DORAN JOHN

THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS. ANNALS OF THE ENGLISH STAGE (VOLUME 1 OF 3)

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PREFACE

It is unnecessary to apologise for a new edition of Dr. Doran's *Annals of the Stage*. The two editions already published have been for many years out of print, and the first is so rare that copies of it bring a high price whenever they occur for sale. And this demand is not a mere bibliographical accident, for the book has held for many years a recognised position as the standard popular history of the English stage. The admirable work of Genest, indispensable as it is to every writer on theatrical history, and to every serious student of the stage, is in no sense a popular work, and is, indeed, rather a collection of facts towards a history than a history itself.

In preparing this new edition every effort has been made to add to its interest by the introduction of portraits and other illustrations, and to its authority as a book of reference, by correcting those errors which are scarcely to be avoided by a writer working among the confused, inaccurate, and contradictory documents of theatrical history. No one who has not ventured into this maze can conceive the difficulty of keeping the true path, and I can imagine nothing better calculated to sap one's self-confidence than the task of noting the false turnings made by such a writer as Dr. Doran. I can hardly hope that my own work, light as it is in comparison with his, will be found free from sins of omission, and even of commission.

My principle has been to pass no error, however trifling; but, at the same time, I have not thought myself entitled to discuss matters of opinion, or to criticise, either directly or indirectly, Dr. Doran's treatment of his subject. Thus it would be easy to supplement the information regarding the ancient theatres and the theatre of Shakspeare's time contained in the first and second chapters; but, as Dr. Doran obviously intended that his real work should begin with the Restoration Theatres, I have not interfered with his scheme. I trust that, in this, as in other respects, my work has been done in a spirit free from captiousness.

The illustrations to this edition have been chosen, not from the book "illustrator's" point of view, but with a serious desire to increase its value as a history. In the case of the portraits, those which Dr. Doran specially mentions, have, wherever it was possible, been selected, and in every instance I believe the portrait given is an accurate and trustworthy likeness. The headpieces, intended to form a supplement to the full-page illustrations, include portraits of persons whose importance scarcely justified their place among the larger pictures, drawings of theatres, and of actors in character. The tailpieces are reproductions of Sayer's beautiful little drawings of Garrick and his contemporaries in their best characters; and in their case no chronological arrangement is possible.

For many valuable notes I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Alban Doran, who intrusted to me his father's annotated copy of this work. These notes have in every case been acknowledged and marked "*Doran MS.*"

ROBERT W. LOWE.

London, *September 1887*.

CHAPTER I
PROLOGUE

The period of the origin of the drama is an unsettled question, but it has been fixed at an early date, if we may accept the theory of a recent writer, who suggests that Moses described the Creation from a visionary pictorial representation, which occupied seven days from the commencement to the close of the spectacle!

Among the most remote of the Chinese traditions, the theatre holds a conspicuous place. In Cochin-China there is at this day a most primitive character about actors, authors, and audience. The governor of the district enjoys the least rude seat in the sylvan theatre; he directs the applause by tapping with his fingers on a little drum, and as at this signal his secretaries fling strings full of *cash* on to the stage, the performance suffers from continual interruption. For the largesse distributed by the patron of the drama, and such of the spectators as choose to follow his example, the actors and actresses furiously scramble, while the poor poet stands by, sees his best situations sacrificed, and is none the richer – by way of compensation.

In Greece the profession of actor was accounted honourable. In Rome it was sometimes a well-requited, but also a despised vocation. During the decade of years when that aristocratic democrat Pisistratus held power, the drama first appeared (it is said) at Athens. It formed a portion of the religion of the State. The theatre was a temple in which, rudely enough at first, the audience were taught how the will, not only of men but of gods, must necessarily submit to the irresistible force of Destiny. This last power, represented by a combination of the lyric and epic elements, formed the drama which had its origin in Greece alone. In such a sense the Semitic races had no drama at all, while in Greece it was almost exclusively of Attic growth, its religious character being especially supported on behalf of the audience by the ever-sagacious, morally, and fervently-pious chorus. Lyric tragedy existed before the age of Thespis and Pisistratus; but a spoken tragedy dates from that period alone, above five centuries earlier than the Christian era; and the new theatre found at once its Prynne and its Collier in that hearty hater of actors and acting, the legislative Solon.

At the great festivals, when the theatres were opened, the expenses of the representations were borne partly by the State and partly by certain wealthy officials. The admission was free, until over-crowding produced fatal accidents. To diminish the latter an entrance-fee of two *oboli*, 3¼d., was established, but the receipts were made over to the poor.[1] From morning till dewy eve these roofless buildings, capable of containing on an average twenty thousand persons, were filled from the ground to the topmost seat, in the sweet spring-tide, sole theatrical season of the Greeks.

Disgrace and disfranchisement were the penalties laid upon the professional Roman actor. He was accounted infamous, and was excluded from the tribes. Nevertheless, the calling in Italy had something of a religious quality. Livy tells us of a company of Etruscan actors, ballet-pantomimists, however, rather than comedians, who were employed to avert the anger of the gods, which was manifested by a raging pestilence. These Etruscans were in their way the originators of the drama in Italy. That drama was at first a dance, then a dance and song; with them was subsequently interwoven a story. From the period of Livius Andronicus (b. c. 240) is dated the origin of an actual Latin theatre, a theatre the glory of which was at its highest in the days of Attius and Terence, but for which a dramatic literature became extinct when the mimes took the place of the old comedy and tragedy.

Even in Rome the skill of the artist sometimes freed him from the degradation attached to the exercise of his art. Roscius, the popular comedian, contemporary with Cicero, was elevated by Sulla to the equestrian dignity, and with Æsopus, the great tragedian, enjoyed the friendship of Tully

[1] Professor Ward says: "The entrance-money was from the time of Pericles provided out of the public treasury."

and of Tully's friends, the wisest and the noblest in Rome. Roscius and Æsopus were what would now be called scholars and gentlemen, as well as unequalled artists, whom no amount of application could appal when they had to achieve a triumph in their art. An Austrian emperor once "encored" an entire opera (the *Matrimonio Segreto*); but, according to Cicero, his friend Æsopus so delighted his enthusiastic audience, that in one piece they encored him "millies," a thousand, or perhaps an indefinite number of times. The Roman tragedian lived well, and bequeathed a vast fortune to his son. Roscius earned £32 daily, and he too amassed great wealth.

The mimes were satirical burlesques, parts of which were often improvised, and had some affinity to the pasquinades and harlequinades of modern Italy. The writers were the intimate friends of emperors; the actors were infamous. Cæsar induced Decius Laberius, an author of knightly rank, to appear on the stage in one of these pieces; and Laberius obeyed, not for the sake of the *honorarium*, £4000, but from dread of disobeying an order from so powerful a master. The unwilling actor profited by his degradation to satirise the policy of Cæsar, who did not resent the liberty, but restored Laberius to the rank and equestrian privileges which he had forfeited by appearing on the stage. Laberius, however, never recovered the respect of his countrymen, not even of those who had applauded him the most loudly.

The licentious pantomimists were so gross in their performances that they even disgusted Tiberius, who forbade them from holding any intercourse, as the professional *histriones* or actors of the drama had done, with Romans of equestrian or senatorial dignity. It was against the stage, exclusively given up to their scandalous exhibitions, that the Christian fathers levelled their denunciations. They would have approved a "well-trod stage," as Milton did, and the object attributed to it by Aristotle, – but they had only anathemas for that horrible theatre where danced and postured Bathyllus and Hylas, and Pylades, Latinus and Nero, and even that graceful Paris, whom Domitian slew in his jealousy, and of whom Martial wrote that he was the great glory and grief of the Roman theatre, and that all Venuses and Cupids were buried for ever in the sepulchre of Paris, the darling of old Rome.

In this our England, minds and hearts had ever been open to dramatic impressions. The Druidical rites contained the elements of dramatic spectacle. The Pagan Saxon era had its dialogue-actors, or buffoons; and when the period of Christianity succeeded, its professors and teachers took of the evil epoch what best suited their purposes. In narrative dialogue, or song, they dramatised the incidents of the lives of the saints, and of One greater than saints; and they thus rendered intelligible to listeners what would have been incomprehensible if it had been presented to them as readers.

In Castle-Hall, before farm-house fires, on the bridges, and in the market-places, the men who best performed the united offices of missionary and actor, were, at once, the most popular preachers and players of the day. The greatest of them all, St. Adhelm, when he found his audience growing weary of too much serious exposition, would take his small harp from under his robes, and would strike up a narrative song, that would render his hearers hilarious.

The mixture of the sacred and profane in the early dialogues and drama prevailed for a lengthened period. The profane sometimes superabounded, and the higher Church authorities had to look to it. The monotony of monastic life had caused the wandering glee-men to be too warmly welcomed within the monastery circles, where there were men who cheerfully employed their energies in furnishing new songs and lively "patter" to the strollers. It was, doubtless, all well meant; but more serious men thought it wise to prohibit the indulgence of this peculiar literary pursuit. Accordingly, the Council of Clovershoe, and decrees bearing the king's mark, severally ordained that actors, and other vagabonds therein named, should no longer have access to monasteries, and that no priest should either play the glee-man himself, or encourage the members of that disreputable profession, by turning ale poets, and writing songs for them.

It is a singular fact, that one of our earliest theatres had Geoffrey, a monk, for its manager, and Dunstable – immortalised by Silvester Daggerwood – for a locality. This early manager, who

flourished about 1119,[2] rented a house in the town just named, when a drama was represented, which had St. Katherine for a heroine, and her whole life for a subject. This proto-theatre was, of course, burnt down; and the managing monk withdrew from the profession, more happy than most ruined managers, in this, that he had his cell at St. Albans, to which he could retire, and therein find a home for the remainder of his days.

Through a course of Mysteries, Miracle-plays – illustrating Scripture, history, legend, and the sufferings of the martyrs, – Moralities, in which the vices were in antagonism against the virtues, and Chronicle-plays, which were history in dialogue, we finally arrive at legitimate Tragedy and Comedy. Till this last and welcome consummation, the Church as regularly employed the stage for religious ends, as the old heathen magistrates did when they made village festivals the means of maintaining a religious feeling among the villagers. Professor Browne, in his *History of Greek Classical Literature*, remarks: – "The believers in a pure faith can scarcely understand a religious element in dramatic exhibitions. They who knew that God is a spirit, and that they who worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth, feel that His attributes are too awful to permit any ideas connected with Deity to be brought into contact with the exhibition of human passions. Religious poetry of any kind, except that which has been inspired, has seldom been the work of minds sufficiently heavenly and spiritual, to be perfectly successful in attaining the end of poetry, namely the elevation of the thoughts to a level with the subject. It brings God down to man, instead of raising man to Him. It causes that which is most offensive to religious feeling, and even good taste, irreverent familiarity with subjects which cannot be contemplated without awe. But a religious drama would be, to those who realise to their own minds the spirituality of God, nothing less than anthropomorphism and idolatry. Christians of a less advanced age, and believers in a more sensuous creed, were able to view with pleasure the mystery-plays in which the gravest truths of the Gospel were dramatically represented; nay, more, just as the ancient Athenians could look even upon their gross and licentious comedy as forming part of a religious ceremony, so could Christians imagine a religious element in profane dramas which represented in a ludicrous light subjects of the most holy character."

Mysteries kept the stage from the Norman to the Tudor era. The Moralities began to displace them during the reign of Henry VI., who was a less beneficial patron of the stage than that Richard III. who has himself retained a so unpleasant possession of the scene. Actors and dramatists have been ungrateful to this individual, who was their first practically useful patron. Never, previous to Richard's time, had an English prince been known to have a company of players of his own. When Duke of Gloucester, a troop of such servants was attached to his household. Richard was unselfish towards these new retainers; whenever he was too "busy," or "not i' the vein" to receive instruction or amusement at their hands, he gave them licence to travel abroad, and forth went the mirthful company, from county to county, mansion to mansion, from one corporation-hall and from one inn-yard to another, playing securely under the sanction of his name, winning favour for themselves, and a great measure of public regard, probably, for their then generous and princely master.

The fashion thus set by a prince was followed by the nobility, and it led to a legal recognition of the actor and his craft, in the royal licence of 1572, whereby the players connected with noble houses were empowered to play wherever it seemed good to them, if their master sanctioned their absence, without any let or hindrance from the law.

The patronage of actors by the Duke of Gloucester led to a love of acting by gentlemen amateurs. Richard had ennobled the profession, the gentlemen of the Inns of Court took it up, and they soon had kings and queens leading the applause of approving audiences. To the same example may be traced the custom of having dramatic performances in public schools, the pupils being the performers. These boys, or, in their place, the children of the Chapel Royal, were frequently summoned to play in presence of the King and Court. Boatsful of them went down the river to Greenwich, or up to

[2] Geoffrey was made Abbot of St. Albans in 1119. The play, of course, was many years earlier.

Hampton Court, to enliven the dulness or stimulate the religious enthusiasm of their royal auditors there. At the former place, and when there was not yet any suspicion of the orthodoxy of Henry VIII., the boys of St. Paul's acted a Latin play before the sovereign and the representatives of other sovereigns. The object of the play was to exalt the Pope, and consequently Luther and his wife were the foolish villains of the piece, exposed to the contempt and derision of the delighted and right-thinking hearers.

In most cases the playwrights, even when members of the clergy, were actors as well as authors. This is the more singular, as the players were generally of a roystering character, and were but ill-regarded by the Church. Nevertheless, by their united efforts, though they were not always colleagues, they helped the rude production of the first regularly constructed English comedy, "Ralph Roister Doister," about 1540. The author was a "clerk," named Nicholas Udall, whom Eton boys, whose master he was, hated because of his harshness. The rough and reverend gentleman brought forth the above piece, just one year previous to his losing the mastership, on suspicion of being concerned in a robbery of the college plate.

Subsequently to this, the Cambridge youths had the courage to play a tragedy called "Pammachus," which must have been offensive to the government of Henry VIII. Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, Chancellor of the University, immediately wrote a characteristic letter to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Matthew Parker. It is dated 27th March 1545. "I have been informed," he says, "that the youth in Christ's College, contrary to the mind of the Master and President, hath of late played a tragedy called 'Pammachus,' a part of which tragedy is so pestiferous as were intolerable. If it be so, I intend to travail, as my duty is, for the reformation of it. I know mine office there, and mind to do in it as much as I may." Parker answers on the 3d of April, that the play had been performed with the concurrence of the College authorities, after means had been taken to strike out "slanderous cavillations and suspicious sentences," and "all such matter whereby offence might greatly have risen. Hitherto," adds Parker, "have I not seen any man that was present at it to show himself grieved; albeit it was thought their time and labour might be spent in a better-handled matter." Gardiner is not satisfied with this, and he will have the subject investigated. Accordingly, some of the audience are ordered to be examined to discover if what they applauded was what the King's government had reproved. "I have heard specialities," he writes, "that they" (the actors) "reproved Lent fastings, all ceremonies, and albeit the words of sacrament and mass were not named, yet the rest of the matter written in that tragedy, in the reproof of them was expressed." Gardiner intimates that if the authorities concurred, after exercising a certain censorship, in licensing the representation, they were responsible for all that was uttered, as it must have had the approval of their judgments.

A strict examination followed. Nearly the entire audience passed under it, but not a man could or would remember that he had heard anything to which he could make objection. Therewith Parker transmitted to Gardiner the stage-copy of the tragedy, which the irate prelate thus reviews: – "Perusing the book of the tragedy which ye sent me, I find much matter not stricken out, all which, by the parties' own confession, was uttered very naught, and on the other part something not well omitted." Flagrant lies are said to be mixed up with incontrovertible truths; and it is suggested, that if any of the audience had declared that they had heard nothing at which they could take offence, it must have been because they had forgotten much of what they had heard. Ultimately, Parker was left to deal with the parties as he thought best; and he wisely seems to have thought it best to do nothing. Plays were the favourite recreation of the university men; albeit, as Parker writes, "Two or three in Trinity College think it very unseeming that Christians should play or be present at any profane comedies or tragedies."

