper as independent attractions, but ballets were injected into many musical productions. A factor, undoubtedly, in the creation of this vogue, was the outstanding acclaim which had been accorded Agnes de Mille's choreography in *Oklahoma!*

HOLLYWOOD GOLD

The spirit of prosperity and excitement which characterizes this period was reflected in Hollywood, too, for during the season a total of $4,000,000 was spent in the acquisition of motion-picture rights to new Broadway plays.

It cannot be claimed that a great body of important dramatic literature was produced during the season, but certainly the public was offered (and accepted) a wide variety of plays.

Selected hits: *Ten Little Indians*, a better-than-average mystery melodrama by Agatha Christie; *Catherine Was Great*, a titillating but tawdry comedy by and with Mae West; *Anna Lucasta*, a vital and absorbing drama of negro life by Philip Yordan; *Soldier's*

Wife, Rose Franken's serious study of the problems of readjustment among returning soldiers and their wives; *I Remember Mama*, a brilliant dramatization by John Van Druten of Kathryn Forbes's book, *Mama's Bank Account*, the warm and moving story of a Norwegian family in San Francisco; *Snafu*, a comedy by Louis Solomon and Harold Buchman concerning a young soldier who is sent home because he is under-age; *Harvey*, Mary Chase's ingenious comedy about a loveable drunk and a rabbit who wasn't there, which fitted Frank Fay like a glove; *The Late George Apley*, a delightful exposition of Bostonian character and ways by John P. Marquand and George S. Kaufman, based on Mr. Marquand's novel of the same title; *A Bell for Adano*, Paul Osborn's dramatization of a novel by John Hersey, dealing with the American military occupation of a town in Italy; *Dear Ruth*, Norman Krasna's lively comedy dealing with the problems created by a romantic and well-meaning teen-ager who writes love-letters in her sister's name to a soldier overseas; *The Hasty Heart*, a human-interest drama by John Patrick, laid in a British hospital behind the Assam-Burma Front, in which a stubborn young Scot discovers his heart; a Margaret Webster production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with the negro actor, Canada Lee, as Caliban, and the ballerina, Vera Zorina, as Ariel; *Foolish Notion*, a not-too-happy combination of wit and fantasy by Philip Barry, which Tallulah Bankhead helped to a moderate success; *Dark of the Moon*, a legend-play by Howard Richardson and William Berney, with music by Walter Hendl, which drew its inspiration from the old English ballad, "Barbara Allen"; and *The Glass Menagerie*, a "memory play" by Tennessee Williams, which revealed a powerful new talent in American playwriting, and which brought Laurette Taylor back to Broadway in the final triumph of her career.

ARTHUR MILLER'S FIRST PLAY

Less popular: *Embezzled Heaven*, by L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay, based on a novel by Franz Werfel, in which Ethel Barrymore portrayed a devout Catholic woman of a Central European country whose faith is betrayed by a wicked nephew; Samson Raphaelson's comedy of married life and rediscovered love, *The Perfect Marriage; In Bed We Cry*, a comedy of tangled love lives by and with Ilka Chase, being a dramatization of Miss

Chase's own novel; *The Streets are Guarded*, by Laurence Stallings, in which a Marine fills the role of saviour on an island in the far Pacific; *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, by Arthur Miller, whose hero has more luck than did the production, which had four performances; *Trio*, by Dorothy and Howard Baker, from a novel by the former, which represented the triumph of normal love over Lesbianism, and which was closed by police action after 67 performances; *Rebecca*, by Daphne Du Maurier, which followed the motion picture of the same title, and was much less successful; and *The Deep Mrs. Sykes*, a satirical comedy by George Kelly, in which the heroine is an amusing victim of her own intuition.

Musical selections: *Song of Norway*, an operetta by Milton Lazarus and others, based on the life and music of Edvard Grieg; *Bloomer Girl*, a musical comedy based on the revolutionary campaign of the 1860s for putting women into pantalettes; *On the Town*, or three sailors on twenty-four-hour passes, a production which introduced Jerome Robbins's lively ballet, *Fancy Free; Up in Central Park*, a musical play of politics and romance in New York City of the 1870s, by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, with music by Sigmund Romberg; *Carousel*, an adaptation by Benjamin F. Glazer of Molnar's classic play, *Liliom*, with music by Richard Rodgers, and book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II; and finally, the continuous series of ice shows, which inhabited the Center Theatre, and were by this time known as "icetravaganzas."

The most interesting non-commercial productions of the season were those presented by the recently-organized Equity-Library Theatre. This organization, the purpose of which was to provide a showcase for new (or unemployed) talent, had been formed under the leadership of the New York Public Library and Actors' Equity Association, the former represented by George Freedley, and the latter by Sam Jaffe. John Golden, the producer, made its early activities possible by several cash contributions. With casts and production staffs made up of approximately eighty per cent professionals and twenty per cent amateurs, Equity-Library productions were offered free to the public in the auditoriums of various branches of the New York Public Library. During the 1944–45 season a total of 37 productions were thus offered, including a wide range of modern and older classics.

The Pulitzer Prize was awarded to *Harvey*, though there were those whose eyebrows lifted slightly at the news. For the record it should perhaps be stated that the Pulitzer Prize is awarded "for an original American play performed in New York, which shall represent in marked fashion the educational power and value of the stage, preferably dealing with American life."

The Critics' Circle chose *The Glass Menagerie* for their award.

1945–46

This, the first of the so-called "Victory seasons"—World War II having come to an end with the sudden collapse of Japan (after atomic bombing) in August, 1945—offered several events of artistic importance, although total production suffered a slight drop from the previous season's figure.

By far the greatest excitement was provided by the visit of the Old Vic Repertory Company of London, headed by Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson, which early in May opened an engagement involving the presentation of five famous plays for a total of 33 performances. The plays were Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part I and Part II, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, W. B. Yeats's English version of *Oedipus*, by Sophocles, and Sheridan's *The Critic*. This engagement, which was hailed as a gesture of Anglo-American goodwill, was arranged by a new non-profit, tax-exempt organization known as Theatre Incorporated, of which Richard Aldrich was managing director, and the purpose of which was stated to be the offering of "a sustained program of great plays of the past and outstanding plays of the present . . . the encouragement of young playwrights, directors and actors through a subsidiary experimental theatre; the utilization of the stage as an educational force, and . . . the ultimate development of a true people's theatre."

Several months before it imported the Old Vic Company, however, Theatre Incorporated had launched a production of its own on Broadway—a revival of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, with Gertrude Lawrence in the role of Eliza Doolittle. Although Mr. Aldrich and Miss Lawrence had announced this production as the first in a repertory series of revivals, it made such a hit that the intention of a short run was scrapped—as repertory ideas usually are in

New York—and the play continued through the season, for a total of 179 performances.

ANDERSON INSULTS THE CRITICS

It was during this season that a bitter war was waged between a playwright and the Broadway critics. Maxwell Anderson was the *provocateur*, and the play that started the battle was his *Truckline Cafe*, which upon its opening was savagely reviewed. Buying space in the daily newspapers, he told the public, in bold-face type, what he thought about the critics. "It is an insult to our theatre," he said, "that there should be so many incompetents and irresponsibles among them. There are still a few critics who know their job and respect it, but of late years all plays are passed on largely by a sort of Jukes family of journalism who bring to the theatre nothing but their own hopelessness, recklessness and despair." The critics reacted in various ways to this comparison between them and members of sociology's classic family of paupers and criminals. Some issued sharp replies, others maintained a dignified silence. At the end of thirteen performances the play was closed.

The season as a whole was not a distinguished one, nor were there many outstanding hits. The failures were as interesting, and of course more numerous, than the hits.

Representative hits: *You Touched Me*, a romantic comedy by Tennessee Williams and Donald Windham, suggested by a short story by D. H. Lawrence, which barely crossed the hundred-performance line; *Deep Are the Roots*, by Arnaud d'Usseau and James Gow, a disturbing drama of troubled love between white girl and colored boy in the Deep South; *State of the Union*, a topical comedy of Presidential politics, by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; Maurice Evans's streamlined, GI version of *Hamlet*, which he had played frequently in the South Pacific during World War II; *Dream Girl*, a light and tricky comedy by Elmer Rice, in which Betty Field (Mrs. Rice) scored a personal triumph; *The Magnificent Yankee*, an appealing portrait of the late Mr. Justice Holmes of the United States Supreme Court, by Emmet Lavery; *O Mistress Mine*, a smooth, sophisticated English comedy by Terence Rattigan, in which Lunt and Fontanne disported themselves happily; *Born Yesterday*, a brazen comedy by Garson

Kanin, which served to reveal the captivating comic talent of Judy Holliday; and *Lute Song*, a love story with music by Sidney Howard and Will Irwin, from the Chinese classic, *Pi-Pa-Ki*, in which Mary Martin exhibited her winning ways.