Actors and clergy came into direct collision, when, at the accession of Edward VI. (1547), the Bishop of Winchester announced "a solemn dirge *and mass*," in honour of the lately deceased king, Henry VIII. The indiscreet Southwark actors thereupon gave notice that at the time announced for the religious service they would act a "solempne play" to try, as the bishop remarks in a letter to

Paget, "who shall have most resort, they in game or I in earnest." The prelate urgently requests the interference of the Lord Protector, but with what effect, the records in the State Paper Office afford no information.

Some of these Southwark actors were the "servants" of Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset, whose mansion was on the opposite side of the river. In 1551 he was promoted to the dukedom of Suffolk, but his poor players were then prohibited from playing anywhere, save in their master's presence.[3]

Severity led to fraud. In the autumn of the following year Richard Ogle forwarded to the Council a forged licence, taken from the players – a matter which was pronounced to be "worthy of correction." The young king's patronage of his own "servants" was not marked by a princely liberality; the salary of one of his players of interludes, John Brown, was five marks yearly as wages, and one pound three shillings and fourpence for his livery.

Of the party dramatists of this reign, that reverend prelate, "Bilious Bale," was the most active and the least pleasant-tempered. Bale had been a Romanist priest, he was now a Protestant bishop (of Ossory), with a wife to control the episcopal hospitality. Bale had "seen the world." He had gone through marvellous adventures, of which his adversaries did not believe a word; and he had converted the most abstruse doctrinal subjects into edifying semi-lively comedies. The bishop did not value his enemies at the worth of a rush in an old king's chamber. He was altogether a Boanerges; and when his "John, King of England," was produced, the audience, comprising two factions in the Church and State, found the policy of Rome towards this country illustrated with such effect, that while one party hotly denounced, the other applauded the coarse and vigorous audacity of the author.

So powerful were the influences of the stage, when thus applied, that the government of Queen Mary made similar application of them in support of their own views. A play, styled "Respublica," exhibited to the people the alleged iniquity of the Reformation, pointed out the dread excellence of the sovereign herself (personified as Queen Nemesis), and exemplified her inestimable qualities, by making all the Virtues follow in her train as Maids of honour.

Such, now, were the orthodox actors; but the heretical players were to be provided against by stringent measures. A decree of the sovereign and council, in 1556, prohibited all players and pipers from strolling through the kingdom; such strollers – the pipers singularly included – being, as it was said, disseminators of seditions and heresies.

The eye of the observant government also watched the resident actors in town. King Edward had ordered the removal of the king's revels and masques from Warwick Inn, Holborn, "to the late dissolved house of Blackfriars, London," where considerable outlay was made for scenery and machinery – adjuncts to stage effect – which are erroneously supposed to have been first introduced a century later by Davenant. There still remained acting a company at the Boar's Head, without Aldgate, on whom the police of Mary were ordered to make levy. The actors had been playing in that inn-yard a comedy, entitled a "Sack full of News." The order of the privy council to the mayor informs his worship, that it is "a lewd play;" bids him send his officers to the theatre without delay, and not only to apprehend the comedians, but to "take their play-book from them and send it before the privy council."

The actors were under arrest for four-and-twenty hours, and were then set free, but under certain stipulations to be observed by them "and all other players throughout the city," – namely: they were to exercise their vocation of acting "between All Saints and Shrovetide" only; and they were bound to act no other plays but such as were approved of by the Ordinary. This was the most stringent censorship to which the stage has ever been subjected.

Although Edward had commanded the transfer of the company of actors from Warwick Inn to Blackfriars, that dissolved monastery was not legally converted into a theatre till the year 1576,

[3] It would appear that noblemen's players were prohibited from acting, even before their masters, without leave from the Privy Council.

when Elizabeth was on the throne. In that year[4] the Earl of Leicester's servants were licensed to open their series of seasons in a house, the site of which is occupied by Apothecaries' Hall and some adjacent buildings. At the head of the company was James, father of Richard Burbage, the original representative of Richard III. and of Hamlet, the author of which tragedies, so named, was, at the time of the opening of the Blackfriars' theatre, a lad of twelve years of age, surmounting the elementary difficulties of Latin and Greek in the Free School of Stratford-on-Avon.

In Elizabeth the drama possessed a generous patroness and a vindictive censor. Her afternoons at Windsor Castle and Richmond were made pleasant to her by the exertions of her players. The cost to her of occasional performances at the above residences during two years amounted to a fraction over £444. There were incidental expenses also, proving that the actors were well cared for. In the year 1575, among the estimates for plays at Hampton Court, the liberal sum of £8, 14s. is set down "for the boyling of the brawns against Xtmas."

As at Court, so also did the drama flourish at the Universities, especially at Cambridge. There, in 1566, the coarse dialect comedy, "Gammer Gurton's Needle" – a marvellous production, when considered as the work of a bishop, Still, of Bath and Wells – was represented amid a world of laughter.

There, too, was exercised a sharp censorship over both actors and audience. In a letter from Vice-Chancellor Hatcher to Burleigh, the conduct of Punter, a student of St. John's, at stage-plays at Caius and Trinity, is complained of as unsteady. In 1581 the heads of houses again make application to Burleigh, objecting to the players of the Great Chamberlain, the Earl of Oxford, poet and courtier, exhibiting certain plays already "practised" by them before the King. The authorities, when scholastic audiences were noisy, or when players brought no novelty with them to Cambridge, applied to the great statesman in town, and vexed him with dramatic troubles, as if he had been general stage-manager of all the companies strolling over the kingdom.

On one occasion the stage was employed as a vantage ground whereon to raise a battery against the power of the stage's great patroness, the Queen. In 1599, the indiscreet followers of Essex "filled the pit of the theatre, where Rutland and Southampton are daily seen, and where Shakspeare's company, in the great play of 'Richard II.,' have, for more than a year, been feeding the public eye with pictures of the deposition of kings." In June of the following year, "those scenes of Shakspeare's play disturb Elizabeth's dreams. The play had had a long and splendid run, not less from its glorious agony of dramatic passion than from the open countenance lent to it by the Earl, who, before his voyage, was a constant auditor at the Globe, and by his constant companions, Rutland and Southampton. The great parliamentary scene, the deposition of Richard, not in the printed book, was possibly not in the early play; yet the representation of a royal murder and a successful usurpation on the public stage is an event to be applied by the groundlings, in a pernicious and disloyal sense. Tongues whisper to the Queen that this play is part of a great plot to teach her subjects how to murder kings. They tell her she is Richard; Essex, Bolingbroke. These warnings sink into her mind. When Lambard, Keeper of the Records, waits upon her at the palace, she exclaims to him, 'I am Richard! Know you not that?'"

The performance of this play was, nevertheless, not prohibited. When the final attempt of Essex was about to be made, in February 1601 – "To fan the courage of their crew," says Mr. Hepworth Dixon, from whose *Personal History of Lord Bacon* I borrow these details, "and prepare the citizens for news of a royal deposition, the chiefs of the insurrection think good to revive, for a night, their favourite play. They send for Augustine Phillips, manager of the Blackfriars Theatre, to Essex House; Monteagle, Percy, and two or three more – among them Cuffe and Meyrick – gentlemen whose names and faces he does not recognise, receive him; and Lord Monteagle, speaking for the rest, tells him that they want to have played the next day Shakspeare's deposition of Richard II. Phillips objects that the play is stale, that a new one is running, and that the company will lose money by a change.

[4] The patent was dated 1574, and does not specify any particular building or locality.

Monteagle meets his objections. The theatre shall not lose; a host of gentlemen from Essex House will fill the galleries; if there is fear of loss, here are 40s. to make it up. Phillips takes the money, and King Richard is duly deposed for them, and put to death."

Meanwhile, the profession of player had been assailed by fierce opponents. In 1587,[5] when twenty-three summers lightly sat on Shakspeare's brow, Gosson, the "parson" of St. Botolph's, discharged the first shot against stage plays which had yet been fired by any one not in absolute authority. Gosson's book was entitled, *A School of Abuse*, and it professed to contain "a pleasant invective against poets, players, jesters, and such like caterpillars of a Commonwealth." Gosson's pleasantry consists in his illogical employment of invective. Domitian favoured plays, *argal*, Domitian's domestic felicity was troubled by a player – Paris. Of Caligula, Gosson remarks, that he made so much of players and dancers, that "he suffered them openly to kiss his lips, when the senators might scarcely have a lick at his feet;" and the good man of St. Botolph's adds, that the murder of Domitian, by Charea, was "a fit catastrophe," for it was done as the Emperor was returning from a play!

As a painter of manners, Gosson thus gaily limns the audiences of his time. "In our Assemblies at plays in London, you shall see such heaving and shouting, such pitching and shouldering to sit by women, such care for their garments that they be not trodden on, such eyes to their laps that no chips light on them, such pillows to their backs that they take no hurt, such masking in their ears, I know not what; such giving them pippins to pass the time; such playing at foot-saunt without cards; such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home when the sports are ended, that it is a right comedy to mark their behaviour." In this picture Gosson paints a good-humoured and a gallant people. When he turns from failings to vices, the old rector of St. Botolph's dwells upon them as Tartuffe does upon the undraped shoulders of Dorinne. He likes the subject, and makes attractive what he denounces as pernicious. The playwrights he assails with the virulence of an author, who, having been unsuccessful himself, has no gladness in the success, nor any generosity for the shortcomings of others. Yet he cannot deny that some plays are moral, such as "Cataline's Conspiracy," – "because," as he elegantly observes, "it is said to be a pig of mine own sow." This, and one or two other plays written by him, he complaisantly designates as "good plays, and sweet plays, and of all plays the best plays, and most to be liked."

Let us now return to the year of Shakspeare's birth. The great poet came into the world when the English portion of it was deafened with the thunder of Archbishop Grindal, who flung his bolts against the profession which the child in his cradle at Stratford was about to ennoble for ever. England had been devastated by the plague of 1563. Grindal illogically traced the rise of the pestilence to the theatres; and to check the evil he counselled Cecil to suppress the vocation of the idle, infamous, youth-infecting players, as the prelate called them, for one whole year, and – "if it were for ever," adds the primate, "it were not amiss."

Elizabeth's face shone upon the actors, and rehearsals went actively on before the Master of the Revels. The numbers of the players, however, so increased and spread over the kingdom, that the government, when Shakspeare was eight years of age, enacted that startling statute which is supposed to have branded dramatic art and artists with infamy. But the celebrated statute of 1572 does *not* declare players to be "rogues and vagabonds." It simply threatens to treat as such all acting companies who presume to set up their stage *without* the license of "two justices of the peace at least." This was rather to protect the art than to insult the artist; and a few years subsequent to the publication of this statute, Elizabeth granted the first *royal* patent conceded in England to actors – that of 1576.[6] By this authority Lord Leicester's servants were empowered to produce such plays as seemed good to them, "as well," says the Queen, "for the recreation of our loving subjects as *for our solace and pleasure*,

[5] 1579 (2d edition).

[6] Should be 1574. It is dated 7th May 1574.

when we shall think good to see them." Sovereign could scarcely pay a more graceful compliment to poet or to actor.

This royal patent sanctioned the acting of plays within the liberties of the city; but against this the city magistrates commenced an active agitation. Their brethren of Middlesex followed a like course throughout the county. The players were treated as the devil's missionaries; and such unsavoury terms were flung at them and at playwrights, by the city aldermen and the county justices, that thereon was founded that animosity which led dramatic authors to represent citizens and justices as the most egregious of fools, the most arrant of knaves, and the most deluded of husbands.

Driven from the city, Burbage and his gay brotherhood were safe in the shelter of Blackfriars, adjacent to the city walls. Safe, but neither welcome nor unmolested. The devout and noble ladies who had long resided near the once sacred building, clamoured at the audacity of the actors. Divine worship and sermon, so they averred, would be grievously disturbed by the music and rant of the comedians, and by the debauched companions resorting to witness those abominable plays and interludes.

This cry was shrill and incessant, but it was unsuccessful. The Blackfriars' was patronised by a public whose favours were also solicited by those "sumptuous houses" the "Theatre" and the "Curtain" in Shoreditch. Pulpit logicians reasoned, more heedless of connection between premises and conclusion than Grindal or Gosson. "The cause of plagues is sin," argues one, "and the cause of sin are plays; therefore, the cause of plagues are plays." Again: "If these be not suppressed," exclaims a Paul's Cross preacher, "it will make such a tragedy that all London may well mourn while it is London."[7] But for the sympathy of the Earl of Leicester it would have gone ill with these players. He has been as ill-requited by authors and actors as their earlier friend, Richard of Gloucester. To this day the stage exhibits the great earl, according to the legend contrived by his foes, as the murderer of his wife.

Sanctioned by the court, befriended by the noble, and followed by the general public, the players stood their ground, but they lacked the discretion which should have distinguished them. They bearded authority, played in despite of legal prohibitions, and introduced forbidden subjects of state and religion upon their stage. Thence ensued suspensions for indefinite periods, severe supervision when the suspension was rescinded, and renewed transgression on the part of the reckless companies, even to the playing on a Sunday, in any locality where they conjectured there was small likelihood of their being followed by a warrant.

But the most costly of the theatrical revels of King James took place at Whitehall, at Greenwich, or at Hampton Court, on Sunday evenings – an unseemly practice, which embittered the hatred of the Puritans against the stage, all belonging to it, and all who patronised it. James was wiser when he licensed Kirkham, Hawkins, Kendall, and Payne to train the Queen's children of the revels, and to exercise them in playing within the Blackfriars' or elsewhere all plays which had the sanction of old Samuel Danyell. His queen, Anne, was both actress and manager in the masques performed at court, the expenses of which often exceeded, indeed were ordered not to be limited to, £1000. "Excellent comedies" were played before Prince Charles and the Prince Palsgrave[8] at Cambridge; and the members of St. John's, Clare, and Trinity, acted before the King and court in 1615, when the illustrious guests were scattered among the colleges, and twenty-six tuns of wine consumed within five days!

The lawyers alone were offended at the visits of the court to the amateurs at Cambridge, especially when James went thither to see the comedy of *Ignoramus*, in which law and lawyers are treated with small measure of respect. When James was prevented from going to Cambridge, he was accustomed to send for the whole scholastic company to appear before him, in one of the choicest of

[7] These quotations are both from the same sermon.

[8] Or, Prince Palatine.

their pieces, at Royston. Roving troops were licensed by this play-loving king to follow their vocation in stated places in the country, under certain restrictions for their tarrying and wending – a fortnight's residence in one town being the time limited, with injunction not to play "during church hours."

Then there were unlicensed satirical plays in unlicensed houses. Sir John Yorke, his wife and brothers, were fined and imprisoned, because of a scandalous play acted in Sir John's house, in favour of Popery. On another occasion, in 1617, we hear of a play, in some country mansion, in which the King, represented as a huntsman, observed that he had rather hear a dog bark than a cannon roar. Two kinsmen, named Napleton, discussed this matter, whereupon one of them remarked that it was a pity the King, so well represented, ever came to the crown of England at all, for he loved his dogs better than his subjects. Whereupon the listener to this remark went and laid information before the council against the kinsman who had uttered it!

The players could, in James's reign, boast that their profession was at least kindly looked upon by the foremost man in the English Church. "No man," says Hacket, "was more wise or more serious than Archbishop Bancroft, the Atlas of our clergy, in his time; and he that writes this hath seen an interlude well presented before him, at Lambeth, by his own gentlemen, when I was one of the youngest spectators." The actors thus had the sanction of the Archbishop of Canterbury in James's reign, as they had that of Williams, Archbishop of York, in the next. Hacket often alludes to theatrical matters. "The theatres," he says, in one of his discourses made during the reign of Charles II., when the preacher was Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, "are not large enough nowadays to receive our loose gallants, male and female, but whole fields and parks are thronged with their concourse, where they make a muster of their gay clothes." Meanwhile, in 1616, the pulpit once more issued anathemas against the stage. The denouncer, on this occasion, was the preacher of St. Mary Overy's, named Sutton, whose undiscriminating censure was boldly, if not logically, answered by the actor, Field. There is a letter from the latter in the State Paper Office, in which he remonstrates against the sweeping condemnation of all players. The comedian admits that what he calls his trade has its corruptions, like other trades; but he adds, that since it is patronised by the King, there is disloyalty in preaching against it, and he hints that the theology of the preacher must be a little out of gear, seeing that he openly denounces a vocation which is not condemned in Scripture!

Field, the champion of his craft in the early part of the seventeenth century, was one of the dozen actors to whom King James, in 1619, granted a licence to act comedy, tragedy, history, &c., for the solace and pleasure of his Majesty and his subjects, at the Globe, and at their private house in the precincts of Blackfriars. This licence was made out to Hemings, Burbage, Condell, Lowen, Tooley, Underwood, Field, Benfield, Gough, Eccleston, Robinson, Shancks, and their associates. Their success rendered them audacious, and, in 1624, they got into trouble, on a complaint of the Spanish ambassador. The actors at the Globe had produced Middleton's "Game at Chess," in which the action is carried on by black and white pieces, representing the Reformed and Romanist parties. The latter, being the rogues of the piece, are foiled, and are "put in the bag." The Spanish envoy's complaint was founded on the fact that living persons were represented by the actors, such persons being the King of Spain, Gondomar, and the famous Antonio de Dominis, who, after being a Romish bishop (of Spalato), professed Protestantism, became Dean of Windsor, and after all died in his earlier faith, at Rome. On the ambassador's complaint, the actors and the author were summoned before the council, but no immediate result followed, for, two days later, Nethercole writes to Carleton, informing him that "the comedy in which the whole Spanish business is taken up, is drawing £100 nightly." At that time, a house with £20 in it was accounted a "good house," at either the Globe or Blackfriars. Receipts amounting to five times that sum, for nine afternoons successively, may be accepted as a proof of the popularity of this play. The Spaniard, however, would not let the matter rest; the play was suppressed, the actors forbidden to represent living personages on the stage, and the author was sent to prison. Middleton was not long detained in durance vile. James set him free, instigated by a quip in a poor epigram, —

"Use but your royal hand, 'twill set me free!
'Tis but removing of a man – that's me."

A worse joke never secured for its author a greater boon – that of liberty.

With all this, an incident of the following year proves that the players disregarded peril, and found profit in excitement. For Shrovetide, 1625, they announced a play founded on the Dutch horrors at Amboyna, but the performance was stopped, on the application of the East India Company, "for fear of disturbances this Shrovetide." A watch of 800 men was set to keep all quiet on Shrove Tuesday; and the subject was not again selected for a piece till 1673, when Dryden's "Amboyna" was produced in Drury Lane, and the cruelties of the Dutch condemned in a serio-comic fashion, as those of a people – so the epilogue intimated to the public – "who have no more religion faith – than you."

In James's days, the greater or less prevalence of the plague regulated the licences for playing. Thus, permission was given to the Queen's Servants to act "in their several houses, the Curtain, and the Boar's Head, Middlesex, as soon as the plague decreases to 30 a week, in London." So, in the very first year of Charles I., 1625, the "common players" have leave not only to act where they will, but "to come to court, now the plague is reduced to six." Accordingly, there was a merry Christmas season at Hampton Court, the actors being there; and, writes Rudyard to Nethercole, "the *demoiselles*" (maids of honour, doubtless), "mean to present a French pastoral, wherein the Queen is a principal actress." Thus, the example set by the late Queen Anne and now adopted by Henrietta Maria, led to the introduction of actresses on the public stage, and it was the manifestation of a taste for acting exhibited by the French princess, that led to the appearance in London of actresses of that nation.

With the reign of Charles I. new hopes came to the poor player, but therewith came new adversaries. Charles I. was a hearty promoter of all sports and pleasures, provided his people would be merry and wise according to his prescription only. Wakes and maypoles were authorised by him, to the infinite disgust of the Puritans, who liked the authorisation no more than they did the suppression of lectures. When Charles repaired to church, where the *Book of Sports* was read, he was exposed to the chance of hearing the minister, after reading the decree as he was ordered, calmly go through the Ten Commandments, and then tell his hearers, that having listened to the commands of God and those of man, they might now follow which they liked best.

When Bishop Williams, of Lincoln, and subsequently Archbishop of York, held a living, he pleaded in behalf of the right of his Northamptonshire parishioners to dance round the maypole. When ordered to deliver up the Great Seal by the King, he retired to his episcopal palace at Buckden, where, says Hacket, "he was the worse thought of by some strict censurers, because he admitted in his public hall a comedy once or twice to be presented before him, exhibited by his own servants, for an evening recreation." Being then in disgrace, this simple matter was exaggerated by his enemies into a report, that on an Ordination Sunday, this arrogant Welshman had entertained his newly-ordained clergy with a representation of Shakspeare's "Midsummer's Night's Dream," the actors in which had been expressly brought down from London for the purpose!

In the troubled days in which King Charles and Bishop Williams lived, the stage suffered with the throne and church. After this time the names of the old houses cease to be familiar. Let us take a parting glance of these primitive temples of our drama.

The royal theatre, Blackfriars, was the most nobly patronised of all the houses opened previous to the Restoration. The grown-up actors were the most skilled of their craft; and the boys, or apprentices, were the most fair and effeminate that could be procured, and could profit by instruction. On this stage Shakspeare enacted the Ghost in "Hamlet," Old Adam, and a similar line of characters, usually intrusted to the ablest of the performers of the second class. Blackfriars was a winter house. Some idea of its capability and pretension may be formed from the fact, that in 1633 its proprietors,

the brothers Burbage,[9] let it to the actors for a yearly rent of £50. In 1655 it was pulled down,[10] after a successful career of about three-quarters of a century.

Upon the strip of shore, between Fleet Street and the Thames, there have been erected three theatres. In the year 1580, the old monastery of Whitefriars was given up to a company of players; but the Whitefriars' Theatre did not enjoy a very lengthened career. In the year 1616, that in which Shakspeare died, it had already fallen into disrepute and decay, and was never afterwards used for the representation of dramatic pieces. The other theatres, in Dorset Gardens, were built subsequently to the Restoration.

In the parish of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, and in the street now called Playhouse Yard, connecting Whitecross Street with Golding Lane, stood the old Fortune, erected in 1600, for Henslowe (the pawnbroker and money-lender to actors) and Alleyn, the most unselfish of comedians. It was a wooden tenement, which was burned down in 1621, and replaced by a circular brick edifice. In 1649, two years after the suppression of plays by the Puritan Act, when the house was closed, a party of soldiers, "the sectaries of those yeasty times," broke into the edifice, destroyed its interior fittings, and pulled down the building.[11] The site and adjacent ground were soon covered by dwelling-houses.

Meanwhile, the inn yards, or great rooms at the inns, were not yet quite superseded. The Cross Keys in Gracechurch Street, the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, near which lived Anthony Bacon, to the extreme dislike of his grandmother; and the Red Bull, in St. John Street, Clerkenwell, which last existed as late as the period of the Great Fire, were open, if not for the acting of plays, at least for exhibitions of fencing and wrestling.

The Surrey side of the Thames was a favourite locality for plays, long before the most famous of the regular and royally-sanctioned theatres. The Globe was on that old joyous Bankside; and the Little Rose, in 1584, there succeeded to an elder structure of the same name, whose memory is still preserved in Rose Alley. The Globe, the summer-house of Shakspeare and his fellows, flourished from 1594 to 1613, when it fell a prey to the flames caused by the wadding of a gun, which lodged in and set fire to the thatched roof. The new house, erected by a royal and noble subscription, was of wood, but it was tiled. Its career, however, was not very extended, for in 1654, the owner of the freehold, Sir Matthew Brand, pulled the house down; and the name of Globe Alley is all that is left to point out the whereabouts of the popular summer-house in Southwark.

On the same bank of the great river stood the Hope, a play-house four times a week, and a garden for bear-baiting on the alternate days. In the former was first played Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair." When plays were suppressed, the zealous and orthodox soldiery broke into the Hope, horsewhipped the actors, and shot the bears. This place, however, in its character of Bear Garden, rallied after the Restoration, and continued prosperous till nearly the close of the seventeenth century. There remains to be noticed, Paris Garden, famous for its cruel but well-patronised sports. Its popular circus was converted by Henslowe and Alleyn into a theatre. Here, the richest receipts were made on the Sunday, till the law interfered, and put down these performances, the dear delight of the Southwarkians and their visitors from the opposite shore, of the olden time.

The supposed assertion of Taylor, the Water poet, has often been quoted, namely, that between Windsor Bridge and Gravesend there were not less than 40,000 watermen, and that more than half of these found employment in transporting the holiday folks from the Middlesex to the Southwark shore of the river, where the players were strutting their little hour at the *Globe*, the *Rose*, and the *Swan*, and Bruin was being baited in the adjacent gardens. A misprint has decupled what was about the true number, and even of these, many were so unskilful that an Act was passed in the very first year of King James, for the protection of persons afloat, whether on pleasure or serious business.

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[9] The owners seem to have been Cuthbert and William Burbage, uncle and nephew.

[10] The year of its destruction seems uncertain.

[11] It was standing in 1661; in which year it was advertised for sale, with the ground belonging to it.

In Holywell Lane, near High Street, Shoreditch, is the site of an old wooden structure which bore the distinctive name of "The Theatre," and was accounted a sumptuous house, probably because of the partial introduction of scenery there. In the early part of Shakspeare's career, as author and actor, it was closed, in consequence of proprietary disputes; and with the materials the Globe, at Bankside, was rebuilt or considerably enlarged. There was a second theatre in this district called "The Curtain," a name still retained in Curtain Road. This house remained open and successful, till the accession of Charles I., subsequent to which time stage plays gave way to exhibitions of athletic exercises.

This district was especially dramatic; the popular taste was not only there directed towards the stage, but it was a district wherein many actors dwelt, and consequently died. The baptismal register of St. Leonard's contains Christian names which appear to have been chosen with reference to the heroines of Shakspeare; and the record of burials bears the name of many an old actor of mark whose remains now lie within the churchyard.

Not a vestige, of course, exists of any of these theatres; and yet of a much older house traces may be seen by those who will seek them in remote Cornwall.

This relic of antiquity is called Piran Round. It consists of a circular embankment, about ten feet high, sloping backwards, and cut into steps for seats or standing-places. This embankment encloses a level area of grassy ground, and stands in the middle of a flat, wild heath. A couple of thousand spectators could look down from the seats upon the grassy circus which formed a stage of more than a hundred feet in diameter. Here, in very early times, sports were played and combats fought out, and rustic councils assembled. The ancient Cornish Mysteries here drew tears and laughter from the mixed audiences of the day. They were popular as late as the period of Shakspeare. Of one of them, a five act piece, entitled "The Creation of the World, with Noah's Flood," the learned Davies Gilbert has given a translation. In this historical piece, played for edification in Scripture history, the stage directions speak of varied costumes, variety of scenery, and complicated machinery, all on an open-air stage, whereon the deluge was to roll its billows and the mimic world be lost. This cataclysm achieved, the depressed spectators were rendered merry. The minstrels piped, the audience rose and footed it, and then, having had their full of amusement, they who had converged, from so many starting points, upon Piran Round, scattered again on their several ways homeward from the ancient theatre, and as the sun went down, thinned away over the heath, the fishermen going seaward, the miners inland, and the agricultural labourers to the cottages and farm-houses which dotted, here and there, the otherwise dreary moor.

Such is Piran Round described to have been, and the "old house" is worthy of tender preservation, for it once saved England from invasion! About the year 1600, "some strollers," as they are called in Somer's Tracts, were playing late at night at Piran. At the same time a party of Spaniards had landed with the intention of surprising, plundering, and burning the village. As the enemy were silently on their way to this consummation, the players, who were representing a battle, "struck up a loud alarum with drum and trumpet on the stage, which the enemy hearing, thought they were discovered, made some few idle shots, and so in a hurly-burly fled to their boats. And thus the townsmen were apprised of their danger, and delivered from it at the same time."

Thus the players rescued the kingdom! Their sons and successors were not so happy in rescuing their King; but the powerful enemies of each suppressed both real and mimic kings. How they dealt with the monarchs of the stage, our prologue at an end, remains to be told.

CHAPTER II
THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE PLAYERS

It was in the eventful year 1587,[12] while Roman Catholics were deploring the death of Mary Stuart; while Englishmen were exulting at the destruction dealt by Drake to a hundred Spanish ships in the port of Cadiz; while the Puritan party was at angry issue with Elizabeth; while John Fox was lying dead; and while Walsingham was actively impeding the ways and means of Armada Philip, by getting his bills protested at Genoa, – that the little man, Gosson, in the parish of St. Botolph, of which he was the incumbent, first nibbed his pen,[13] and made it fly furiously over paper, in wordy war against the stage and stage-players.

When the Britons ate acorns and drank water, he says, they were giants and heroes; but since plays came in they had dwindled into a puny race, incapable of noble and patriotic achievements! And yet next year, some pretty fellows of that race were sweeping the Invincible Armada from the surface of our seas!

When London was talking admiringly of the coronation of Charles I., and Parliament was barely according him one pound in twelve of the money-aids of which he was in need, there was another pamphleteer sending up his testimony from Cheapside to Westminster, against the alleged abomination of plays and players. This writer entitles his work *A short Treatise against Stage Plays*, and he makes it as sharp as it is short. Plays were invented by heathens; they must necessarily be prejudicial to Christians! —*that* is the style of his assertion and argument. They were invented in order to appease false gods; consequently, the playing of them must excite to wrath a true Deity! They are no recreation, because people come away from them wearied. The argument, in tragedy, he informs us, is murder; in comedy, it is social vice. This he designates as bad instruction; and remembering Field's query to Sutton, he would very much like to know in what page of Holy Writ authority is given for the vocation of an actor. He might as well have asked for the suppression of tailors, on the ground of their never being once named in either the Old Testament or the New!

But this author finds condemnation there of "stage effects," rehearsed or unrehearsed. You deal with the judgments of God in tragedy, and laugh over the sins of men in comedy; and thereupon he reminds you, not very appositely, that Ham was accursed for deriding his father! Players change their apparel and put on women's attire, – as if they had never read a chapter in Deuteronomy in their lives! If coming on the stage under false representation of their natural names and persons be not an offence against the Epistle to Timothy, he would thank you to inform him *what* it is! As to looking on these pleasant evils and not falling into sin, – you have heard of Job and King David, and you are worse than a heathen if you do not remember what *they* looked upon with innocent intent, or if you have forgotten what came of the looking.

He reminds parents, that while *they* are at the play, there are wooers who are carrying off the hearts of their daughters at home; perhaps, the very daughters themselves *from* home. This seems to me to be less an argument against resorting to the theatre than in favour of your taking places for your "young ladies," as well as for yourselves. The writer looks too wide abroad to see what lies at his feet. He is in Asia, citing the Council of Laodicea against the theatre. He is in Africa, vociferating, as the Council of Carthage did, against audiences. He is in Europe, at Arles, where the Fathers decided that no actor should be admitted to the sacrament. Finally, he unites all these Councils together at Constantinople, and in a three-piled judgment sends stage, actors, and audiences to Gehenna.

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[12] Should be 1579. Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse* was entered at Stationers' Hall, July 22, 1579. Dr. Doran corrects this in the second edition.