NEAR MISS BY SHERWOOD

Moderate successes: *Thérèse*, a drama by Thomas Job, based on Emile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, with Eva Le Gallienne and Dame May Whitty; and *The Rugged Path*, a searching inquiry into the motives, patriotic and otherwise, of journalists and soldiers during World War II, by Robert E. Sherwood, with Spencer Tracy as the chief inquirer.

Less popular: *The Assassin*, a drama by Irwin Shaw, based on the assassination of Admiral Darlan in Algiers early in the War; *The Mermaids Singing*, John Van Druten's comedy about a mature and married playwright who manages to resist the advances of an amorous ingenue; *Strange Fruit*, a dramatization by Lillian and Esther Smith of a novel by the former, which deals with a romance between a colored girl and white boy, and which ends in a lynching; *Dunnigan's Daughter*, S. N. Behrman's drama of a ruthless American industrialist in Mexico, whose wife finally leaves him for a nobler man; *Home of the Brave*, a psychiatric drama by Arthur Laurents, in which a young Jewish soldier recovers from a paralysis which had psychological causes; and *Antigone*, the Sophocles tragedy, adapted by Lewis Galantiere from a French version of the play by Jean Anouilh, with Katharine Cornell and Cedric Hardwicke.

Hit musicals: a revival of *The Red Mill*, by Henry Blossom, with music by Victor Herbert, of 1906 vintage; *The Would-Be Gentleman*, a musical comedy adapted by Bobby Clark from Molière's classic, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, with music adapted by Jerome Morass from the original by Lully; *Annie Get Your Gun*, a musical comedy by Dorothy and Herbert Fields, with music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, in which Ethel Merman scored as Annie Oakley, the dead-shot; a revival of *Show Boat*, by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern; and *Are You With It?*, a musical comedy by Sam Perrin and George Balzer, with lyrics by Arnold B. Horwitt, and music by Harry Revel.

For the fourth time the Drama Critics' Circle failed to agree on an American play worthy of their award. Furthermore, they re-

fused to make a citation of a foreign play. Their only positive action was to cite *Carousel* as an outstanding contribution in the musical field. The Pulitzer Prize went to *State of the Union.*

1946–47

There was, quantitatively, a slight increase in production during this season. But the increase was due largely to the number of revivals rather than to new plays. And, of the nineteen revivals, six were major successes.

At the City Center the season was taken up for the most part by ballet, with engagements of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, the Ballet Theatre, and the Joos Ballet. In the field of standard drama the principal innovation was the activity of the recently organized American Repertory Company, which undoubtedly had drawn inspiration from the visit the previous spring of the Old Vic Repertory of London. Under the intelligent and aggressive leadership of Margaret Webster, Cheryl Crawford, and Eva Le Gallienne, the new group collected $300,000 in subscriptions, and opened its series in November with revivals of three diverse classics: Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*, and Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman.* In December Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* was added to the repertoire, later in the winter, Howard and de Kruif's *Yellow Jack,* and in the spring *Alice in Wonderland,* which Miss Le Gallienne had produced with signal success some years before at her Civic Repertory Theatre.

The American Repertory Theatre started out with high hopes, with a reasonable amount of capital, with three brilliant directors, and with a number of seasoned players, including Walter Hampden, Eva Le Gallienne, Margaret Webster, Ernest Truex, June Duprez, Philip Bourneuf, Victor Jory, and Richard Waring. But within a few months of its opening it was in financial trouble, and only the popularity of *Alice in Wonderland* at the end of the season saved it from disaster. The two destructive factors were: the proverbial disinterest in repertory on the part of American theatregoers, and the unwillingness of the theatrical unions to make concessions favorable to the enterprise. The stagehands' union, for example, insisted that the large number of backstage workers required for *Henry VIII* be retained on a basis of steady employment, even though, when *John Gabriel Borkman* or *What Every Woman Knows* was being performed, a smaller

number was sufficient. There were expensive difficulties, also, with the musicians' union. The net result was that the high-minded and admirable project was abandoned.

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE REVIVED

Early in 1947 the Experimental Theatre, which had come into being during 1940–41, but which had remained dormant during the War, was reactivated under the sponsorship of ANTA (the American National Theatre and Academy), and, with the co-operation of the Theatre Guild, Theatre, Inc., the American Repertory Theatre, and the Playwrights' Company, five experimental productions were offered to subscribers at the small Princess Theatre, each production being given five performances. The plays were the work of comparatively unknown American playwrights, and included *The Wanhope Building*, by John Finch; *O'Daniel*, by Glendon Swarthout and John Saracool; *As We Forgive Our Debtors*, by Tillman Breiseth; *The Great Campaign*, by Arnold Sundgaard; and *Virginia Reel*, by John and Harriet Weaver.

During February and early March, 1947, Donald Wolfit brought his English Repertory Company to Broadway in four plays by Shakespeare and *Volpone*, by Ben Jonson. Although Mr. Wolfit came with an impressive record of popularity in London and the English provinces, he was treated rather roughly by the Broadway critics, and not too warmly by the public. Although Mr. Wolfit is undoubtedly an actor of great ability, particularly in the roles of King Lear and Shylock, it is true that his supporting cast was not particularly strong, and it is also true that his productions (designed for trans-Atlantic and transcontinental travel) were designed with simplicity and economy. The total effect, therefore, did not measure up to the contemporary Broadway fashion in Shakespeare, which is based upon a lavish concentration of money and talent on the production of a single play.

As for the standard productions on Broadway, it was a season of many hits. First came José Ferrer's happy revival of Rostand's romantic drama, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, in the Brian Hooker version which had been prepared for Walter Hampden's historic production in 1923. Then, after a silence of twelve years, the sombre voice of Eugene O'Neill was heard in *The Iceman Cometh*, a

relentless, probing, saloon-philosophy play which managed simultaneously to exalt and depress its audiences.

HELEN HAYES ON A LARK

Other hits: Cornelia Otis Skinner in a revival of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, with stunning *décor* by Cecil Beaton; Clifton Webb in Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*, a frivolous comedy concerned with the complex love-life of a London stage star; Helen Hayes in *Happy Birthday*, by Anita Loos, a rollicking holiday for Miss Hayes in the role of a meek little librarian who inadvertently gets drunk and discovers life; Maxwell Anderson's mixture of history and theatricals, *Joan of Lorraine*, with Ingrid Bergman starred; Ina Claire in a sparkling performance of George Kelly's *The Fatal Weakness*, a play about a woman who cannot resist going to weddings; Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest*, an interesting flashback to the early lives of the Hubbards, the avaricious family in the same author's *The Little Foxes; Christopher Blake*, Moss Hart's imaginatively inventive drama of the effect of divorce on a sensitive child; *Years Ago*, Ruth Gordon's touching and amusing comedy of her own stage-struck girlhood; a revival of *Burlesque*, by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins, with Bert Lahr and Jean Parker; *All My Sons*, Arthur Miller's trenchant drama of war-profiteering; *John Loves Mary*, Norman Krasna's well-oiled comedy of a returned serviceman's misunderstandings with his fiancée; and *The Whole World Over*, a surprisingly amiable though slight Russian comedy by Konstantine Simonov, adapted by Thelma Schnee.

Almost hits: *Made in Heaven*, a comedy of marital quarrels and reconciliation, by Hagar Wilde; a revival of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, with Burgess Meredith and Eithne Dunne; a brilliant revival of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with John Gielgud and an English supporting company.

Definitely not hits: *Obsession*, an adaptation by Jane Hinton of Louis Verneuil's two-character play, *Jealousy*, with Basil Rathbone and Eugenie Leontovich; *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Elizabethan tragedy of blood by John Webster, in an adaptation by W. H. Auden, with Elizabeth Bergner; *No Exit*, a tortured drama of four people in Hell, by the leading exponent of existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, as adapted by Paul Bowles; *Temper the Wind*, by Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins, a play concerned with

the American post-war occupation of a town in Bavaria; *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, a more affected than effective melodrama by Jean Cocteau, adapted from the French by Ronald Duncan, and starring Tallulah Bankhead; and *Miracle in the Mountains*, a legend by Ferenc Molnar, in which the supernatural is employed as an instrument of justice.

Musical items: *Park Avenue*, by Nunnally Johnson and George S. Kaufman, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin and music by Arthur Schwartz, which proved an expensive failure; *Street Scene*, Elmer Rice's hit play of 1929, successfully remade as a dramatic musical, with lyrics by Langston Hughes and music by Kurt Weill; *Finian's Rainbow*, a fantastic and refreshing comedy by E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, with music by Burton Lane; *Brigadoon*, a fantasy in legendary vein, set in Scotland, by Alan Jay Lerner, with music by Frederick Loewe; and two strikingly original and dramatic short operas, *The Telephone* and *The Medium*, the music, book, and lyrics all by Gian-Carlo Menotti.