[13] Gosson was not made rector of St. Botolph till 1600.

If you would only remember that many royal and noble men have been slain when in the theatre, on their way thither, or returning thence, you will have a decent horror of risking a similar fate in like localities. He has known actors who have died after the play was over; he would fain have you believe that there is something in *that*. And when he has intimated that theatres have been burnt and audiences suffocated; that stages have been swept down by storms and spectators trodden to death; that less than forty years previous to the time of his writing, eight persons had been killed and many more wounded, by the fall of a London playhouse; and that a similar calamity had lately occurred in the city of Lyons – the writer conceives he has advanced sufficient argument, and administered more than enough of admonition, to deter any person from entering a theatre henceforth and for ever.

This paper pellet had not long been printed, when the vexed author might have seen four actors sailing joyously along the Strand. There they are, Master Moore (there were no *managers* then; they were "masters" till the Georgian era), Master Moore, heavy Foster, mirthful Guilman, and airy Townsend. The master carries in his pocket a royal licence to form a company, whose members, in honour of the King's sister, shall be known as "the Lady Elizabeth's servants;" with permission to act when and where they please, in and about the city of London, unless when the plague shall be more than ordinarily prevalent.

There was no present opportunity to touch these licensed companies; and, accordingly, a sect of men who professed to unite loyalty with orthodoxy, looking eagerly about them for offenders, detected an unlicensed fraternity playing a comedy in the old house, before noticed, of Sir John Yorke. The result of this was the assembling of a nervously-agitated troop of offenders in the Star Chamber. One Christopher Mallory was made the scapegoat, for the satisfactory reason that in the comedy alluded to he had represented the devil, and in the last scene descended through the stage, with a figure of King James on his back, remarking the while, that such was the road by which all Protestants must necessarily travel! Poor Mallory, condemned to fine and imprisonment, vainly observed that there were two points, he thought, in his favour – that he had not played in the piece, and had not been even present in the house!

Meanwhile the public flocked to their favourite houses, and fortune seemed to be most blandly smiling on "masters," when there suddenly appeared the monster mortar manufactured by Prynne, and discharged by him over London, with an attendant amount of thunder, which shook every building in the metropolis. Prynne had just previously seen the painters busily at work in beautifying the old "Fortune," and the decorators gilding the horns of the "Red Bull." He had been down to Whitefriars, and had there beheld a new theatre rising near the old time-honoured site. He was unable to be longer silent, and in 1633 out came his *Histrio-Mastix*, consisting, from title-page to *finis*, of a thousand and several hundred pages.

Prynne, in some sense, did not lead opinion against the stage, but followed that of individuals who suffered certain discomfort from their vicinity to the chief house in Blackfriars. In 1631, the churchwardens and constables petitioned Laud, on behalf of the whole parish, for the removal of the players, whose presence was a grievance, it was asserted, to Blackfriars generally. The shopkeepers affirm that their goods, exposed for sale, are swept off their stalls by the coaches and people sweeping onward to the playhouse; that the concourse is so great, the inhabitants are unable to take beer or coal into their houses while it continues; that to get through Ludgate to the water is just impossible; and if a fire break out Heaven help them, how can succour be brought to the sufferers through such mobs of men and vehicles? Christenings are disturbed in their joy by them, and the sorrow of burials intruded on. Persons of honour dare not go abroad, or if abroad, dare not venture home while the theatre is open. And then there is that other house, Edward Alleyn's, rebuilding in Golden Lane, and will not the Council look to it?

The Council answer that Queen Henrietta Maria is well affected towards plays, and that therefore good regulation is more to be provided than suppression decreed. There must not be more than two houses, they say; one on Bankside, where the Lord Chamberlain's servants may act; the

other in Middlesex, for which license may be given to Alleyn, "servant of the Lord Admiral," in Golden Lane. Each company is to play but twice a week, "forbearing to play on the Sabbath Day, in Lent, and in times of infection."

Here is a prospect for old Blackfriars; but it is doomed to fall. The house had been condemned in 1619, and cannot longer be tolerated. But compensation must be awarded. The players, bold fellows, claim £21,000! The referees award £3000, and the delighted inhabitants offer £100 towards it, to get rid of the people who resort to the players, rather than of the players themselves.

Then spake out Prynne. He does not tell us how many prayer-books had been recently published, but he notes, with a cry of anguish, the printing of forty thousand plays within the last two years. "There are five devil's chapels," he says, "in London; and yet in more extensive Rome, in Nero's days, there were but three, and those," he adds, "were three too many!" When the writer gets beyond statistics he grows rude; but he was sincere, and accepted all the responsibility of the course taken by him, advisedly.

While the anger excited by this attack on pastimes favoured by the King was yet hot, the assault itself was met by a defiance. The gentlemen of the Inns of Court closed their law-books, got up a masque, and played it at Whitehall, in the presence of a delighted audience, consisting of royal and noble personages. The most play-loving of the lords followed the example afforded by the lawyers, and the King himself assumed the buskin, and turned actor, for the nonce. Tom Carew was busy with superintending the rehearsals of his "Cœlum Britannicum," and in urging honest and melodious Will Lawes to progress more rapidly with the music. Cavalier Will was not to be hurried, but did his work steadily; and Prynne might have heard him and his brother Harry humming the airs over as they walked together across the park to Whitehall. When the day of representation arrived, great was the excitement and intense the delight of some, and the scorn of others. Among the noble actors who rode down to the palace was Rich, Earl of Holland. All passed off so pleasantly that no one dreamed it was the inauguration of a struggle in which Prynne was to lose his estate, his freedom, and his ears; the King and the earl their heads; while gallant Will Lawes, as honest a man as any of them, was, a dozen years after, to be found among the valiant dead who fell at the siege of Chester.

Ere this *dénouement* to a tragedy so mirthfully commenced had been reached, there were other defiances cast in the teeth of audacious, but too harshly-treated Prynne. There was a reverend playwright about town, whom Eton loved and Oxford highly prized; Ben Jonson called him his "son," and Bishop Fell, who presumed to give an opinion on subjects of which he was ignorant, pronounced the Rev. William Cartwright to be "the utmost that man could come to!" For the Christ Church students at Oxford, Cartwright wrote the "Royal Slave," one of three out of his four plays which sleep under a righteous oblivion. The King and Queen went down to witness the performance of the scholastic amateurs; and, considering that a main incident of the piece comprises a revolt in order to achieve some reasonable liberty for an oppressed people, the subject may be considered more suggestive than felicitous. The fortunes of many of the audience were about to undergo mutation, but there was an actor there whose prosperity commenced from that day. All the actors played with spirit, but this especial one manifested such self-possession, displayed such judgment, and exhibited such powers of conception and execution, that King, Queen, and all the illustrious audience showered down upon him applauses – hearty, loud, and long. His name was Busby. He had been so poor that he received £5 to enable him to take his degree of B.A. Westminster was soon to possess him, for nearly three-score years the most famous of her "masters." "A very great man!" said Sir Roger de Coverley; "he whipped my grandfather!"

When Prynne, and Bastwick, and Burton – released from prison by the Long Parliament – entered London in triumph, with wreaths of ivy and rosemary round their hats, the players who stood on the causeway, or at tavern windows, to witness the passing of the victims, must have felt uneasy at their arch-enemy being loose again. Between politics, perverse parties, the plague, and the parliament, the condition of the actors fell from bad to worse. In a dialogue which professedly passed at this time

between Cane of the "Fortune" and Reed of the "Friers," one of the speakers deplores the going-out of all good old things, and the other, sighingly, remarks that true Latin is as little in fashion at Inns of Court as good clothes are at Cambridge. At length arrived the fatal year 1647, when, after some previous attempts to abolish the vocation of the actors, the parliament disbanded the army and suppressed the players. The latter struggled manfully, but not so successfully, as the soldiery. They were treated with less consideration; the decree of February 1647[14] informed them that they were no better than heathens; that they were intolerable to Christians; that they were incorrigible and vicious offenders, who would now be compelled by whip, and stocks, and gyves, and prison fare, to obey ordinances which they had hitherto treated with contempt. Had not the glorious Elizabeth stigmatised them as "rogues," and the sagacious James as "vagabonds?" Mayors and sheriffs, and high and low constables were let loose upon them, and encouraged to be merciless; menace was piled upon menace; money penalties were hinted at in addition to corporeal punishments – and, after all, plays were enacted in spite of this counter-enactment.

But these last enactors were not to be trifled with; and the autumn saw accomplished what had not been effected in the spring. The *Perfect Weekly Account* for "Wednesday, Oct. 20, to Tuesday, Oct. 26," informs its readers that on "Friday an ordinance passed both Houses for suppressing of stage-plays, which of late began to come in use again." The ordinance itself is as uncivil a document as ever proceeded from ruffled authority; and the framers clearly considered that if they had not crushed the stage for ever, they had unquestionably frozen out the actors as long as the existing government should endure.

At this juncture, historians inform us that many of the ousted actors took military service – generally, as was to be expected, on the royalist side. But, in 1647, the struggle was virtually over. The great fire was quenched, and there was only a trampling out of sparks and embers. Charles Hart, the actor – grandson of Shakspeare's sister – holds a prominent place among these players turned soldiers as one who rose to be a major in Rupert's Horse. Charles Hart, however, was at this period only seventeen years of age, and more than a year and a half had elapsed since Rupert had been ordered beyond sea, for his weak defence of Bristol. Rupert's major was, probably, that very "jolly good fellow" with whom Pepys used to take wine and anchovies to such excess as to make it necessary for his "girl" to rise early, and fetch her sick master fresh water, wherewith to slake his thirst, in the morning.

The enrolment of actors in either army occurred at an earlier period, and one Hart was certainly among them. Thus Alleyn, erst of the Cockpit, filled the part of quartermaster-general to the King's army at Oxford. Burt became a cornet, Shatterel was something less dignified in the same branch of the service – the cavalry. These survived to see the old curtain once more drawn; but record is made of the death of one gallant player, said to be Will Robinson, whom doughty Harrison encountered in fight, and through whom he passed his terrible sword, shouting at the same time: "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently!" This serious bit of stage business would have been more dramatically arranged had Robinson been encountered by Swanston, a player of Presbyterian tendencies, who served in the Parliamentary army. A "terrific broadsword combat" between the two might have been an encounter which both armies might have looked at with interest, and supported by applause. Of the military fortunes of the actors none was so favourable as brave little Mohun's, who crossed to Flanders, returned a major, and was subsequently set down in the "cast" under his military title. Old Taylor retired, with that original portrait of Shakspeare to solace him, which was to pass by the hands of Davenant, to that glory of our stage, "Incomparable Betterton." Pollard, too, withdrew, and lusty Lowen, after a time, kicked both sock and buskin out of sight, clapped on an apron, and appeared, with well-merited success, as landlord of the Three Pigeons, at Brentford.

[14] February 1647-48: that is, February 1648. This act succeeded the one mentioned in the next paragraph.

The actors could not comprehend why their office was suppressed, while the bear-baiters were putting money in both pockets, and non-edifying puppet-shows were enriching their proprietors. If Shakspeare was driven from Blackfriars and the Cockpit, was it fair to allow Bel and the Dragon to be enacted by dolls, at the foot of Holborn Bridge? The players were told that the public would profit by the abolition of their vocation. Loose young gentlemen, fast merchant-factors, and wild young apprentices were no longer to be seen, it was said, hanging about the theatres, spending all their spare money, much that they could not spare, and not a little which was not theirs to spend. It was uncivilly suggested that the actors were a merry sort of thieves, who used to attach themselves to the puny gallants who sought their society, and strip them of the gold pieces in their pouches, the bodkin on their thighs, the girdles buckled to give them shape, and the very beavers jauntily plumed to lend them grace and stature.

In some of the streets by the river-side a tragedy-king or two found refuge with kinsfolk. The old theatres stood erect and desolate, and the owners, with hands in empty pockets, asked how they were to be expected to pay ground-rent, now that they earned nothing? whereas their afternoon-share used to be twenty – ay, thirty shillings, sir! And see, the flag is still flying above the old house over the water, and a lad who erst played under it, looks up at the banner with a proud sorrow. An elder actor puts his hands on the lad's shoulder, and cries: "Before the old scene is on again, boy, thy face will be as battered as the flag there on the roof-top!" And as this elder actor passes on, he has a word with a poor fellow-mime who has been less provident than he, and whose present necessities he relieves according to his means. Near them stand a couple of deplorable-looking "door-keepers," or, as we should call them now, "money-takers," and the well-to-do ex-actor has his allusive joke at their old rascality, and affects to condole with them that the time is gone by when they used to scratch their neck where it itched not, and then dropped shilling and half-crown pieces behind their collars! But they were not the only poor rogues who suffered by revolution. That slipshod tapster, whom a guest is cudgelling at a tavern-door, was once the proudest and most extravagantly-dressed of the tobacco-men whose notice the smokers in the pit gingerly entreated, and who used to vend, at a penny the pipeful, tobacco that was not worth a shilling a cart-load. And behold other evidences of the hardness of the times! Those shuffling fiddlers who so humbly peer through the low windows into the tavern room, and meekly inquire: "Will you have any music, gentlemen?" they are tuneful relics of the band who were wont to shed harmony from the balcony above the stage, and play in fashionable houses, at the rate of ten shillings for each hour. *Now*, they shamble about in pairs, and resignedly accept the smallest dole, and think mournfully of the time when they heralded the coming of kings, and softly tuned the dirge at the burying of Ophelia!

Even these have pity to spare for a lower class than themselves, – the journeymen playwrights, whom the managers once retained at an annual stipend and "beneficial second nights." The old playwrights were fain to turn pamphleteers, but their works sold only for a penny, and that is the reason why those two shabby-genteel people, who have just nodded sorrowfully to the fiddlers, are not joyously tippling sack and Gascony wine, but are imbibing unorthodox ale and heretical small beer. "*Cunctis graviora cothurnis!*" murmurs the old actor, whose father was a schoolmaster; "it's more pitiful than any of your tragedies!"

The distress was severe, but the profession had to abide it. Much amendment was promised, if only something of the old life might be pursued without peril of the stocks or the whipping-post. The authorities would not heed these promises, but grimly smiled – at the actors, who undertook to promote virtue; the poets, who engaged to be proper of speech; the managers, who bound themselves to prohibit the entrance of all temptations into "the sixpenny rooms;" and the tobacco-men, who swore with earnest irreverence to vend nothing but the pure Spanish leaf, even in the threepenny galleries.

But the tragedy which ended with the killing of the King gave sad hearts to the comedians, who were in worse plight than before, being now deprived of hope itself. One or two contrived to print and sell old plays for their own benefit; a few authors continued to add a new piece, now and

then, to the stock, and that there were readers for them we may conjecture from the fact of the advertisements which began to appear in the papers – sometimes of the publication of a solitary play, at another of the entire dramatic works of that most noble lady the Marchioness of Newcastle. The actors themselves united boldness with circumspection. Richard Cox, dropping the words *play* and *player*, constructed a mixed entertainment, in which he spoke and sang; and on one occasion so aptly mimicked the character of an artisan, that a master in the craft kindly and earnestly offered to engage him. During the suppression, Cowley's "Guardian" was privately played at Cambridge. The authorities would seem to have winked at these private representations, or to have declined noticing them until after the expiration of the period within which the actors were exposed to punishment. Too great audacity, however, was promptly and severely visited from the earliest days after the issuing of the prohibitory decree. A first-rate troop obtained possession of the Cockpit for a few days, in 1648. They had played unmolested for three days, and were in the very midst of "The Bloody Brother" on the fourth, when the house was invaded by the Puritan soldiery, the actors captured, the audience dispersed, and the seats and the stage righteously smashed into fragments. The players (some of them among the most accomplished of their day) were paraded through the streets in all their stage finery, and clapped into the Gate House and other prisons, whence they were too happy to escape, after much unseemly treatment, at the cost of all the theatrical property which they had carried on their backs into durance vile.