This season, for the first time, the Drama Critics' Circle made a citation of their choice for the best musical play, and *Brigadoon* was the selection. The same group settled on *All My Sons* as the best American straight play, and on *No Exit* as the best foreign play.

The Pulitzer Prize Committee, for reasons of its own, made no award. Rightly or wrongly, Burns Mantle guesses that the Pulitzer Committee, which votes later in the spring than does the Critics' Circle, was jealous of the latter's choice of *All My Sons*, and was reluctant to follow in the Circle's footsteps.

1947–48

This season began and ended with record-smashing. On June 14, 1947 (two weeks after the official beginning of the theatrical year) *Life With Father* was given its 3183d performance, thus passing (by one performance) the long-run record of *Tobacco Road*. The play then went on to a final performance total of 3216. And on May 29th, 1948, *Oklahoma!* ended its run with a total of 2248 performances, which passed, though barely, the world long-run record for musicals set in London in 1916 by *Chu Chin Chow*.

Among activities which enlivened the Broadway scene during the season were those of the Experimental Theatre, which had

gotten on its feet the season before, and which now was emboldened to move from the small Princess Theatre (seating 300) into the Maxine Elliott Theatre (seating more than 900). In the latter house six plays were presented during the season for an enlarged group of subscribers, and the first two productions featured guest-stars from Hollywood—Charles Laughton in Bertold Brecht's *Galileo*, and John Garfield in Jan de Hartog's *Skipper Next to God*. Although there was considerable criticism of this semi-commercial policy, it was warmly defended by the management, and the second of the plays was moved to *The Playhouse* for a fair commercial run of 93 performances. In conformity with the altruistic spirit of the Experimental Theatre, both Mr. Laughton and Mr. Garfield accepted the salary scale governing all other members of the casts, a scale which allotted Mr. Laughton $8 for each performance, and Mr. Garfield $10. It is a matter of record, however, that at the end of the season, Experimental Theatre found itself with a deficit, attributable to a combination of inefficient management and excessive charges for scenery.

A new off-Broadway group calling itself New Stages, Inc., attracted considerable attention in the spring of 1948 by presenting in a small theatre a sensational play by Jean-Paul Sartre entitled *The Respectful Prostitute*, which had to do with the experiences encountered by a New York prostitute in a Southern town, including her shielding and then betraying a colored man accused of rape. Interest in this French piece was so great that the production was moved to Broadway, where it achieved a profitable commercial run.

In January two well-known actors, Richard Whorf and José Ferrer, formed the New York City Center Theatre Company, and produced at the City Center Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, Patrick Hamilton's *Angel Street*, and a bill of one-act plays by Anton Chekhov. In May the same company returned to this playhouse with Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, and four one-acters by Eugene O'Neill. Although these ventures provided an excellent opportunity for the display of the acting talents of Messrs. Whorf and Ferrer, they did not arouse tremendous public enthusiasm.

ALBUM DE LUXE

A colorful feature of the season was a Sunday night benefit performance of the *ANTA Album*, at the Ziegfeld Theatre, a variety

show participated in by the cream of the New York theatrical world, which, with seats at $100 each, raised an encouraging sum of money for the furtherance of the program of the American National Theatre and Academy.

There were two visits of distinguished foreign companies. One was of the Gate Theatre of Dublin, which appeared in February, 1948, with productions of Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, Denis Johnston's *The Old Lady Says "No"!*, and Micheal MacLiammoir's *Where Stars Walk*. Although the Gate Theatre came with an excellent reputation, it was not received in New York with much warmth. The manager of the company blamed this on the inability (or disinclination) of Broadway audiences to listen to literary plays with the patience of Dublin and London audiences.

The other importation was the celebrated D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London, the unique, official custodians of Gilbert and Sullivan traditions, who presented a repertory of eleven G. & S. operettas, for a total of 136 performances. This was the first visit of the company to New York since 1939, and was received with genuine enthusiasm.

There were approximately a dozen hits among the straight plays of the season: *The Heiress*, a play by Ruth and Augustus Goetz, suggested by Henry James's novel, *Washington Square*, in which the English actress, Wendy Hiller, appeared with outstanding success; *Command Decision*, a hard-hitting, ironical study of men who make decisions in war, by William Wister Haines, with a memorable performance by Paul Kelly; Maurice Evans in a handsome and profitable revival of Shaw's *Man and Superman*, the first New York revival of the play since 1912, and the most successful of all; a thrilling production of *Medea*, freely adapted from Euripides by Robinson Jeffers, with Judith Anderson drawing superlative praise from critics and public alike; *The Winslow Boy*, Terence Rattigan's absorbing drama of an Englishman's stubborn legal fight for his son's honor; Katharine Cornell in a sumptuous revival of *Antony and Cleopatra; A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams's feverish and compelling drama of love, lust, frustration, and moral disintegration in a New Orleans flat; *Strange Bedfellows*, by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements, a comedy of the fight for women's rights in San Francisco during the 1890s; *Mister Roberts*, a play by Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan, based on a novel by the former, compounded of the

ennui, horseplay, character-conflict, and girl-chasing that make up life on a U.S. Navy cargo ship in the far Pacific—with Henry Fonda; a revival of Molnar's sophisticated and witty comedy, *The Play's the Thing*, with Louis Calhern; and *For Love or Money*, a routine comedy by F. Hugh Herbert about an aging matinee idol and an idealistic young girl.

Almost a hit: *The Inspector Calls*, an ingenious comedy of conscience and an extremely mysterious Inspector, by a veteran in the realm of ingenuity, J. B. Priestley.

INCLUDING DOSTOEVSKY

Short runs: *Laura*, a mystery drama by Vera Caspary and George Sklar, based on a novel by the former; *Our Lan'*, by Theodore Ward, depicting the double-crossing of a group of freed negroes by the Union Army in 1865; *Dear Judas*, an adaptation by Michael Myerberg of a poetic work by Robinson Jeffers, in which Judas's betrayal of Jesus is rationalized; *The Druid Circle*, John Van Druten's acid portrait of provincial British academic life; *Crime and Punishment*, Rodney Ackland's intelligent dramatization of the great novel by Dostoevsky, with John Gielgud, Lillian Gish, and Dolly Haas; *The Last Dance*, an ill-fated adaptation by Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short of Strindberg's macabre *Dance of Death; The Hallams*, Rose Franken's attempt to revive interest in a family which she had introduced in *Another Language* in 1932; and *Eastward in Eden*, by Dorothy Gardner, an interpretation of the intriguing love story in the life of the poet, Emily Dickinson.

Popular musicals: *Music in My Heart*, based on the life and melodies of Tchaikovsky, by Patsy Ruth Miller, with lyrics by Forman Brown, and the music adapted by Franz Steininger; *High Button Shoes*, or life at Dear Old Rutgers in 1913, by Stephen Longstreet, with music and lyrics by Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn; *Allegro*, a sentimental musical play dealing with the temptations and noble triumphs of a doctor with an inspiring mother, by Oscar Hammerstein II, with music by Richard Rodgers; *Angel in the Wings*, a musical revue by Bob Hilliard and Carl Sigman, with Paul and Grace Hartman the featured performers; *Make Mine Manhattan*, a revue by Arnold B. Horwitt, with music by Richard Lewine; and *Inside U.S.A.*, a revue suggested by John Gunther's book of the same title, with sketches by various hands,

including Moss Hart, with lyrics and music by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz, and with Beatrice Lillie as premiere comedienne.

It was a difficult season for the donors of prizes, for there were more strong contenders than usual. The result was, however, that for the second time the Pulitzer Committee and the Drama Critics' Circle agreed on the same American play; *A Streetcar Named Desire.* There was no citation of a musical, but the Critics named *The Winslow Boy* as the outstanding importation.

1948–49

It became apparent at the beginning of this season that the war boom was definitely over, and that the commercial theatre would experience a recession. And this view was substantiated by the final records of the season, which showed a total of only 70 new productions—as low a figure as Broadway has known in recent times.

The off-Broadway little theatre groups were active, as usual, but none of them revealed anything of startling import. Under the strong, protecting wing of ANTA, the Experimental Theatre presented (for two invitational performances each) seven new plays by aspiring younger dramatists, and the governing committee, of which George Freedley was chairman, announced that the cost of each of these productions (met from ANTA's funds), was limited to $500, including token salaries of $5 to each actor participating in the performances under a special Equity contract.

A stir was created in the Times Square area by the return of standard vaudeville to its old and theatrically-hallowed home, The Palace Theatre, the middle of May, 1949. One of the factors in this revival undoubtedly was the new impulse given to vaudeville acts by their popularity on television screens.