This severity, visited in other houses as well as the Cockpit, caused some actors to despair, while it rendered others only a little more discreet. Rhodes, the old prompter at Blackfriars, turned bookseller, and opened a shop at Charing Cross. There he and one Betterton, an ex-under-cook in the kitchen of Charles I., who lived in Tothill Street, talked mournfully over the past, and, according to their respective humours, of the future. The cook's sons listened the while, and one of them especially took delight in hearing old stories of players, and in cultivating an acquaintance with the old theatrical bookseller. In the neighbourhood of the ex-prompter's shop, knots of very slenderly-built players used to congregate at certain seasons. A delegate from their number might be seen whispering to the citizen captain in command at Whitehall, who, as wicked people reported, consented, for a "consideration," not to bring his red-coats down to the Bull or other localities where private stages were erected – especially during the time of Bartholomew Fair, Christmas, and other joyous tides. To his shame, be it recorded, the captain occasionally broke his promise, or the poor actors had fallen short in their purchase-money of his pledge, and in the very middle of the piece, the little theatre would be invaded, and the audience be rendered subject to as much virtuous indignation as the actors.

The cause of the latter, however, found supporters in many of the members of the aristocracy. Close at hand, near Rhodes's shop, lived Lord Hatton, first of the four peers so styled. His house was in Scotland Yard. His lands had gone by forfeiture, but the proud old Cheshire landowner cared more for the preservation of the deed by which he and his ancestors had held them, than he did for the loss of the acres themselves. Hatton was the employer, so to speak, of Dugdale, and the patron of literary men and of actors, and, it must be added, of very frivolous company besides. He devoted much time to the preparation of a Book of Psalms and the ill-treatment of his wife; and was altogether an eccentric personage, for he recommended Lambert's daughter as a personally and politically suitable wife for Charles II., and afterwards discarded his own eldest son for marrying that incomparable lady. In Hatton, the players had a supreme patron in town; and they found friends as serviceable to them in the noblemen and gentlemen residing a few miles from the capital. These patrons opened their houses to the actors for stage representations; but even this private patronage had to be distributed discreetly. Goffe, the light-limbed lad who used to play women's parts at the "Blackfriars," was generally employed as messenger to announce individually to the audience when they were to assemble, and to the actors the time and place for the play. One of the mansions, wherein these dramatic entertainments were most frequently given, was Holland House, Kensington. It was then held and inhabited by the widowed countess of that unstable Earl of Holland, whose head

had fallen on the scaffold in March 1649; but this granddaughter of old Sir Walter Cope, who lost Camden House at cards to a Cheapside mercer, Sir Baptist Hicks, was a strong-minded woman, and perhaps found some consolation in patronising the pleasures which the enemies of her defunct lord so stringently prohibited. When the play was over, a collection was made among the noble spectators, whose contributions were divided between the players according to the measure of their merits. This done they wended their way down the avenue to the high road, where probably, on some bright summer afternoon, if a part of them prudently returned afoot to town, a joyous but less prudent few "padded it" to Brentford, and made a short but glad night of it with their brother of the "Three Pigeons."

At the most this was but a poor life; but such as it was, the players were obliged to make the best of it. If they were impatient, it was not without some reason, for though Oliver despised the stage, he could condescend to laugh at, and with, men of less dignity in their vocation than actors. Buffoonery was not entirely expelled from his otherwise grave court. At the marriage festival of his daughter Frances and his son-in-law Mr. Rich, the Protector would not tolerate the utterance of a line from Shakspeare, expressed from the lips of a player; but there were hired buffoons at that entertainment, which they well-nigh brought to a tragical conclusion. A couple of these saucy fellows seeing Sir Thomas Hillingsley, the old gentleman-usher to the Queen of Bohemia, gravely dancing, sought to excite a laugh by trying to blacken his face with a burnt cork. The high-bred, solemn old gentleman was so aroused to anger by this unseemly audacity, that he drew his dagger, and, but for swift interference, would have run it beneath the fifth rib of the most active of his rude assailants. On this occasion, Cromwell himself was almost as lively as the hired jesters; snatching off the wig of his son Richard, he feigned to fling it in the fire, but suddenly passing the wig under him, and seating himself upon it, he pretended that it had been destroyed, amid the servile applause of the edified spectators. The actors might reasonably have argued that "Hamlet" in Scotland Yard or at Holland House was a more worthy entertainment than such grown-up follies in the gallery at Whitehall.

Those follies ceased to be; Oliver had passed away, and Richard had laid down the greatness which had never sat well upon him. Important changes were at hand, and the merry rattle of Monk's drums coming up Gray's Inn Road, welcomed by thousands of dusty spectators, announced no more cheering prospect to any class than to the actors. The Oxford vintner's son, Will Davenant, might be seen bustling about in happy hurry, eagerly showing young Betterton how Taylor used to play Hamlet, under the instruction of Burbage, and announcing bright days to open-mouthed Kynaston, ready at a moment's warning to leap over his master's counter, and take his standing at the balcony as the smooth-cheeked Juliet.

Meanwhile, beaming old Rhodes, with a head full of memories of the joyous Blackfriars' days, and the merry afternoons over the water, at the Globe, leaving his once apprentice, Betterton, listening to Davenant's stage histories, and Kynaston, not yet out of his time, longing to flaunt it before an audience, took his own way to Hyde Park, where Monk was encamped, and there obtained, in due time, from that far-seeing individual, licence to once more raise the theatrical flag, enrol the actors, light up the stage, and, in a word, revive the English theatre. In a few days the drama commenced its new career in the Cockpit, in Drury Lane; and this fact seemed so significant, as to the character of General Monk's tastes that, subsequently, when he and the Council of State dined in the city halls, the companies treated their guests, after dinner, with satirical farces, such as "Citizen and Soldier," "Country Tom," and "City Dick," with, as the newspapers inform us, "dancing and singing, many shapes and ghosts, and the like; and all to please his Excellency the Lord General."

The English stage owes a debt of gratitude to both Monk and Rhodes. The former made glorious summer of the actors' winter of discontent; and the latter inaugurated the Restoration by introducing young Betterton. The son of Charles I.'s cook was, for fifty-one years, the pride of the English theatre. His acting was witnessed by more than one old contemporary of Shakspeare, – the poet's younger brother being among them, – he surviving till shortly after the accession of Charles II. The destitute

actors warmed into life and laughter again beneath the sunshine of his presence. His dignity, his marvellous talent, his versatility, his imperishable fame, are all well known and acknowledged. His industry is indicated by the fact that he created one hundred and thirty new characters! Among them were Jaffier and Valentine, three Virginiuses, and Sir John Brute. He was as mirthful in Falstaff as he was majestic in Alexander; and the craft of his Ulysses, the grace and passion of his Hamlet, the terrible force of his Othello, were not more remarkable than the low comedy of his Old Bachelor, the airyness of his Woodville, or the cowardly bluster of his Thersites. The old actors who had been frozen out, and the new who had much to learn, could not have rallied round a more noble or a worthier chief; for Betterton was not a greater actor than he was a true and honourable gentleman. Only for him, the old frozen-outs would have fared but badly. He enriched himself and them, and, as long as he lived, gave dignity to his profession. The humble lad, born in Tothill Street, before monarchy and the stage went down, had a royal funeral in Westminster Abbey, after dying in harness almost in sight of the lamps. He deserved no less, for he was the king of an art which had well-nigh perished in the Commonwealth times, and he was a monarch who probably has never since had, altogether, his equal. Off as on the stage, he was exemplary in his bearing; true to every duty; as good a country gentleman on his farm in Berkshire as he was perfect actor in town; pursuing with his excellent wife the even tenor of his way; not tempted by the vices of his time, nor disturbed by its politics; not tippling like Underhill; not plotting and betraying the plotters against William, like Goodman, nor carrying letters for a costly fee between London and St. Germains, like Scudamore. If there had been a leading player on the stage in 1647, with the qualities, public and private, which distinguished Betterton, there perhaps would have been a less severe ordinance than that which inflicted so much misery on the actors, and which, after a long decline, brought about a fall; from which they were, however, as we shall see, destined to rise and flourish.

CHAPTER III
THE "BOY ACTRESSES," AND THE "YOUNG LADIES."

The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, is the "sacred ground" of the English drama since the restoration of monarchy. At the Cockpit (Pit Street remains a memory of the place), otherwise called the Phœnix, in the "lane" above-named, the old English actors had uttered their last words before they were silenced. In a reconstruction of the edifice near, rather than on, the old site, the young English actors, under Rhodes, built their new stage, and wooed the willing town.

There was some irregularity in the first steps made to re-establish the stage, which, after an uneasy course of about four years, was terminated by Charles II., who, in 1663,[15] granted patents for two theatres, and no more, in London. Under one patent, Killigrew, at the head of the King's Company (the Cockpit being closed), opened at the new theatre in Drury Lane, in August[16] 1663, with a play of the olden time – the "Humourous Lieutenant" of Beaumont and Fletcher. Under the second patent, Davenant and the Duke of York's Company found a home – first at the old Cockpit, then in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, the building of which was commenced in 1660, on the site of the old granary of Salisbury house, which had served for a theatre in the early years of the reign of Charles I. This little stage was lapped up by the great tongue of fire, by which many a nobler edifice was destroyed, in 1666. But previous to the fire, thence went Davenant and the Duke's troop to the old Tennis Court, the first of the three theatres in Portugal Row, on the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, from which the houses took their name.

In 1671, Davenant being dead, the company, under the nominal management of his widow, migrated to a house designed by Wren, and decorated by Grinling Gibbons. This was the Duke's Theatre, in Dorset Gardens. It was in close vicinity to the old Salisbury Court Theatre, and it presented a double face – one towards Fleet Street, the other overlooking the terrace which gave access to visitors who came by the river. Later, this company was housed in Lincoln's Inn Fields again; but it migrated, in 1732, to Covent Garden, under Rich. Rich's house was burnt down in 1808, and its successor, built by Smirke, was destroyed in 1856. On the site of the latter now stands the Royal Italian Opera, the representative, in its way, of the line of houses wherein the Duke's Company struggled against their competitors of the King's.

The first house of those competitors in Drury Lane was burnt in 1672, but the King's Company took refuge in the "Fields" till Wren built the new house, opened in 1674. The two troops remained divided, yet not opposed, each keeping to its recognised stock pieces, till 1682, when Killigrew, having "shuffled off this mortal coil,"[17] the two companies, after due weeding, formed into one, and abandoning Lincoln's Inn to the tennis-players, Dorset Gardens to the wrestlers, and both to decay, they opened at the New Drury, built by Sir Christopher, on the 16th of November 1682. Wren's theatre was taken down in 1791; its successor, built by Holland, was opened in 1794, and was destroyed in 1809. The present edifice is the fourth which has occupied a site in Drury Lane. It is the work of Wyatt, and was opened in 1812.

Thus much for the edifice of the theatres of the last half of the seventeenth century. Before we come to the "ladies and gentlemen" who met upon the respective stages, and strove for the approval

[15] The second and final patents were dated – Killigrew's, 25th April 1662; Davenant's, 15th January 1663.

[16] April (2d edition). The exact date is 8th April, as given by Downes.

[17] Killigrew died after, not before, the union of the two companies. Chalmers expressly says that he lived to see them united, and gives March 1683 as the time of his death.

of the town, let me notice that, after the death of Oliver,[18] Davenant publicly exhibited a mixed entertainment, chiefly musical, but which was not held to be an infringement of the law against the acting of plays. Early in May 1659, Evelyn writes: – "I went to see a new opera, after the Italian way, in recitative music and scenes, much inferior to the Italian composure and magnificence; but it was prodigious, that in a time of such public consternation, such a vanity should be kept up or permitted." That these musical entertainments were something quite apart from "plays," is manifest by another entry in Evelyn's diary, in January 1661: – "After divers years since I had seen any play, I went to see acted 'The Scornful Lady,' at a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Of Shakspeare's brother Charles, who lived to this period, Oldys says: – "This opportunity made the actors greedily inquisitive into every little circumstance, more especially in Shakspeare's dramatic character, which his brother could relate of him. But he, it seems, was so stricken in years, and possibly his memory so weakened by infirmities (which might make him the easier pass for a man of weak intellects), that he could give them but little light into their inquiries; and all that could be recollected from him of his brother *Will* in that station, was the faint, general, and almost lost ideas he had of having once seen him act a part in one of his own comedies, wherein being to personate a decrepit old man, he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping, and unable to walk, that he was forced to be supported and carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of them sung a song." This description applies to old Adam, in "As You Like It;" and he who feebly shadowed it forth, formed a link which connected the old theatre with the new.

The principal actors in Killigrew's Company, from which that of Drury Lane is descended, were Bateman, Baxter, Bird (Theophilus), Blagden, Burt, Cartwright, Clun, Duke, Hancock, Hart, Kynaston, Lacy, Mohun, the Shatterels (William and Robert), and Wintersel. Later additions gave to this company Beeston, Bell, Charleton, "Scum" Goodman, Griffin, Hains, Joe Harris, Hughes, Lyddoll, Reeves, and Shirley.

The "ladies" were Mrs. Corey, Eastland, Hughes, Knep, the Marshalls (Anne and Rebecca), Rutter, Uphill, whom Sir Robert Howard too tardily married, and Weaver. Later engagements included those of Mrs. Boutel, Gwyn (Nell), James, Reeves, and Verjuice. These were sworn at the Lord Chamberlain's Office to serve the King. Of the "gentlemen," ten were enrolled on the Royal Household Establishment, and provided with liveries of scarlet cloth and silver lace. In the warrants of the Lord Chamberlain they were styled "*Gentlemen* of the Great Chamber;" and they might have pointed to this fact as proof of the dignity of their profession.

The company first got together by Rhodes, subsequently enlarged by Davenant, and sworn to serve the Duke of York, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was in some respects superior to that of Drury Lane. Rhodes's troop included the great Betterton, Dixon, Lilliston, Lovel, Nokes (Robert), and six lads employed to represent female characters – Angel, William Betterton, a brother of the great actor (drowned early in life, at Wallingford), Floid, Kynaston (for a time), Mosely, and Nokes (James). Later, Davenant added Blagden, Harris, Price, and Richards; Medbourn, Norris, Sandford, Smith, and Young. The actresses were Mrs. Davenport, Davies, Gibbs, Holden, Jennings, Long, and Saunderson, whom Betterton shortly after married.

This new fashion of actresses was a French fashion, and the mode being imported from France, a French Company, with women among them, came over to London. Hoping for the sanction of their countrywoman, Queen Henrietta Maria, they established themselves in Blackfriars. This essay excited all the fury of Prynne, who called these actresses by very unsavoury names; but who, in styling

[18] Davenant performed "The Siege of Rhodes" two years before Cromwell's death, namely, in 1656. [See Mr. Joseph Knight's Preface to his recent edition of the "Roscius Anglicanus."] Cromwell also permitted the entertainment named "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru" to be represented, from political motives.

them "unwomanish and graceless," did not mean to imply that they were awkward and unfeminine, but that acting was unworthy of their sex, and unbecoming women born in an era of grace.

"Glad am I to say," remarks as stout a Puritan as Prynne, namely, Thomas Brand, in a comment addressed to Laud, "glad am I to say they were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage, so that I do not think they will soon be ready to try the same again." Although Brand asserts "that all virtuous and well-disposed persons in this town" were "justly offended" at these women "or monsters rather," as Prynne calls them, "expelled from their own country," adds Brand, yet more sober-thinking people did not fail to see the propriety of Juliet being represented by a girl rather than by a boy. Accordingly, we hear of English actresses even before the Restoration, mingled, however, with boys, who shared with them that "line of business." "The boy's a pretty actor," says Lady Strangelove, in the "Court Beggar," played at the Cockpit, in 1632, "and his mother can play her part. The women now are in great request." Prynne groaned at the "request" becoming general. "They have now," he writes, in 1633, "their female players in Italy and other foreign parts."

Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes" was privately acted[19] by amateurs, including Matthew Locke and Henry Purcell; the parts of Ianthe and Roxalana were played by Mrs. Edward Coleman and another lady. The piece is so stuffed with heroic deeds, heroic love, and heroic generosity, that none more suitable could be found for ladies to appear in. Nevertheless, when Rhodes was permitted to reopen the stage, he could only assemble boys about him for his Evadnes, Aspasias, and the other heroines of ancient tragedy.

Now, the resumption of the old practice of "women's parts being represented by men in the habits of women," gave offence, and this is assigned as a reason in the first patents accorded to Killigrew and Davenant why those managers were authorised to employ actresses to represent all female characters. Killigrew was the first to avail himself of the privilege. It was time. Some of Rhodes's "boys" were men past forty, who frisked it as wenches of fifteen; even real kings were kept waiting because theatrical queens had not yet shaved; when they did appear, they looked like "the guard disguised," and when the prompter called "Desdemona" – "enter Giant!" *Who* the lady was who first trod the stage as a professional actress is not known; but that she belonged to Killigrew's Company is certain. The character she assumed was Desdemona, and she was introduced by a prologue written for the occasion by Thomas Jordan. It can hardly be supposed that she was too modest to reveal her name, and that of Anne Marshal has been suggested, as also that of Margaret Hughes. On the 3d of January 1661, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Beggar's Bush" was performed at Killigrew's Theatre, "it being very well done," says Pepys, "and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." Davenant did not bring forward *his* actresses before the end of June 1661, when he produced the second part of the "Siege of Rhodes," with Mrs. Davenport as Roxalana, and Mrs. Saunderson as Ianthe; both these ladies, with Mrs. Davies and Mrs. Long, boarded in Davenant's house. Killigrew abused his privilege to employ ladies. In 1664, his comedy, the "Parson's Wedding," wherein the plague is made a comic incident of, connected with unexampled profligacy, was acted, "I am *told*," are Pepys's own words, "by nothing but women, at the King's house."

By this time the vocation of the "boy-actresses" had altogether passed away; and there only remains for me to briefly trace the career of those old world representatives of the gentle or truculent heroines depicted by our early dramatists.

There were three members of Killigrew's, or the King's Company, who were admirable representatives of female characters before the Civil Wars. These were Hart, Burt, and Clun – all pupils of luckless Robinson, slain in fight, who was himself an accomplished "actress." Of the three, Hart rose to the greatest eminence. His Duchess, in Shirley's "Cardinal," was the most successful of his youthful parts. After the Restoration, he laid down Cassio to take Othello, from Burt, by the

[19] Mr. Knight, in the Preface before mentioned, quotes some lines from the Prologue to this performance, showing that it was a public performance for money. This being so settles the question in the next paragraph as to the identity of the first professional actress.

King's command, and was as great in the Moor as Betterton, at the other house, was in Hamlet. His Alexander, which he *created*, always filled the theatre; and his dignity therein was said to convey a lesson even to kings. His Brutus was scarcely inferior, while his Catiline was so unapproachable, that when he died, Jonson's tragedy died with him.[20] Rymer styles him and Mohun the Æsopus and Roscius of their time. When they acted together (Amintor and Melantius) in the "Maid's Tragedy," the town asked no greater treat. Hart was one of Pepys's prime favourites. He was a man whose presence delighted the eye, before his accents enchanted the ear. The humblest character intrusted to him was distinguished by his careful study. On the stage he acknowledged no audience; their warmest applause could never draw him into a moment's forgetfulness of his assumed character. In Manly, "The Plain Dealer," as in Catiline, he never found a successor who could equal him. His salary was, at the most, three pounds a week, but he is said to have realised £1000 yearly after he became a shareholder in the theatre. He finally retired in 1682, on a pension amounting to half his salary, which he enjoyed, however, scarcely a year. He died of a painful inward complaint in 1683, and was buried at Stanmore Magna.

There is a tradition that Hart, Mohun, and Betterton fought on the King's side at Edgehill, in 1642. The last-named was then a child, and some things are attributed to Charles Hart which belonged to his father. If Charles was but eighteen when his namesake, the King, returned in 1660, it must have been his father who was at Edgehill with Mohun, and who, perhaps, played female characters in his early days.

Burt, after he left off the women's gear, acted Cicero, with rare ability, in "Catiline," for the getting up of which piece Charles II. contributed £500 for robes. Of Clun, in or out of petticoats, the record is brief. His Iago was superior to Mohun's, but Lacy excelled him in the "Humourous Lieutenant;" but as Subtle, in the "Alchymist," he was the admiration of all playgoers. After acting this comic part, Clun made a tragic end on the night of the 3d of August 1664. With a lady hanging on his arm, and some liquor lying under his belt, he was gaily passing on his way to his country lodgings in Kentish Town, when he was assailed, murdered, and flung into a ditch, by rogues, one of whom was captured, "an Irish fellow, most cruelly butchered and bound." "The house will have a great miss of him," is the epitaph of Pepys upon versatile Clun.

Of the boys belonging to Davenant's Company, who at first appeared in woman's boddice, but soon found their occupation gone, some were of greater fame than others. One of these, Angel, turned from waiting-maids to low comedy, caricatured Frenchmen and foolish lords. We hear nothing of him after 1673. The younger Betterton, as I have said, was drowned at Wallingford. Mosely and Floid represented a vulgar class of women, and both died before the year 1674; but Kynaston and James Nokes long survived to occupy prominent positions on the stage.

Kynaston made "the loveliest lady," for a boy, ever beheld by Pepys. This was in 1660, when Kynaston played Olympia, the Duke's sister, in the "Loyal Subject;" and went with a young fellow-actor to carouse, after the play, with Pepys and Captain Ferrers. Kynaston was a handsome fellow under every guise. On the 7th of January 1661, says Pepys, "Tom and I, and my wife, to the theatre, and there saw 'The Silent Woman.' Among other things here, Kynaston, the boy, had the good turn to appear in three shapes. First, as a poor woman, in ordinary clothes, to please Morose; then, in fine clothes, as a gallant – and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house; and lastly, as a man – and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house." When the play was concluded, and it was not the lad's humour to carouse with the men, the ladies would seize on him, in his theatrical dress, and, carrying him to Hyde Park in their coaches, be foolishly proud of the precious freight which they bore with them.

Kynaston was not invariably in such good luck. There was another handsome man, Sir Charles Sedley, whose style of dress the young actor aped; and his presumption was punished by a ruffian,

[20] Very questionable. Langbaine (1691) says, "This play is still in vogue on the stage, and always presented with success."

hired by the baronet, who accosted Kynaston in St. James's Park, as "Sir Charles," and thrashed him in that character. The actor then mimicked Sir Charles on the stage. A consequence was, that on the 30th of January 1669,[21] Kynaston was waylaid by three or four assailants, and so clubbed by them, that there was no play on the following evening; and the victim, mightily bruised, was forced to keep his bed. He did not recover in less than a week. On the 9th of February he reappeared, as the King of Tidore, in the "Island Princess," which "he do act very well," says Pepys, "after his beating by Sir Charles Sedley's appointment."

The boy who used to play Evadne, and now enacted the tyrants of the drama, retained a certain beauty to the last. "Even at past sixty," Cibber tells us, "his teeth were all sound, white, and even as one would wish to see in a reigning toast of twenty." Colley attributes the formal gravity of Kynaston's mien "to the stately step he had been so early confined to in a female decency." The same writer praises Kynaston's Leon, in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," for its determined manliness and honest authority. In the heroic tyrants, his piercing eye, his quick, impetuous tone, and the fierce, lion-like majesty of his bearing and utterance, "gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration."

When Cibber played Syphax, in "Cato," he did it as he thought Kynaston would have done, had he been alive to impersonate the character. Kynaston roared through the bombast of some of the dramatists with a laughable earnestness; but in Shakspeare's monarchs he was every inch a king – dignified and natural. The true majesty of his Henry IV. was so manifest, that when he whispered to Hotspur, "Send us your prisoners, or you'll hear of it," he conveyed, says Cibber, "a more terrible menace in it than the loudest intemperance of voice could swell to." Again, in the interview between the dying King and his son – the dignity, majestic grief, the paternal affection, the injured, kingly feeling, the pathos and the justness of the rebuke – were alike remarkable. The actor was equal to the task assigned him by the author – putting forth "that peculiar and becoming grace which the best writer cannot inspire into any actor that is not born with it."

Kynaston remained on the stage from 1659 to 1699. By this time his memory began to fail and his spirit to leave him. These imperfections, says the generous Colley, "were visibly not his own, but the effects of decaying nature." But Betterton's nature was not thus decaying; and his labour had been far greater than that of Kynaston, who created only a score of original characters, the best known of which are, Harcourt, in the "Country Wife;" Freeman, in the "Plain Dealer;" and Count Baldwin, in "Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage." His early practice in representing female characters affected his voice in some disagreeable way. "What makes you feel sick?" said Kynaston to Powell – suffering from a too riotous "last night." "How can I feel otherwise," asked Powell, "when I hear your voice?"

Edward Kynaston died in 1712, and lies buried in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. If not the greatest actor of his day, Kynaston was the greatest of the "boy-actresses." So exalted was his reputation, "that," says Downes, "it has since been disputable among the judicious, whether any woman that succeeded him so sensibly touched the audience as he."

In one respect he was more successful than Betterton, for he not only made a fortune, but kept what he had made, and left it to his only son. This son improved the bequest by his industry as a mercer in Covent Garden; and, probably remembering that he was well-descended from the Kynastons of Oteley, Salop, he sent his own son to college, and lived to see him ordained. This Reverend Mr. Kynaston purchased the impropriation of Aldgate; and, despite the vocations of his father and grandfather, but in consequence of the prudence and liberality of both, was willingly acknowledged by his Shropshire kinsmen.

Kynaston's contemporary, James Nokes, was as prudent and as fortunate as he; but James was not so well-descended. His father (and he himself for a time) was a city toyman – not so well to do, but he allowed his sons to go on the stage, where Robert was a respectable actor, and James, after a brief exercise of female characters, was admirable in his peculiar line. The toyman's son became

[21] Dr. Doran misreads Pepys, who gives the date as 31st January 1669.

a landholder, and made of his nephew a lord of the soil. Thus, even in those days of small salaries, players could build up fortunes; because the more prudent among them nursed the little they could spare with care, and of that little made the very utmost.

Nokes was, to the last night of his career, famous for his impersonation of the Nurse in two plays; first, in that strange adaptation by Otway of "Romeo and Juliet" to a Roman tragedy, "Caius Marius;" and secondly, in Nevil Payne's fierce, yet not bombastic drama, "Fatal Jealousy." Of the portraits to be found in Cibber's gallery, one of the most perfect, drawn by Colley's hand, is that of James Nokes. Cibber attributes his general excellence to "a plain and palpable simplicity of nature, which was so utterly his own, that he was often as accountably diverting in his common speech as on the stage." His very conversation was an unctuous acting; and, in the truest sense of the word, he was "inimitable." Cibber himself, accomplished mimic as he was, confessedly failed in every attempt to reproduce the voice and manner of James Nokes, who identified himself with every part so easily, as to reap a vast amount of fame at the cost of hardly an hour's study. His range was through the entire realm of broad comedy, and Cibber thus photographs him for the entertainment of posterity.

"He scarce ever made his first entrance in a play but he was received with an involuntary applause, not of hands only, for those may be, and have often been, partially prostituted and bespoken, but by a general laughter, which the very sight of him provoked, and nature could not resist; yet the louder the laugh the graver was his look upon it; and sure the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops into a titter, could he have been honoured (may it be no offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend auditors. In the ludicrous distresses which by the laws of comedy folly is often involved in, he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity, and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot point whether you ought not to have pitied him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb, studious pout, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content as the most absurd thing he could say upon it."

This great comic actor was naturally of a grave and sober countenance; "but the moment he spoke, the settled seriousness of his features was utterly discharged, and a dry, drolling, or laughing levity took such full possession of him, that I can only refer the idea of him to your imagination." His clear and audible voice better fitted him for burlesque heroes, like Jupiter Ammon, than his middle stature; but the pompous inanity of his travestied pagan divinity, was as wonderful as the rich stolidity of his contentedly ignorant fools.

There was no actor whom the City so rejoiced in as Nokes; there was none whom the Court more delighted to honour. In May 1670, Charles II., and troops of courtiers, went down to Dover to meet the Queen-mother, and took with them the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields comedians. When Henrietta Maria arrived, with her suite of French ladies and gentlemen, the latter attired, according to the prevailing fashion, in very short blue or scarlet laced coats, with broad sword belts, the English comedians played before the royal host and his guests the play founded on Molière's "Ecole des Femmes," and called "Sir Solomon." Nokes acted Sir Arthur Addel, in dressing for which part he was assisted by the Duke of Monmouth. In order that he might the better ape the French mode, the duke took off his own sword and belt, and buckled them to the actor's side. At his first entrance on the stage, King and Court broke into unextinguishable laughter, so admirably were the foreign guests caricatured; at which outrage on courtesy and hospitality, the guests, naturally enough, "were much chagrined," says Downes. Nokes retained the duke's sword and belt to his dying day, which fell in the course of the year 1692. He was the original representative of about forty characters, in plays which have long since disappeared

from the stage. Charles II. was the first who recognised, on the occasion of his playing the part of Norfolk, in "Henry VIII.," the merit of Nokes as an actor.[22]

James Nokes left to his nephew something better than the sword and belt of the Duke of Monmouth, namely, a landed estate at Totteridge, near Barnet, of the value of £400 a year. Pepys may have kissed that nephew's mother, on the August day of 1665, when he fell into company near Rochester with a lady and gentleman riding singly, and differing as to the merits of a copy of verses, which Pepys, by his style of reading aloud, got the husband to confess that they were as excellent as the wife had pronounced them to be. "His name is Nokes," writes the diarist, "over against Bow Church… We promised to meet, if ever we come both to London again, and at parting, I had a fair salute on horseback, in Rochester streets, of the lady."

Having thus seen the curtain fall upon the once "boy-actresses," I proceed to briefly notice the principal ladies in the respective companies of Killigrew and Davenant, commencing with those of the King's House, or Theatre Royal, under Killigrew's management, chiefly in Drury Lane. The first name of importance in this list is that of Mrs. Hughes, who, on the stage from 1663 to 1676, was more remarkable for her beauty than for her great ability. When the former, in 1668, subdued Prince Rupert, there was more jubilee at the Court of Charles II., at Tunbridge Wells, than if the philosophic Prince had fallen upon an invention that should benefit mankind. Rupert, whom the plumed gallants of Whitehall considered as a rude mechanic, left his laboratory, put aside his reserve, and wooed in due form the proudest, perhaps, of the actresses of her day. Only in the May of that year Pepys had saluted her with a kiss, in the green-room of the Kings House. She was then reputed to be the intimate friend and favourite of Sir Charles Sedley. "A mighty pretty woman," says Pepys, "and seems, but is not, modest." The Prince enshrined the frail beauty in that home of Sir Nicholas Crispe, at Hammersmith, which was subsequently occupied by Bubb Doddington, the Margravine of Anspach, and Queen Caroline of Brunswick. She well-nigh ruined her lover, at whose death there was little left beside a collection of jewels, worth £20,000, which were disposed of by lottery, in order to pay his debts. Mrs. Hughes was not unlike her own Mrs. Moneylove in "Tom Essence," a very good sort of person till temptation beset her. After his death she squandered much of the estate which Rupert had left to her, chiefly by gambling. Her contemporary, Nell Gwyn, purchased a celebrated pearl necklace belonging to the deceased Prince for £4520, a purchase which must have taken the appearance of an insult, in the eyes of Mrs. Hughes. The daughter of this union, Ruperta, who shared with her mother the modest estate bequeathed by the Prince, married General Emanuel Scrope Howe. One of the daughters of this marriage was the beautiful and reckless maid of honour to Caroline, Princess of Wales, whom the treachery of Nanty Lowther sent broken-hearted to the grave, in 1726. Through Ruperta, however, the blood of her parents is still continued in the family of Sir Edward Bromley.