Because of a falling-off in motion-picture box-office revenues, and the consequent retrenchment policies in Hollywood, only two Broadway plays were bought for film use during the season. These purchases involved a total investment of $90,000, a shocking contrast to the investment of the previous season, which had amounted to $4,000,000, and had represented the rights in twelve plays.

Another weakness of the season was the lack of visiting European companies. On the credit side, however, was a considerable

number of solid hit plays, of both foreign and native origin. Not one of these, but technically a hit because of its 102 performances, was *Summer and Smoke*, by Tennessee Williams, which offered again that gifted author's effective blend of poetry and realism, but which lacked the impact of his earlier successes. Another piece which found great favor with the minority (and which also passed the hundred-performance mark by a small margin), was Jean-Paul Sartre's melodrama, *Red Gloves*, in which Charles Boyer excelled in the role of a Communist leader. A third marginal production was *The Big Knife*, a savage, backbiting play about Hollywood by Clifford Odets, in which John Garfield appeared.

CREAM OF THE SEASON

Unquestioned hits: *Edward, My Son*, an adroit and ironic comedy-drama of an over-indulgent father, by Robert Morley and Noel Langley, acted superbly by Mr. Morley and Adrianne Allen; *Life With Mother*, another ingratiating chapter in the saga of the Day Family, by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, with Mr. Lindsay and his wife, Dorothy Stickney; *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, a satirical and fantastic comedy, and the last play of Jean Giraudoux, adapted from the French by Maurice Valency, and starring Martita Hunt; *The Silver Whistle*, a lively comedy laid in an old folks' home, by Robert E. McEnroe, with José Ferrer; *Goodbye, My Fancy*, a light comedy about a college president, a congresswoman, and a *Life* photographer, by Fay Kanin, with Madeleine Carroll; *Light Up the Sky*, an "inside job" on theatrical life, by Moss Hart; *Anne of the Thousand Days*, the love affair of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, by Maxwell Anderson, given style and authority by Rex Harrison and Joyce Redman; a rowdy revival of Noel Coward's *Private Lives*, with Tallulah Bankhead; *Two Blind Mice*, a satirical farce of governmental confusion in Washington, by Samuel Spewack, with Melvyn Douglas; *Detective Story*, a superior police-force melodrama, with a social message added, by Sidney Kingsley; and Arthur Miller's overpowering tragedy of a "common" American, *Death of a Salesman*, with Lee J. Cobb.

A near miss: *The Traitor*, a spy drama involving a young physicist and atomic secrets, by Herbert Wouk.

Wide of the mark: *My Name is Aquilon*, a play adapted by Philip Barry from the French of Jean-Pierre Aumont, with M.

Aumont and Lilli Palmer; *Make Way for Lucia*, a playful period comedy by John Van Druten; *The Leading Lady*, a drama of theatrical people by and with Ruth Gordon; Marc Connelly's whimsical *A Story for Strangers*, about a talking horse and a small mid-West town; *The Ivy Green*, a play about Charles Dickens, by Mervyn Nelson; and *The Biggest Thief in Town*, a macabre comedy about a stolen corpse, by Dalton Trumbo.

Top musicals: *As the Girls Go*, a routine show about the first woman President of the United States, the music by Jimmy McHugh and the lyrics by Harold Adamson, with Bobby Clark as the principal clown; *Where's Charley?*, a musical version of the hardy farce of the '90s, *Charley's Aunt*, with tunes by Frank Loesser and the nimble performance of Ray Bolger; *Kiss Me, Kate*, based roughly on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, with music and lyrics by Cole Porter; *Lend an Ear*, a refreshing revue by Charles Gaynor; and *South Pacific*, an adaptation by Oscar Hammerstein II and Joshua Logan of James A. Michener's book, *Tales of the South Pacific*, with music by Richard Rodgers, and with acclaimed performances by Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza.

For the third time, the Pulitzer Committee and the Drama Critics' Circle agreed in their awards: both chose *Death of a Salesman*. The Critics also cited *The Madwoman of Chaillot* as the best foreign play of the season, and *South Pacific* as the best musical.

1949–50

If the previous season had caused alarm because of its small number of productions, the final season of the decade (and of the half-century) proved even more discouraging quantitatively, with a record of 60 as compared with the 70 of 1948–49. The chief factor in the decline was obviously the continually mounting cost of production, a cost which nonsensically reached the point where a play might run to good business for as long as five months and still close "in the red." As John Chapman said in his summary of the season, "Once again, Economics has won over Art."

Apart from the productions themselves, the most interesting events of the period were:

1. The Government of the United States, through its Attorney

General, instituted an action against the Shuberts and their corporate ramifications on the grounds that they were exercising a monopoly in the realm of the theatre. The action was resisted, and the accusation denied.

2. A proposal was made to the government of New York City that the building code be revised so as to permit the construction of theatres in office or store buildings, and also to permit the installation of bars in theatres.

3. Broadway acquired its first theatre-in-the-round with the opening on May 31st, 1950, of the Arena in a converted ballroom of the Hotel Edison.

4. It was announced that approximately 300 "off-Broadway" groups of actors were offering plays intermittently in New York City, and in April of 1950, 53 of these groups banded together with a view toward obtaining a theatre to be used for their activities on a year-round basis.

THE PRODUCTIONS

The first non-musical success of the season was *I Know My Love*, a sentimental comedy adapted by S. N. Behrman from Marcel Achard's *Auprès de ma blonde*, in which Lunt and Fontanne depicted a long married life in such a way as to please their admirers. The second was an inconsequential farce by Benn W. Levy entitled *Clutterbuck*, which was described by one critic as "a soap bubble," but which was clever enough in its sexiness to achieve a run, though George Jean Nathan regretted that it had not been written by a Frenchman.

Considerably more distinguished was the revival of Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, with Cedric Hardwicke and Lilli Palmer in the leading roles. This production, in fact, provided the critics with their first happiness (non-musical) of the season. They approved also, as did the public, of a human-interest comedy by Rosemary Casey entitled *The Velvet Glove*, in which Grace George gracefully and amusingly portrayed a Mother-General in a convent. Even more successful was Carson McCullers' dramatization of her own novel, *The Member of the Wedding*, in which the role of a wistful girl of twelve years was played strikingly by Julie Harris. Mr. Nathan complained that the play was undramatic, but his critical colleagues outvoted him.

The most discussed play of the season was T. S. Eliot's *The*

Cocktail Party, a poetic play about modern, undistinguished, troubled people, which the dissenting Mr. Nathan described as "bosh sprinkled with mystic cologne," but which immediately after its opening acquired tremendous artistic prestige, and continued for a long run. It was felt by some that the performance of the highly polished British cast was the chief factor in this success, but John Chapman, Robert Garland, and Richard Watts, Jr. considered the play itself a "masterpiece."

The next winner to appear was a domestic comedy entitled *The Happy Time*, a dramatization by Samuel Taylor of Robert Fontaine's novel of the same name. With a slight plot, the play managed to create effective entertainment from the problems, eccentricities, and basic humanness of a French family living in Ottawa, Canada, in the 1920s. This piece was followed quickly by two classics: Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*, with Maurice Evans, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, with Katharine Hepburn, both of which achieved the hit class. The 145 performances registered by the Shakespeare comedy is said to have established a record for a run of that play.

Only four other plays of the season were hits. These were *The Innocents*, a dramatization by William Archibald of the famous Henry James story of the supernatural, *The Turn of the Screw*, in which Beatrice Straight was an outstanding performer; *Come Back, Little Sheba*, a pathetic drama of frustration and drabness, by William Inge, a talented new playwright of the Tennessee Williams school; *The Wisteria Trees*, a free adaptation by Joshua Logan of Chekhov's classic, *The Cherry Orchard*, with sad-comic aristocrats of the American "Old South" replacing the Russian originals, and with Helen Hayes in the colorful leading role; a revival of J. M. Barrie's perennial fantasy, *Peter Pan*, with Jean Arthur as Peter.

ALMOST BUT NOT QUITE

Among those productions which aroused interest, but which ran short of one hundred performances, should be mentioned: *Yes, M'Lord*, a pleasantly innocuous comedy by W. Douglas Home, in which the loveable English actor, A. E. Matthews was starred, and during the run of which Mr. Matthews celebrated his eightieth birthday; *The Browning Version*, and *Harlequinade*, two short plays by Terence Rattigan, starring Maurice Evans

and Edna Best; *Montserrat*, a tough-fibred drama adapted by Lillian Hellman from the French of Emmanuel Roblès; a revival of Strindberg's *The Father*, with Raymond Massey and Mady Christians; Kate O'Brien's romantic melodrama, *That Lady*, in which Katharine Cornell wore gorgeous sixteenth-century Spanish costumes and a black patch over one eye; *The Rat Race*, a sordid play of life in New York City by Garson Kanin; *The Man*, a melodrama by Mel Dinelli; and *The Enchanted*, a fantasy from the French of Jean Giraudoux.