Mrs. Knipp (or Knep) was a different being from Margaret Hughes. She was a pretty creature, with a sweet voice, a mad humour, and an ill-looking, moody, jealous husband, who vexed the soul and bruised the body of his sprightly, sweet-toned, and wayward wife. Excellent company she was found by Pepys and his friends, whatever her horse-jockey of a husband may have thought of her, or Mrs. Pepys of the philandering of her own husband with the minx, whom she did not hesitate to pronounce a "wench," and whom Pepys himself speaks of affectionately as a "jade" he was always glad to see. Abroad he walks with her in the New Exchange to look for pretty faces; and of the home of an actress, in 1666, we have a sketch in the record of a visit in November, "To Knipp's lodgings, whom I find not ready to go home with me; and there staid reading of Waller's verses, while she finished dressing, her husband being by. Her lodging very mean, and the condition she lives in; yet makes a show without doors, God bless us!"

[22] I doubt whether *James* Nokes ever played the part. Genest evidently approves of Davies's suggestion that Robert Nokes was the actor of it.

Mrs. Knipp's characters embraced the rakish fine ladies, the rattling ladies'-maids, one or two tragic parts; and where singing was required, priestesses, nuns, and milkmaids. As one of the latter, Pepys was enchanted at her appearance, with her hair simply turned up in a knot, behind.

Her intelligence was very great, her simple style of dressing much commended; and she could deliver a prologue as deftly as she could either sing or dance, and with as much grace as she was wont to throw into manifestations of touching grief or tenderness. She disappears from the bills in 1678, after a fourteen years' service; and there is no further record of the life of Mistress Knipp.

Anne and Rebecca Marshall are names which one can only reluctantly associate with that of Stephen Marshall the divine, who is said to have been their father. The Long Parliament frequently commanded the eloquent incumbent of Finchingfield, Essex, to preach before them. Cambridge University was as proud of him as a distinguished *alumnus*, as Huntingdonshire was of having him for a son. In affairs of religion he was the oracle of Parliament, and his advice was sought even in political difficulties. He was a mild and conscientious man, of whom Baxter remarked, that "if all the bishops had been of the spirit and temper of Usher, the Presbyterians of the temper of Mr. Marshall, and the Independents like Mr. Burroughs, the divisions of the Church would have been easily compromised." Stephen Marshall was a man who, in his practice, "preached his sermons o'er again;" and Firmin describes him as an "example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, and in purity." He died full of honours and understanding; and Westminster Abbey afforded him a grave, from which he was ruthlessly ejected at the Restoration. It is hardly possible to believe that such a saint was the father of the two beautiful actresses whom Nell Gwyn taunted with being the erring daughters of a "praying Presbyterian."

On the other hand, we learn from Sir Peter Leicester's *History of Cheshire*, that the *royalist*, Lord Gerard of Bromley, retained this staunch Presbyterian in his house as his chaplain. Further, we are told, that this chaplain married a certain illegitimate Elizabeth, whose father was a Dutton of Dutton, and that of this marriage came Anne and Rebecca. As Sir Peter was himself connected with both the Gerards and Duttons by marriage, he must be held as speaking with some authority in this matter.

Pepys says of Anne Marshall, that her voice was "not so sweet as Ianthe's," meaning Mrs. Betterton's. Rebecca had a beautiful hand, was very imposing on the stage, and even off of it was "mighty fine, pretty, and noble." She had the reputation of facilitating the intrigue which Lady Castlemaine kept up with Hart, the actor, to avenge herself on the King because of his admiration for Mrs. Davies. One of her finest parts was Dorothea, in the "Virgin Martyr;" and her Queen of Sicily (an "up-hill" part) to Nell Gwyn's Florimel, in Dryden's "Secret Love," was highly appreciated by the playgoing public.

With the exception of Mrs. Corey, the mimic, and pleasing little Mrs. Boutel, who realised a fortune, with her girlish voice and manner, and her supremely innocent and fascinating ways, justifying the intensity of love with which she inspired youthful heroes, the only other actress of the King's company worth mentioning is Nell Gwyn; but Nell was the crown of them all, winning hearts throughout her jubilant career, beginning in her early girlhood with that of a link-boy, and ending in her womanhood with that of the king.

Nell Gwyn is claimed by the Herefordshire people. In Hereford city, a mean house in the rear of the Oak Inn is pointed out as the place of her birth. The gossips there little thought that a child so humbly born would be the mother of a line of dukes, or that her great grandson[23] should be the bishop of her native town, and occupy for forty years the episcopal palace in close proximity to the poor cottage in which the archest of hussies first saw the light.

But the claims of Pipe Lane, Hereford, are disputed by Coal Yard, Drury Lane, and also by Oxford, where Nell's father, James Gwyn, a "captain," according to some, a fruiterer according to

[23] This should be grandson.

others, died in prison. The captain with his wife Helena,[24] somewhile a resident in St. Martin's Lane, had two daughters, Nell and Rose. The latter married a Captain Capels, and, secondly, a Mr. Foster; little else is known of her, save that her less reputable sister left her a small legacy, and that she survived till the year 1697. Nelly was born early in 1650; and tradition states that she very early ran away from her country home to town, and studied for the stage by going every night to the play. I suspect Coal Yard was her first bower, that thence she issued to cry "fresh herrings!" and captivate the hearts of susceptible link-boys; and passed, from being hander of strong waters to the gentlemen who patronised Madame Ross's house, to taking her place in the pit, with her back to the orchestra, and selling oranges and pippins, with pertinent wit, gratis, to liberal fops who would buy the first and return the second with interest. As Rochester assures us, there was a "wondering pit" in presence of this smartest and most audacious of orange-girls. It was natural enough that she should attract the notice of the actors, that Lacy should give her instruction, and that from Charles Hart she should take that and all the love he could pay her. The latter two were spoken of in prologues, long after both were dead, as "those darlings of the stage."

Under the auspices of Charles Hart, Nelly made her first appearance at the (King's) theatre, in a serious part, Cydaria, in the "Indian Emperor." She was then not more than fifteen, though some say seventeen years of age. For tragedy she was unfitted: her stature was low, though her figure was graceful; and it was not till she assumed comic characters, stamped the smallest foot in England on the boards, and laughed with that peculiar laugh that, in the excess of it, her eyes almost disappeared, she fairly carried away the town, and enslaved the hearts of city and of court. She spoke prologues and epilogues with wonderful effect, danced to perfection, and in her peculiar but not extensive line was, perhaps, unequalled for the natural feeling which she put into the parts most suited to her. She was so fierce of repartee that no one ventured a second time to allude sneeringly to her antecedents. She was coarse, too, when the humour took her; could curse pretty strongly if the house was not full, and was given, in common with the other ladies of the company, to loll about and talk loudly in the public boxes, when she was not engaged on the stage. She left both stage and boxes for a time, in 1667, to keep mad house at Epsom with the clever Lord Buckhurst – a man who for one youthful vice exhibited a thousand manly virtues. The story, that Lord Buckhurst separated from Mistress Gwyn for a money consideration and a title, can be disproved by the testimony of a character which all Peru could not have influenced, and of chronology, which sets the story at nought.

They who would read Buckhurst's true character, will find it in the eloquent and graceful dedication which Prior made of his poems to Buckhurst's son, Lionel. Like the first Sackville, of the line of the Earls of Dorset, he was himself a poet; and, "To all you ladies now on land," although not quite the impromptu it is said to have been, is an evidence how gracefully he could strike the lyre on the eve of a great battle. In short, Buckhurst, who took Nelly from the stage, and who found Prior in a coffee-shop and added him to literature, was a "man," brave, truthful, gay, honest, and universally beloved. He was the people's favourite; and Pope assures us, when Buckhurst had become Earl of Dorset, that he was "the grace of courts, the muses' pride."

After a year's absence,[25] Mistress Gwyn returned to the stage. In all nature, there was nothing better than she, in certain parts. Pepys never hoped to see anything like her in Florimel, with her changes of sex and costume. She was little, pretty, and witty; danced perfectly, and with such applause, that authors would fain have appropriated the approbation bestowed on her "jig," to the play in which it was introduced. A play, without Nell, was no play at all to Mr. Pepys. When, in 1667, she followed Buckhurst to Epsom, and flung up her parts and an honestly-earned salary for a poor £100 a-year, Pepys exclaims, "Poor girl! I pity her; but more the loss of her at the King's house." The Admiralty-

[24] Or Eleanor.

[25] She was absent only about six weeks; Pepys chronicles her departure under July 13, 1667, and her return under August 22, 1667.

clerk's admiration was confined to her merry characters; he speaks of her Emperor's Daughter, in the "Indian Emperor," as "a great and serious part, which she does most basely."

Her own party hailed her return; but she did not light upon a bed of roses. Lady Castlemaine was no longer her patroness – rather that and more of Nelly's old lover, Charles Hart, who flouted the ex-favourite of Buckhurst. That ex-favourite, however, bore with equal indifference the scorn of Charles Hart and the contempt of Charles Sackville; – she saw compensation for both, in the royal homage of Charles Stuart. Meanwhile, she continued to enchant the town in comedy, to "spoil" serious parts in Sir Robert Howard's mixed pieces, and yet to act with great success characters, in which natural emotion, bordering on insanity, was to be represented. Early in 1668, we find her among the loose companions of King Charles; "and I am sorry for it," says Pepys, "and can hope for no good to the state, from having a Prince so devoted to his pleasure." The writers for the stage were of a like opinion. Howard wrote his "Duke of Lerma," as a vehicle of reproof to the King, who sat, a careless auditor, less troubled than Pepys himself, who expected that the play would be interrupted by royal authority. The last of her original characters was that of Almahide, in Dryden's "Conquest of Granada," the prologue to which she spoke in a straw hat as broad as a cart wheel, and thereby almost killed the King with laughter. In this piece, her old lover, Hart, played Almanzor; and his position with respect to King Boabdelin (Kynaston) and Almahide (Nelly) corresponds with that in which he stood towards King Charles and the actress. The passages reminding the audience of this complex circumstance threw the house into "convulsions."

From this time, Ellen Gwyn disappears from the stage. A similar surname appears in the play-bills from 1670 to 1682; but there is no ground for believing that the "Madam Gwyn" of the later period was the Mrs. Ellen of the earlier, poorer, and merrier times. Nelly's first son, Charles Beauclerc, was born in her house, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in May 1670; her second, in the following year, at her house in Pall Mall, the garden terrace of which overlooked the then green walk in the park, from which Evelyn saw, with shame, the King talking with the impudent "comedian." This younger son, James, died at Paris, 1680. The elder had Otway for a tutor. In his sixth year he was created Earl of Burford, and in his fourteenth was created a duke. His mother had addressed him, in the King's hearing, by an epithet referring to his illegitimacy, on the plea that she did not know by what title to call him. Charles made him an earl. Accident of death raised him to a dukedom. Harry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans, of whom report made the second husband of Henrietta Maria, had just died. Blind as he had been, he had played cards to the last – some one sitting near him to tell him the points. At an age approaching to ninety years, he had passed away. Charles gave the name of St. Albans, with the title of duke, to Nell Gwyn's eldest son, adding thereto the registrarship of the High Court of Chancery, and the office (rendered hereditary) of Master Falconer of England. The present and tenth Duke of St. Albans is the lineal descendant of Charles Stuart and Ellen Gwyn.

The King had demurred to a request to settle £500 a year on this lady, and yet within four years she is known to have exacted from him above £60,000. Subsequently, £6000, annually, were tossed to her from the Excise, – that hardest taxation of the poor, – and £3000 more were added for the expenses of each son. She blazed publicly at Whitehall, with diamonds out-flashing those usually worn, as Evelyn has it, "by the like cattle." At Burford House, Windsor, her gorgeous country residence, she could gaily lose £1400[26] in one night at basset, and purchase diamond necklaces the next day, at fabulous prices. Negligent dresser as she was, she always looked fascinating; and fascinating as she was, she had a ready fierceness and a bitter sarcasm at hand, when other royal favourites, or sons of favourites, assailed or sneered at her. With the King and his brother she bandied jokes as freely as De Pompadour or Du Barry with Louis XV. By impulse, she could be charitable; but by neglecting the claims of her own creditors she could be cruel. Charles alluded to her extravagance when, on his deathbed, he recommended those shameless women, Cleveland and Portsmouth, to his brother's

[26] Peter Cunningham says, "1400 guineas, or £5000 at least of our present money."

kindness, and hoped he would "not let Nelly starve." An apocryphal story attributes the founding of Chelsea Hospital to Nelly's tenderness for a poor old wounded soldier who had been cheated of his pay. The dedications to her of books by such people as Aphra Behn and Duffet are blasphemous in their expressions, making of her, as they do, a sort of divine essence, and becoming satirical by their exaggerated and disgusting eulogy. For such a person, the pure and pious Bishop Ken was once called upon to yield up an apartment in which he lodged, and the peerage had a narrow escape of having her foisted upon it as Countess of Greenwich. This clever actress died in November 1687 of a fit of apoplexy, by which she had been stricken in the previous March. She was then in her thirty-eighth year. She had been endowed like a princess, but she left debts, and died just in time to allow James to discharge them out of the public purse. Finally, she was carried to old St. Martin's-in-the-Fields to be buried, and Tennison preached her funeral sermon. When this was subsequently made the ground of exposing him to the reproof of Queen Mary, she remarked, that the good doctor, no doubt, had said nothing but what the facts authorised.

In the time of Nelly's most brilliant fortunes, the people who laughed at her wit and impudence publicly contemned her. In February 1680 she visited the Duke's Theatre, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on which occasion a person in the pit called her loudly by a name which, to do her justice, she never repudiated. The affront, which she herself could laugh at, was taken up by William Herbert, brother of Philip, Earl of Pembroke, who had married the younger sister of another of the King's favourites, Henrietta de Querouaille. The audience took part, some with the assailant, others with the champion of Nelly. Many swords were drawn, the sorrows of the "Orphan" were suspended, there was a hubbub in the house, and more scratches given than blood spilt. That Nelly found a knight in Thomas Herbert only proves that a hot-headed young gentleman may become a very sage as years grow upon him. This Thomas, when Earl of Pembroke, was "first plenipotentiary" at the making of the treaty of Ryswick, and Chief Commissioner in establishing the Union of England and Scotland. His excellent taste and liberality laid the foundations of the collection of antiques which yet attracts visitors to Wilton. But love for leading play-house factions did not die out in his family. Four and forty years after he had drawn sword for the reputation of Nell Gwyn, his third Countess, Mary, sister of Viscount Howe, headed the Cuzzoni party at the Opera-house against the Faustina faction, led by the Countess of Burlington and Lady Delawar. Whenever Faustina opened her mouth to sing, Lady Pembroke and her friends hissed the singer heartily; and as soon as Cuzzoni made a similar attempt, Lady Burlington and her followers shrieked her into silence. Lord Pembroke sat by, thinking, perhaps, of the young days when he was the champion of Nell Gwyn, or of Margaret Symcott, if an old tradition be true that such was Nelly's real name.