There were approximately a dozen new plays which proved quick failures, the most interesting of which was perhaps Christopher Fry's poetic novelty, *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. And there were several short-lived revivals, the most objectionable of which was *Tobacco Road* with a colored cast.

MUSICALS AND BALLETS

It was a good season for musicals, with six distinct hits—none of them, of course, equaling the immense popularity of the previous season's holdover, *South Pacific*, which continued to sell out months in advance. The six were: *Miss Liberty*, *Touch and Go*, *Texas, L'il Darlin'*, *Lost in the Stars*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and *The Consul*. It was the last-mentioned work which received the highest critical praise—a tragic opera with libretto and music by Gian-Carlo Menotti. But there was acclaim, also, for the musical tragedy, *Lost in the Stars*, which was based on Alan Paton's novel of South African life, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, with words by Maxwell Anderson and music by Kurt Weill. There was interest, too, but not enough for success, in *Regina*, Marc Blitzstein's musical version of Lillian Hellman's famous play, *The Little Foxes*.

It was a tremendous season for ballet. In addition to successful performances by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and other familiar troupes, New York and certain other cities were offered the excitement of two trans-Atlantic ballet companies, both of which achieved resounding popularity. One was Roland Petit's *Les Ballets de Paris*, which, largely on the strength of its sensational *Carmen*, established a new record for entertainment of this type, with a run of 118 performances. The other was the Sadler's Wells Ballet, of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, which is subsidized by the British Government. Headed by Mar-

got Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, and Robert Helpmann, this troupe, whose most popular offering was *The Sleeping Beauty*, was forced by circumstances to play a limited engagement in New York, and also to limit its subsequent tour to a very few cities, but in each locality its performances were sold out far ahead, and the engagements could have been extended almost indefinitely.

THE SEASON'S HONORS

In the spring of 1950 the Pulitzer Prize for drama was awarded (to the amazement of most) to *South Pacific*. Although it was a holdover from the previous season, it had opened a week too late for the Pulitzer committee's consideration in 1949. This was the first time since 1932 (when *Of Thee I Sing* had been chosen), that the prize had gone to a musical. Somewhat confusingly, though not incomprehensibly, the Pulitzer committee voted its citation of the best musical of the 1949–50 season to *The Consul*.

The New York Drama Critics Circle Awards went to *The Member of the Wedding*, as the best new American play, to *The Cocktail Party* as the best imported play, and to *The Consul* as the best musical.

SUMMARY

It was not a distinguished nor a hopeful season. Only 28 new plays were presented, and 8 of these were by foreign authors, while 9 others were adaptations of earlier plays or of novels. Which is to say that the American playwright was at his lowest ebb in at least fifty years.

RAGE FOR MUSICALS

A noticeable phenomenon of the closing years of the decade was the extraordinary popularity and prestige of the musical show. Musical comedies and revues have long delighted the public, but never before in our theatre history have they assumed a position of precedence over straight plays. The explanation of the phenomenon lies, partly, no doubt, in improvement of this type of show, which has not always attracted superior literary and musical talents, but which lately, at least on occasion, it has done. Another obvious factor is the enormous success of *Oklahoma!*, which

was based on a distinguished straight play, and which broke a world record for long-run musicals.

Although it is true that there was a good deal of excitement generated in New York over the opening of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, most straight plays of the past few seasons have opened without impressive fanfare or public suspense. By contrast, before the opening of *South Pacific* in the spring of 1949, Broadway was in a veritable frenzy of anticipation, and the advance sale of tickets was staggering. A few months later the same fever attended the opening of *Miss Liberty*, the musical by Robert E. Sherwood and Irving Berlin which inaugurated the summer season of 1949. In this case ardent New York theatregoers rushed in swarms to Philadelphia for the customary out-of-town opening. Mr. Sherwood himself was somewhat dismayed by the invasion, and complained that, "You cannot have a tryout opening out of town any more. All of Broadway has rushed down here. Philadelphia cannot get in." It was chiefly the result of snobbishness, he intimated—a matter of social prestige. "They cannot wait to get back to New York and say, 'Well, I saw the new Berlin show.' "

PLIGHT OF THE PLAYWRIGHT

How far the craze for musicals will go is beyond anyone's powers of prophecy. But one conclusion is inescapable: namely, that it is not improving the health or position of the standard drama. And that is a pity, for American playwrights need all the encouragement that can possibly be offered them. During the entire decade of the forties, and even with the help of the war-boom, only two new major playwrights were developed—Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. That is a disgraceful, a disheartening record. Our country is filled with talent of every kind—including talented playwrights. But few can squeeze through the bottleneck of Broadway. The small number of theatres, the inflated costs of production, the emphasis of critics and public alike on the sensationally frivolous or the sensationally powerful production—these are restrictive factors. The odds against a writer's having his play produced in New York are so great today that many competent men refuse to risk their time and energy on this market. Just recently one of them, Robert Ardrey,

author of *Thunder Rock*, produced on Broadway in 1939, and who in recent years has earned his living as a scriptwriter in Hollywood, stated the case succinctly in *Variety* by saying, "If and when I get at writing plays again it will be because I've found some approach other than the usual routine of writing a new play, finding a producer and turning the script into the Broadway mill. There are just too many hazards in that. . . . It seems to be part of the general Broadway attitude that everything is either 'great' or 'it smells.' "

The producer who cannot discover a "great" or "terrific" new play, turns in desperation to an older hit, and attempts to give it a new twist—usually by having it set to music, or, if it be a foreign play, by giving it an American locale, and if it be a Shakespeare piece, by changing its period. It is alarming to consider the possibility of American playwriting becoming as parasitical as popular-song writing, a profession infamous for its habit of picking the brains of old masters. We should take warning from the dramatically sterile Japanese, who have been rewriting other men's plays for three centuries.

SUMMER PHENOMENA

The summer theatres, many of which had their birth during the thirties, continued to flourish throughout the forties. Their number gradually increased, and the end of the decade found at least 200 of them operating for seasons of eight or ten weeks. Although the majority were concentrated in the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, they dotted the Eastern landscape from Maine to Virginia, appeared occasionally in the mid-West, and in a cluster of beach towns of Southern California. Aspiring playwrights continued to find these theatres useful for tryout purposes, as did restless or unemployed stage and film stars.

Most of the summer theatres inhabit permanent buildings, charge fairly high admission prices (though of course below the Broadway scale), and cater to prosperous and more-or-less sophisticated vacationers. In a different category are the tent shows which take to the road during summer months and regale the regular inhabitants of the nation's small towns with a varied assortment of movies, vaudeville acts, dramatic sketches, operettas, and straight plays. Although this type of show suffered a relapse dur-

ing the war, it rallied strongly after 1945, and it was estimated that during the summer of 1949 nearly 700 tent shows were on the road, expecting to exhibit their wares in some 15,000 communities before a total audience of 75,000,000. Such an audience would be approximately three times the size of the annual audience for all Broadway plays, including those played to on tour.

But lest the reader conclude from these figures that the legitimate drama is reaching the hinterland via canvas, we must point out immediately that of the approximately 700 tent shows mentioned, fully 600 purvey no straight plays whatever, but confine themselves to a combination of movies and vaudeville. As for the remaining minority—their dramatic offerings are for the most part on a very low level of intelligence and artistic accomplishment. We may or may not agree with Don Carle Gillette, a former editor of *Billboard*, who, in an article published in the *New York Times* of March 13th, 1949, expressed the opinion that even though the offerings of the tent shows are "corny . . . the indigenous and innocuous corn they dispense is as justifiable as the sex, sin and psychology employed to lure the Broadway trade."

NEW CRITICS

Most of the dramatic critics who began their careers during the twenties and thirties were still practicing their profession in the forties. During the latter decade, however, there were four new critics who attracted deserved attention.

Wolcott Gibbs (1902–) began his journalistic life as a newspaper reporter in 1922. In 1927 he became a copyreader on *The New Yorker* magazine, from 1928 to 1937 served as an associate editor, and since 1940 has been its dramatic critic. In conforming to this periodical's well-known policy of witty sophistication, Mr. Gibbs composes some of the liveliest and most devastating reviews offered to the American public. It is an unusual circumstance when a new play escapes his ridicule, but, like certain of his colleagues, he is content to use the drama as a springboard for his wit.

John Gassner (1903–) was born in Hungary, and was brought to America in 1911. After his graduation from Columbia University he became a book-reviewer for the New York *Herald-Tribune* (1926–28), and later a play-reader for the Theatre Guild (1930–44). He is a regular contributor to periodicals on dramatic

subjects, has lectured extensively, has edited several anthologies of plays, and has written two important books: *Masters of the Drama* (1940), and *Producing the Play* (1941). He is a scholarly critic, with a special interest in the drama of social problems.

George Freedley (1904–) is a graduate of the University of Richmond, and holds an M.F.A. degree from Yale University. From 1928 to 1931 he was an actor and stage manager for the Theatre Guild, and in the latter year he took charge of the Theatre Collection in the New York Public Library, becoming Curator of the Collection in 1938 and remaining in that position until the end of 1947. After a period spent in the employ of a commercial theatrical agency, he returned in 1950 to the Library. In 1940 he became drama critic for the New York *Morning Telegraph*. In addition to newspaper reviews, he has written a great many articles for periodicals, and is co-author of two comprehensive and valuable books: *A History of the Theatre*, with John A. Reeves (1941), and *A History of Modern Drama*, with Barrett H. Clark (1947). Mr. Freedley is not only one of the most alert and best-informed of our critics, but he also is one of the few who make it their business to keep in touch with new theatrical developments in all parts of the country. As one of the leading spirits in ANTA, and as one of the founders and directors of Equity-Library Theatre and the Experimental Theatre, he has played an important role in the most forward-looking movements of the theatre of the forties.

Eric Bentley (1916–) was born in England, and holds a B. Litt. degree from Oxford University, as well as a Ph.D. from Yale University. He is an academic rather than a journalistic critic, and has recently held the rank of associate professor in the English department of the University of Minnesota. He came into prominence during the middle forties with a number of magazine articles dealing with the drama, and with a book, the *Playwright as Thinker* (1946), in which he examines the artistic and intellectual validity of various dramatists. This study was supplemented by the publication in 1947 of another book, *Bernard Shaw: A Reconsideration*. Mr. Bentley's basic and compelling interest is in the work of the playwright, and he has been accused of minimizing the importance of actors, designers, and other contributors to the theatrical whole. It is, however, indisputable that in him we

have a penetrating and provocative analyst who believes in the drama as a civilizing force.

THE ECONOMICS OF THE THEATRE

In the autumn of 1943 George Freedley published an article in the *Quarterly Bulletin* of the National Theatre Conference entitled "The Theatre Has Swallowed a Tapeworm." His opening paragraph included the statement that the Broadway stage "is feeding on a rich diet of standing room only, yet it is starving to death. It is at least a quarter of a century since the houses have been so packed, yet the theatre is on its way out."

Mr. Freedley then examined in detail the reasons for the unhealthy condition of the theatre. He found that all these reasons had a common basis: greed. There was, for example, the greed of actors—particularly the stars—who, after being exploited for centuries, have during the past three decades demanded higher and higher salaries, using, in recent years, the inflated salaries of Hollywood and radio networks as measuring sticks. There was also the demand of playwrights for higher royalties and a larger share of subsidiary (particularly film) rights in their work. There was the appalling and ruthless attitude of the stage hands' and musicians' unions, both of whom have on occasion tied Broadway productions in such economic knots that strangulation was the result. In every department of the theatre he found greed and stringent unionism rampant, expressing itself in "featherbedding" and a wide variety of racketeering practices. He cited instances of ten musicians having to be paid (whether used or not) when the script called for one pianist; of the required employment of unneeded and superannuated stage hands, who did nothing more than clutter the stage and draw good wages; and of the demand that a live band be paid because recordings of band music were used in a production.

Everyone with any knowledge of theatrical history is aware of the grievances that all types of theatre workers have accumulated during past centuries. And everyone with a sense of decency is sympathetic with the basic aims of union organization—the protection of the worker from injustice and exploitation. It is obvious, however, to any impartial observer, that in their struggle for security certain unions have abused their newly-won power,

and have done the theatre as a whole as great an injustice as was ever done to individual workers in the past. In the struggle to achieve their own ends many of them have lost (or have never acquired) any real interest in or affection for the institution which they serve. Without such interest and affection the theatre becomes a crass and inhuman mechanism, in which art and intellect exist only on sufferance, and in which the impudence of illiteracy combines with the greed of commercialism to destroy creative freedom and dignity. Small wonder that so few new playwrights can obtain a hearing today. Time was, and not so long ago, when an unpretentious play could be produced on Broadway for an initial investment of $15,000 or $20,000. In 1950 such a play required three times that amount. A costume play with several settings is likely to cost $100,000 and a lavish musical as much as $250,000. In the rarified atmosphere of such high finance, there is no healthy growth for the simple, the natural, or the experimental product. It is a climate for orchids.

ANTA

Inspired by the historic examples of Europe, such as the state and municipal theatres of France and Germany, Americans have for approximately half a century discussed the advisability of a national theatre of our own. As early as 1902 a group of leading actors approved the idea of establishing a federally-supported theatre in Washington, D.C., and a bill was actually introduced in Congress toward this end, though nothing came of it. In 1909 a concrete attempt was made to realize the national-theatre ideal by the construction and operation of the New Theatre, but that venture proved a colossal failure.

The next efforts in this direction came in 1935, when the Federal Theatre was set up as a relief project under the Works Progress Administration, and when a group of Eastern capitalists and theatre devotees succeeded in having introduced and passed in Congress a "charter incorporating the American National Theatre and Academy, a non-profit corporation, without capital stock, to present theatrical productions of the highest type, advance public interest in the drama as an art belonging both to the theatre and to literature and thereby to be enjoyed both on the stage and in the study."

With the history of the Federal Theatre project we have pre-

viously dealt, and in that account it was made clear that the project was essentially ephemeral. The history of the chartered American National Theatre and Academy offers little of interest before 1946. No appropriation of funds accompanied the charter's grant, and none of the charter members seemed able to stimulate any constructive action. In 1937 there was a flurry of excitement, caused by the appointment of an Advisory Committee made up of outstanding playwrights and actors, and at least one member of the Committee—Robert E. Sherwood—took his appointment seriously. Mr. Sherwood promulgated a plan for what he called a National People's Theatre, involving a series of touring productions of classic and modern plays, but a printed prospectus of the scheme remains the only evidence of its existence.

ANTA COMES TO LIFE

During World War II the charter was virtually a forgotten document. In 1946, however, it was brought to sudden vitality by a group of Broadway producers, actors, playwrights, and critics. With Vinton Freedley as president, Robert E. Sherwood as vice-president, Gilbert Miller as treasurer, Rosamond Gilder as secretary, Robert Breen as executive secretary, and C. Lawton Campbell as chairman of the board of directors, ANTA began to function. By conducting a vigorous, nation-wide drive, it acquired an impressive membership, and from members' dues and benefit performances it accumulated funds sufficient to launch an intelligent, long-range program, the aim of which is the development of a healthy and worthy theatre throughout the nation.

Until recently, ANTA's activities were limited chiefly to educational propaganda (via lectures and the printed word), although it sponsored the Experimental Theatre in New York, as well as a series of radio broadcasts, and served effectively as adviser to professional and non-professional theatres. But in 1950 it acquired its own theatre in New York, and began at once to sponsor a series of native and foreign productions of unusual artistic interest. If and when it acquires funds commensurate with its ambitions, it may very well prove responsible for the creation of a true national theatre.

In this connection it is worthy of note that early in 1949 a bill was introduced in Congress by Senator Irving Ives and Representative Jacob J. Javits calling for federal action in the promotion

of theatre arts throughout the nation, and requesting the appropriation of $250,000 for this purpose. The bill, however, died in committee. Meanwhile the United States of America remains the only important country of the world which does not recognize the theatre as an institution worthy of subsidy from national funds. Even England, in the midst of her post-war financial distress, recently appropriated the equivalent of $4,000,000 for the establishment of a national theatre in London, and the same country has for several years subsidized touring companies and provincial resident theatres. It is unfortunately true that American political leaders, like the majority of their constituents, are either ignorant of the changes which have overtaken the theatre in recent years, or else are indifferent to the question of its survival.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Although most officials and leading citizens of American cities have not as yet shown any sense of responsibility in theatrical matters, there are positive signs that such a sense of responsibility is growing. The operation of the New York City Center is at least a beginning in the metropolis; San Francisco opened its impressive War Memorial Opera House in 1932, and has maintained it creditably ever since; summer festivals of plays and operas have become a fixture in several cities, including Cleveland and St. Louis; Los Angeles has launched plans for a magnificent concert and opera house; Palo Alto, California, provides municipal subsidy and supervision for its Community Theatre.

When any institution or activity passes from the realm of private enterprise and becomes a public charge, the transition arouses bitter antagonism. A hundred years ago there was an outcry against tax-supported public schools. Later there was opposition to public libraries. And, still later, to the expensive development of playgrounds, fieldhouses, and other recreational facilities. Most recently there have been controversies over the advisability of city financial support for art museums and symphony orchestras. There are many citizens who feel that those arts which require subsidy should depend upon private philanthropy. There are others, however, who point out that times change, that the day of the millionaire art-patron is nearly over, and that henceforth the public as a whole must (through its various forms of government) take the place of the individual patron.