Of the ladies who played at the Duke's House, under Davenant, the principal were Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Davies, Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Holden, Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Long, and Mrs. Norris. Chief among these were Mistresses Davenport, Davies, Saunderson, and Long. Mrs. Davenport is remembered as the Roxalana of Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes," which she played so well that Pepys could not forget her in either of her successors, Mrs. Betterton or Mrs. Norton. She is still better remembered in connection with a story of which she is the heroine, although that character in it has been ascribed to others.

Aubrey de Vere, the twentieth Earl of Oxford, was the last of his house who held that title, but the one who held it the longest, namely, seventy years, from 1632 to 1702. Aubrey de Vere despised the old maxim, "Noblesse oblige." He lived a roystering life, kept a roystering house, and was addicted to hard drinking, rough words, and unseemly brawling and sword-slashing in his cups. The young earl made love, after the fashion of the day and the man, to Mrs. Davenport, but he might as well have made love to Diana; and it was not till he proposed marriage that the actress condescended to listen to his suit. The lovers were privately married, and the lady was, in the words of old Downes, "erept the stage." The honeymoon, however, was speedily obscured; Lord Oxford grew indifferent and brutal. When the lady talked of her rights, he informed her that she was not Countess of Oxford at all. The

apparent reverend gentleman who had performed the ceremony of marriage was a trumpeter, who served under this very noble Lord in the King's own regiment of cavalry. The forlorn fair one, after threatening suicide, sought out the King, fell at his feet, and demanded justice. The award was made in the shape of an annuity of £300 a year, with which "Lord Oxford's Miss," as Evelyn calls her, seems to have been satisfied and consoled; for Pepys, soon after, being at the play, "saw the old Roxalana in the chief box, in a velvet gown, as the fashion is, and very handsome, at which I was glad."

As for Miss Mary Davies, it is uncertain whether she was the daughter of a Wiltshire blacksmith, or the less legitimate offspring of Thomas Howard, the first Earl of Berkshire, or of the earl's son – not the poet, but the colonel. However this may be, Mary Davies was early on the stage, where she danced well, played moderately ill, announced the next afternoon's performance with grace, and won an infamous distinction at the King's hands, by her inimitable singing of the old song, "My lodging is on the cold ground." Then there was the publicly furnishing of a house for her, and the presentation of a ring worth £600, and much scandal to good men and honest women. Thereupon Miss Davies grew an "impertinent slut," and my Lady Castlemaine waxed melancholy, and meditated mischief against her royal and fickle lover. The patient Queen herself was moved to anger by the new position of Miss Davies, and when the latter appeared in a play at Whitehall, in which she was about to dance, her Majesty rose and left the house. But neither the offended dignity of the Queen, nor Lady Castlemaine "looking fire," nor the bad practical jokes of Nell Gwyn, could loose the King from the temporary enchantment to which he surrendered himself. Their daughter was that Mary Tudor, who married the second Earl of Derwentwater, whose son, the third earl, was the gallant young fellow who lost his head for aid afforded to his cousin, the first Pretender, in 1715. Before his death, a request was made to the Duke of Richmond, son of Charles II., by Madlle. de Querouaille, to present a memorial to the Lords in order to save the young earl's life. The Duke presented the memorial, but he added his earnest hope that their lordships would reject the prayer of it! In such wise did the illegitimate Stuarts play brother to each other! Through the marriage of the daughter of Lord Derwentwater with the eighth Lord Petre, the blood of the Stuart and of Moll Davies still runs in their lineal descendant, the present and twelfth lord.

Happy are the women who have no histories! Such is the case with Miss Saunderson, better known to us as Mrs. Betterton. For about thirty years she played the chief female characters, especially in Shakspeare's plays, with great success. She created as many new parts as she played years; but they were in old-world pieces, which have been long forgotten. In the home which she kept with her husband, charity, hospitality, and dignity abided. So unexceptionable was Mrs. Betterton's character, that when Crowne's "Calisto" was to be played at court in 1674, she was chosen to be instructress to the Lady Mary and the Lady Anne. These princesses derived from Mrs. Betterton's lessons the accomplishment for which both were distinguished when queens, of pronouncing speeches from the throne in a distinct and clear voice, with sweetness of intonation, and grace of enunciation. Mrs. Betterton subsequently instructed the Princess Anne in the part of Semandra, and her husband did the like office for the young noblemen who also played in Lee's rattling tragedy of "Mithridates." Two individuals, better qualified by their professional skill and their moral character, to instruct the young princesses and courtiers, and to exercise over them a wholesome authority, could not then have been found on or off the stage. After Betterton's death, Queen Anne settled on her old teacher of elocution a pension of £500 a year.

Of the remainder of the actresses who first joined Davenant, there is nothing recorded, except their greater or less efficiency. Of Mrs. Holden, Betterton's kinswoman, the only incident that I can recall to mind is, that once, by the accidental mispronunciation of a word, when playing in "Romeo and Juliet," and giving it "a vehement action, it put the house into such a laughter, that London Bridge at low water was silence to it!" Under its echoes let us pass to the "gentlemen of the King's Company."

CHAPTER IV
THE GENTLEMEN OF THE KING'S COMPANY

Of the King's Company, under Killigrew – Hart, Burt, and Clun have already been noticed as players who commenced their career by acting female parts. Of the other early members of this troop, the first names of importance are those of Lacy, and little Major Mohun, the low comedian, and the high tragedian. Of those who precede them alphabetically, but little remains on record. We only know of Theophilus Bird, that he broke his leg when dancing in Suckling's "Aglaura," probably when the poet changed his tragedy, in which the characters killed each other, into a sort of comedy, in which they all survived. Cartwright, on the other hand, has left a lasting memorial. If you would see how the kind old fellow looked, go down to Dulwich College – that grand institution, for which actors have done so much and which has done so little for actors – and gaze on his portrait there. It is the picture of a man who bequeathed his books, pictures, and furniture to the College which Alleyn, another actor, had founded. In early life, Cartwright had been a bookseller, at the corner of Turnstile, Holborn; and in his second vocation his great character was Falstaff.

Lacy was a great Falstaff, too; and his portrait, a triple one, painted by Wright and etched by Hopkins, one of the Princess Elizabeth's pages, is familiarly known to Hampton Court visitors. Lacy had been first a dancing-master, then a lieutenant in the army, before he tried the stage. In his day he had no equal; and his admirers denied that the day to come would ever see his equal. Lacy was handsome, both in shape and feature, and is to be remembered as the original performer of Teague, in the "Committee;" a play of Howard's, subsequently cut down to the farce of "The Honest Thieves." And eight years later (1671), taught by Buckingham, and mimicking Dryden, he startled the town with that immortal Bayes, in the "Rehearsal;" a part so full of happy opportunities that it was coveted or essayed for many years, not only by every great actor, whatever his line, but by many an actress, too; and last of all by William Farren, in 1819.

There was nothing within the bounds of comedy that Lacy could not act well. Evelyn styles him "Roscius." Frenchman, or Scot, or Irishman, fine gentleman or fool, rogue or honest simpleton, Tartuffe or Drench, old man or loquacious woman, – in all, Lacy was the delight of the town for about a score of years. The King ejected the best players from parts, considered almost as their property, and assigned them to Lacy. His wardrobe was a spectacle of itself, and gentlemen of leisure and curiosity went to see it. He took a positive enjoyment in parts which enabled him to rail at the rascalities of courtiers. Sometimes this Aristophanic licence went too far. In Howard's "Silent Woman," the sarcasms reached the King, and moved his majesty to wrath, and to locking up Lacy himself in the Porter's Lodge. After a few days' detention, he was released; whereupon Howard, meeting him behind the scenes, congratulated him. Lacy, still ill in temper, abused the poet for the nonsense he had put into the part of Captain Otter, which was the cause of all the mischief. Lacy further told Howard he was "more a fool than a poet." Thereat the honourable Edward, raising his glove, smote Lacy smartly with it over the face. Jack Lacy retaliated by lifting his cane and letting it descend quite as smartly on the pate of a man who was cousin to an earl. Ordinary men marvelled that the honourable Edward did not run Jack through the body. On the contrary, without laying hand to hilt, Howard hastened to the King, lodged his complaint, and the house was thereupon ordered to be closed. Thus, many starved for the indiscretion of one; but the gentry rejoiced at the silencing of the company, as those clever fellows and their fair mates were growing, as that gentry thought, "too insolent."

Lacy, soon after, was said to be dying, and altogether so ill-disposed, as to have refused ghostly advice at the hands of "a bishop, an old acquaintance of his," says Pepys, "who went to see him." Who could this bishop have been who was the old acquaintance of the ex-dancing-master and lieutenant? Herbert Croft, or Seth Ward? – or, Isaac Barrow, of Sodor-and-Man, whose father, the mercer, had

lived near the father of Betterton? But, whoever he may have been, the King's favour restored the actor to health; and he remained Charles's favourite comedian till his death, in 1681.

When Lacy's posthumous comedy, "Sir Hercules Buffoon," was produced in 1684, the man with the longest and crookedest nose, and the most wayward wit in England – Tom Durfey – furnished the prologue. In that piece he designated Lacy as the standard of true comedy. If the play does not take, said lively Tom —

"all that we can say on't
Is, we've his fiddle, but not his hands to play on't!"

Genest, a critic not very hard to please, says that Lacy's friends should have "buried his fiddle with him."

Michael Mohun is the pleasantest and, perhaps, the greatest name on the roll of the King's Company. When the players offended the King, Mohun was the peacemaker.

One cannot look on Mohun's portrait, at Knowle, without a certain mingling of pleasure and respect. That long-haired young fellow wears so frank an aspect, and the hand rests on the sword so delicately yet so firmly! He is the very man who might "rage like Cethegus, or like Cassius die." Lee could never willingly write a play without a part for Mohun, who, with Hart, was accounted among the good actors that procured profitable "third days" for authors. No Maximin could defy the gods as he did; and there has been no franker Clytus since the day he originally represented the character in "Alexander the Great." In some parts he contested the palm with Betterton, whose versatility he rivalled, creating one year Abdelmelich, in another Dapperwit, in a third Pinchwife, and then a succession of classical heroes and modern rakes or simpletons. Such an actor had many imitators, but, in his peculiar line, few could rival a man who was said to speak as Shakspeare wrote, and whom nature had formed for a nation's delight. The author of the Epilogue to "Love in the Dark" (that bustling piece of Sir Francis Fane's, from the Scrutinio,[27] in which, played by Lacy, Mrs. Centlivre derived her Marplot), illustrates the success of Mohun's imitators by an allusion to the gout from which he suffered:

"Those Blades indeed, but cripples in their art, —
Mimic his foot, but not his speaking part."

Of his modesty, I know no better trait than what passed when Nat. Lee had read to him a part which Mohun was to fill in one of Lee's tragedies. The Major put aside the manuscript, in a sort of despair – "Unless I could play the character as beautifully as you read it," said he, "it were vain to try it at all!"

Such is the brief record of a great actor, one who before our civil jars was a young player, during the civil wars was a good soldier, and in the last years of Charles II. was an old and a great actor still. Of the other original members of the Theatre Royal, there is not much to be said. Wintershell, who died in 1679, merits, however, a word. He was distinguished, whether wearing the sock or the buskin, majestic in loftily-toned kings, and absurd in sillily-amorous knights. Downes has praised him as superior to Nokes, in at least one part, and his Slender has won eulogy from so stern a critic as Dennis.

Among the men who subsequently joined the Theatre Royal, there were some good actors, and a few great rogues. Of these, the best actor and the greatest rogue was Cardell Goodman, or *Scum* Goodman, as he was designated by his enemies. His career on the stage lasted from 1677, as Polyperchon, in Lee's "Rival Queens," to 1688. His most popular parts were Julius Cæsar and

[27] Should be Intrigo, which Lacy really played.

Alexander. He came to the theatre hot from a fray at Cambridge University, whence he had been expelled for cutting and slashing the portrait of that exemplary Chancellor, the Duke of Monmouth.

This rogue's salary must have been small, for he and Griffin shared the same bed in their modest lodging, and having but one shirt between them, wore it each in his turn. The only dissension which ever occurred between them was caused by Goodman, who, having to pay a visit to a lady, clapped on the shirt when it was clean, and Griffin's day for wearing it!

For restricted means, however, every gentleman of spirit, in those days, had a resource, if he chose to avail himself of it. The resource was the road, and Cardell Goodman took to it with alacrity. But he came to grief, and found himself with gyves on in Newgate; yet he escaped the cart, the rope, and Tyburn. King James gave "his Majesty's servant" his life, and Cardell returned to the stage – a hero.

A middle-aged duchess, fond of heroes, adopted him as a lover, and Cardell Goodman had fine quarters, rich feeding, and a dainty wardrobe, all at the cost of his mistress, the ex-favourite of a king, Barbara, the Duchess of Cleveland. Scum Goodman was proud of his splendid degradation, and paid such homage to "*my* duchess," as the impudent fellow called her, that when he expected her presence in the theatre, he would not go on the stage, though king and queen were kept waiting, till he heard that "his duchess" was in the house. For her he played the mad scene in Alexander with double vigour, and cared for no other applause so long as her Grace's fan signalled approbation.

Scum might have had a rare, if a rascally, life, had he been discreet; but he was fool as well as knave. A couple of the Duchess's children in the Duchess's house annoyed him, and Scum suborned a villainous Italian quack to dispose of them by poison. A discovery, before the attempt was actually made, brought Scum to trial for a misdemeanour. He had the luck of his own father, the devil, that he was not tried for murder. As it was, a heavy fine crippled him for life. He seems, however, to have hung about the stage after he withdrew from it as an actor. He looked in at rehearsals, and seeing a likely lad, named Cibber, going through the little part of the Chaplain, in the "Orphan," one spring morning of 1690, Scum loudly wished he might be – what he very much deserved to be, if the young fellow did not turn out a good actor. Colley was so delighted with the earnest criticism, that the tears flowed to his eyes. At least, he says so.

King James having saved Cardell's neck, Goodman, out of pure gratitude, perhaps, became a Tory, and something more, when William sat in the seat of his father-in-law. After Queen Mary's death, Scum was in the Fenwick and Charnock plot to kill the King. When the plot was discovered, Scum was ready to peach. As Fenwick's life was thought by his friends to be safe if Goodman could be bought off and got out of the way, the rogue was looked for, at the *Fleece*, in Covent Garden, famous for homicides, and at the robbers' and the revellers' den, the *Dog*, in Drury Lane. Fenwick's agent, O'Bryan, erst soldier and highwayman, now a Jacobite agent, found Scum at the *Dog*, and would then and there have cut his throat, had not Scum consented to the pleasant alternative of accepting £500 a year, and a residence abroad. This to a man who was the first forger of bank-notes! Scum suddenly disappeared, and Lord Manchester, our Ambassador in Paris, inquired after him in vain. It is impossible to say whether the rogue died by an avenging hand, or starvation.

We are better acquainted with the fate of the last of Scum's fair favourites, the pretty Mrs. Price of Drury Lane. This Ariadne was not disconsolate for her Theseus. She married "Charles, Lord Banbury," who was *not* Lord Banbury, for the House of Peers denied his claim to the title; and he was not Mrs. Price's husband, as he was already married to a living lady, Mrs. Lester. Of this confusion in social arrangements the world made small account, although the law did pronounce in favour of Mrs. Lester, without troubling itself to punish "my lord." The Judges pronounced for the latter lady, solely on the ground that she had had children, and the actress none.

Joseph Haines! "Joe" with his familiars, "Count Haines" with those who affected great respect, was a rogue in his way, – a merry rogue, a ready wit, and an admirable low comedian, from 1672 to 1701. We first hear of him as a quickwitted lad at a school in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, whence he

was sent, through the liberality of some gentlemen who had remarked his talents, to Queen's College, Oxford. There Haines met with Williamson, the Sir Joseph of after days, distinguished alike for his scholarship, his abilities as a statesman, the important offices he held, and the liberality with which he dispensed the fortune which he honourably acquired.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.