It is difficult for serious devotees of the drama to see any basic difference between a tax-supported theatre and tax-supported schools, libraries, and recreation centers. It is difficult for them to agree with a public policy which authorizes millions of tax dollars for zoos and bathing beaches, but nothing for a form of cultural recreation which has been a vital part of every important civilization in history. It is inevitable, they feel, that in the not-too-distant future, our cities will attain an enlightened point of view in this matter, and will establish local, professional theatres commensurate with the artistic needs of each community. A well-managed theatre, divorced from politics, will never strain a municipal budget. It will almost pay for its operation. And a year-round presentation of the world's best plays (for children as well as for adults) might well prove as valuable a contribution to the public welfare as the creation of another baseball field or the construction of a new pit for the polar bears. And it might actually cost less.

COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY THEATRES

Meanwhile the college and community theatres are keeping the drama alive throughout the nation. In 1947 there were 287 colleges and universities offering degrees in drama or in a combination of speech and drama. Each one of these institutions carries on an active program of public play production. The list includes, of course, such veteran departments as Carnegie Tech, Yale, Washington, North Dakota State, North Carolina, Cornell, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, and Northwestern, and also a large number that have come into more recent prominence. In the latter category one finds Western Reserve (whose department is headed by Barclay S. Leatham), Syracuse (Sawyer Falk), Fordham (Edgar L. Kloten), Catholic University, Washington, D.C. (Walter Kerr), Indiana (Lee Norvelle), Pennsylvania State College (Arthur C. Cloetingh), Minnesota (Frank Whiting), Maine (Herschel Bricker), Dartmouth (Warner Bentley), Texas (Loren Winship), Stanford (Hubert Heffner), Miami (Frederick H. Koch, Jr.), and the University of California at Los Angeles (Kenneth Macgowan).

In addition to their regular campus productions, several college departments have recently sent shows on tour of adjacent regions. The University of North Carolina was a pioneer in this field, as

was North Dakota State College. Lately the University of Indiana, Stanford University, and the University of Washington, Seattle, have launched touring projects. The last-named institution operates by far the most ambitious road enterprise—an eight-month annual tour of the entire state of Washington, with a company of graduate students as actors and technicians, traveling in their own bus and truck, playing 200 performances a season in high school auditoriums, with a repertoire of three plays—an older classic (such as a play by Shakespeare, Sheridan, or Goldsmith), a modern comedy (such as *Blithe Spirit* or *Years Ago*), and a children's play (for example, *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*).

Another recent development in college theatricals is the use of professional guest-stars with a student supporting cast. This policy has been given enthusiastic support by Actors' Equity and also by ANTA, and is considered by many to be a significant step in the development of mutually-beneficial relations between the professional and non-professional theatres.

The college theatre operates under obvious limitations, and there is some question as to the nature of its ultimate development. Although it has come a long way in three decades, it still fails in most instances to supply its community with regular dramatic fare. Typically, a college play is presented for two or three performances in a large auditorium, and there is a dark period of a month or more between plays. Such a policy, regardless of the artistic standard of the productions, does not offer a satisfactory substitute for the regular, six- or seven-nights per week, year-round schedule of the defunct stock companies.

THE CASE FOR THE SMALL THEATRE

In a few cases small theatres have been constructed for the use of college players, and runs have been lengthened somewhat, but in only one case has a professional schedule been followed: at the University of Washington, in Seattle, where two small theatres, the Showboat and the Penthouse, operate publicly six nights per week every week of the year. The Showboat Theatre was opened in September, 1938, and the Penthouse Theatre in June, 1940. Neither has ever known a dark week. In these theatres each play has an average run of six weeks.

The advantages of the small theatre are as numerous as they are indisputable. In a small theatre, with a seating capacity of two

or three hundred, the potential audience can be spread out to provide a long run, offering the equivalent of professional experience for the actors, as well as convenient regularity of performance for the public; the audience, conditioned by the movies to visual close-ups and auditory amplification, is placed in effective intimacy with the actors; and the talents of the young and relatively inexperienced performers are not taxed beyond their limits of projection. And yet, in spite of these compelling considerations, many of our colleges and universities have lately built, and others are contemplating the construction of, huge and impressive theatre-auditoriums. It is true that academic institutions need concert and lecture halls, and it is natural, although unfortunate, that they should so frequently insist upon combining the satisfaction of this need with the provision for a theatre in which standard plays are to be presented by student actors. There is a dire need for the education of administrators and architects in this matter.

There is also, on the academic side, an unfortunate alliance between speech training and drama. Public speaking and debate, largely because of their connection with such traditional professions as law and the ministry, were included in college curricula long before courses in dramatic production were introduced. And, because speech and drama have oral expression as a common basis, it was natural that at first they should be combined. But there is no rational basis for their combination in colleges where dramatic instruction has reached maturity, and is represented by a complete curriculum and an adequate faculty. Speech and drama both are outgrowths of departments of English, for they are forms of oral English, and in some institutions their development has been hampered by their being held too long under the parent's wing. The late Professor George Pierce Baker, of Harvard, and later of Yale, was bitter in regard to English departments. He blamed them for retarding the drama's growth in colleges. But of course he was prejudiced because of his unhappy experience of many frustrating years at Harvard. Some English departments have been liberal and encouraging to embryonic drama departments. In the long run it does not matter what nest the bird is hatched in, provided it is permitted to fly when its wings have sprouted.

DESIRABLE VARIETY

One of the most hopeful aspects of the college dramatic world is the increasing tendency toward variety and specialization. Obviously a college located in New York City has different opportunities and a different function from a college in a small mid-Western town, and this fact is coming more and more to be realized. Intelligent heads of drama departments analyze their situations and proceed accordingly. At Cornell University, for example, Professor A. M. Drummond has for many years emphasized a program of regional drama for the state of New York; in North Carolina the late Frederick H. Koch found fertile soil for the cultivation of folk-drama, and this activity has been continued by Samuel Selden; at Yale University (where Boyd Smith carried on the policies established by Professor Baker), the emphasis has been on advanced (graduate-level) training for the professional theatre—in playwriting, directing, and the technical aspects of production; at the Universities of Iowa and Texas there have been interesting experiments in the tryout of new plays, with the playwrights in residence; at Catholic University, Walter Kerr has conducted a persistent program of production in the field of original plays aimed at Broadway; at Fordham, the directors have aimed at variety, with a combination of traditional and novel staging; at Vassar and at Smith experiment has been the dominating idea, with Hallie Flanagan the stimulating guide; at Carnegie Tech, Henry Boettcher has kept acting and production values uppermost; under the leadership of Professor Hubert C. Heffner, at Stanford, there have been tryouts of new plays with professional guest stars; at the University of California at Los Angeles an ambitious program has been inaugurated by Kenneth Macgowan which involves a co-ordination of legitimate theatre, motion pictures, and radio; at the University of Washington, because of its long-run, continuous production policy, acting and theatre management are paramount. This variety of emphasis is desirable. Our American society today is extremely mobile, and students are able to move freely from one section of the country to another. It is proper that they be offered a choice of specialization, and that college drama departments differ markedly from each other—provided each excels in something. The theatre is a flexible and

complex organism, and the more variations it exhibits, the more fully it will enrich our national life.

It seems reasonable to assume, however, that no matter how professional the college theatre may become in its policy, its destiny is to provide on an amateur basis adequate training for young people who may eventually find employment in a decentralized professional theatre—a theatre which will flourish in a hundred cities. Meanwhile the eager and talented graduates of college drama departments walk the streets of Broadway, or languish outside the gates of Hollywood studios, wondering why there is so little opportunity for them to exercise their talents in a traditional land of opportunity.

There have been some signs also, that the community theatre is moving toward professionalization. Jasper Deeter's Hedgerow Theatre, (the only year-round repertory theatre in America), near Philadelphia, has long provided subsistence for its company; Robert Porterfield's Barter Theatre in Virginia, whether at home or on tour, has always operated on a professional basis; Frederic McConnell's Cleveland Playhouse has for many years employed a nucleus of paid actors; Newell Tarrant pays most of his actors at the Playhouse in Erie, Pennsylvania; and Margo Jones follows strictly professional lines in operating her arena theatre in Dallas (which she ingeniously calls Dallas Theatre '49, Dallas Theatre '50, etc. in conformity with the calendar). It is, indeed, a credit to Miss Jones's combination of artistic and business talent that she has been able (in a house seating only 190 persons) to maintain a salaried personnel for a thirty-week season, and to end the season with a balance in the bank.

It should not be assumed, however, because a few community theatres have demonstrated their ability to attain professional standards without subsidy other than season subscriptions and good-will, that all community theatres can do likewise. It is only a happy coincidence of unusually astute directors and unusually enthusiastic patronage which can make possible such an independent success.

NON-ACADEMIC DRAMATIC SCHOOLS

Supplementing the training in theatre arts offered by the colleges, a number of community theatres have established schools

of their own, which serve not only to provide actors and technicians for their productions, but which also create a welcome income through student fees. Such an arrangement often makes possible the payment of directors' salaries. Notable among schools of this type is the one maintained by the Pasadena Playhouse.

In a somewhat different category are the private dramatic schools. Oldest and most famous among these is the American Academy of Dramatic Art, in New York City, whose history goes back to the days of Steele MacKaye and Franklin Sargent, and which stands very high in the estimation of professionals. In the mid-West the outstanding example is the Goodman School of the Theatre in Chicago, which, under the direction of Maurice Gnesin, has achieved an admirable standard of instruction, and which provides in its own theatre a series of excellent public productions for both adults and children.

CHILDREN'S THEATRES

Although there is nothing new in the idea of presenting plays for children, it is a fact that during the forties this idea functioned more effectively than it has in any previous period. Under the leadership of community theatres, the Junior League of America, college drama departments, and many local organizations of clubwomen, the regular presentation of children's plays has become an integral and valued part of American life.

A survey made by ANTA in 1948 indicated that there were in existence at that time one hundred sixty well-organized children's theatre groups in the United States, including Clare Tree Major's Children's Theatre, the King-Coit Children's Theatre, and the Children's World Theatre, all of New York City; the Edwin Strawbridge Productions (which tour the entire country); the Children's Theatre of Evanston, Illinois, which is connected with Northwestern University and is directed by Winifred Ward; the Palo Alto Children's Theatre, a Community Playhouse activity directed by Hazel G. Robertson; the Junior School of the Theatre in Cleveland, directed by Dina Rees Evans; and Seattle Junior Programs, of Seattle, Washington, which sponsors annually six productions for children made by the School of Drama of the University of Washington.

In many instances children are used as actors; in others the actors are adults. The tendency, however, appears to be toward

the latter policy. And at the same time there is a growing interest in the technique known as Creative Dramatics, which owes most of its development to the work carried on at Northwestern University by Winifred Ward, and which makes use of natural dramatic impulses to stimulate and guide the imagination of the child. In Creative Dramatics there is no public exhibition. Small groups of children, under trained leaders, improvise their own dialogue and action in dramatizing a story. When skillfully-handled, this technique not only provides a pleasurable form of recreation, but it also achieves excellent therapeutic results. It is, in fact, a happy solution to many problems of child adjustment.

A NOTE ON OPERA

There has been some comment recently on the apparently increasing closeness of opera to standard drama. This comment has been occasioned chiefly by the production in Broadway theatres of such true operas as *The Medium* and *The Consul*, as well as by the musical versions of such standard plays as *Porgy* (*Porgy and Bess*), *Liliom* (*Carousel*), and *Green Grown the Lilacs* (*Oklahoma!*), *The Little Foxes* (*Regina*). Opera has, in fact, followed the course of ballet by intruding itself into the Broadway legitimate theatre.

Meanwhile, however, standard grand opera has pursued its customary course at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, at the San Francisco Memorial Opera House, and on the road through the activities of the San Carlo and other touring companies. It is becoming more and more apparent, however, that this most costly of all forms of theatrical entertainment faces the problem of new methods of subsidization. What was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a luxurious indulgence of the royalty and aristocracy of Europe, and which in the nineteenth century became the fashionable object of millionaires' *largesse*, is now in Europe thrown on the mercy of the state, and in the United States on the mercy of the general public.

Each season there is a frantic effort in New York City to meet the deficits incurred by the Metropolitan, and each season it is considered somewhat of a miracle when the crisis is survived. One of the notable factors in these survivals has been the activities of the Metropolitan Opera Guild, an organization founded in 1935 by Mrs. August Belmont, who, before her marriage in 1910 was

the popular and famous actress, Eleanor Robson. The Opera Guild has as its purpose the support of opera on a national scale, and at present it claims 50,000 members scattered throughout the country, who pay modest dues, and who receive issues of *Opera News*, an excellent periodical published weekly during the opera season and fortnightly during the spring and fall. Reinforcing the Guild's activities are the regular radio broadcasts of operas on national networks from the Metropolitan.

The fate of opera in the United States is, at the turn of the half-century, a questionable matter. But one has every right to assume that despite the obstacles it faces, it will survive, either through increased popular support or through tax-derived subsidies on the civic or federal level.

MECHANICAL ENTERTAINMENT

It cannot be said that the motion picture made much progress during the forties, either artistically or commercially. The number of movie theatres in operation remained approximately the same throughout the decade, hovering between seventeen and eighteen thousand; the number of weekly paid admissions fluctuated between eighty and ninety million. Toward the end of the decade there was a sharp drop at the box-office, and this drop resulted immediately in an economy wave in Hollywood, involving the cutting of budgets, a reduction in personnel, and a frenzied search for the answer to the problem of a waning market.

Another feature of the late forties was the increase in American film production abroad—particularly in England, France, and Italy—a development brought about by several factors: first, the restrictions placed by those countries on the showing of films made in America; second, the need of using "frozen" funds accumulated by American companies from film rentals; and third, the advantage of lower wages and production costs, compared with those in Hollywood. A reciprocal element in this international adjustment was the American distribution and exhibition of an increased number of foreign films, several of which were of such high artistic standard, and attained such popularity in this country, that they constituted a very stimulating challenge to our own studios.

Radio, younger than the movies, continued to expand during the forties. The number of homes equipped with sets increased

from less than thirty million to approximately forty million, and the total number of sets in use (including portables and those installed in automobiles) increased from forty-three million to seventy-five million. But, following the pattern of so many phenomena, radio faced, at the zenith of its development, a serious threat to its continued pre-eminence. The threat, of course, was television.

THE NEWEST MEDIUM

Retarded by World War II, television began in 1945 to invade the American home, offering entertainment which combined the essential characteristics of radio with those of the motion picture. For three years progress was moderate, but in 1948 the new medium acquired sudden momentum. Networks were established between the large Eastern cities, manufacturers rushed the production of sets, and by the end of the year there were forty-six television stations in twenty-five cities throughout the nation, sending programs to more than seven hundred thousand receiving sets.

In 1948, also, for the first time a television broadcast was shown publicly on the screen of a motion-picture theatre, the Paramount Theatre in New York presenting to its patrons on April 14 a telecast of a boxing bout in Brooklyn.

The headlong expansion of television during the first half of 1949 involved an increase in the number of stations to a total of seventy, and in the number of receiving sets to approximately two million. Such startling growth could not fail to impress and worry the leaders of the radio and motion picture industries. During the final year of the decade theatrical trade papers were filled with analyses and predictions relating to the ultimate effects of television on rival forms of mechanical entertainment. The conclusions reached by analysts and prophets were as varied and contradictory as those reached twenty years before, when the future of talking pictures was the controversial issue.

To legitimate theatre people television is merely another form of mass distribution, unlikely to affect in any extraordinary way the present status of the stage play presented by living actors.

Among contemporary sociologists there is a school of thought which holds the belief that we should realistically distinguish between the functions of fine arts and popular arts. In their view,

American values have been confused by a failure to make this distinction, which is, indeed, inharmonious with our political and educational theories. These sociologists would have us accept without annoyance the banalities of most radio programs and motion pictures, realizing that the majority of the public has (and always will have) inferior taste. They think we have wasted a great deal of time, money, and energy in our attempts to force culture on those who have no aptitude for it.

Whether the legitimate theatre in America today can qualify as a fine art is a matter for argument. But no one can deny that it serves the minority.

THE PERILS OF PROPHECY

Anyone with even the slightest sense of history is hesitant to indulge in prophecy, for events have a way of confounding even the most clairvoyant. One seems justified, however, in predicting that the future of the American theatre will conform neither to the roseate dreams of the optimist nor to the calamitous concepts of the pessimist. Human nature being what it is, human institutions tend to follow a middle course, not so wonderful as hope envisages, but not so dreadful as fear conceives. In the two and one-half centuries of its life, our theatre has reflected all the changes attendant upon the growth of our national culture. It would seem that we are now entering upon a new era, a period characterized by the disappearance of frontiers, by the curtailment of private enterprise, by the devastating efficiency of the machine, and by the inevitable assumption of new responsibilities by governmental agencies. How important a role the theatre will play in the coming scheme remains to be seen. But there are many Americans who believe firmly that any civilization which rejects the drama in its historic form, with flesh-and-blood actors embodying the truest revelations of our past and present, is committing a treasonable act of omission. If the human spirit is worth ennobling, then the theatre is worth preserving. For in no other way has man expressed himself more profoundly or more inspiringly than in the drama.

It is all very well to say that the theatre is a "fabulous invalid," always sick and ever dying, but why should it be an invalid of any sort? It should be a paragon of health.

THE END

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(Unless otherwise noted, the place of publication is New York)

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