

THE ADELPHI THEATRE CALENDAR PROJECT



Sans Pareil Theatre 1806-1819 / Adelphi Theatre 1819-1899

SANS PAREIL/ADELPHI THEATRES SEASONAL DIGESTS: 1806-1899

*Theatre developments, history, reviews, performers, authors, genres,
audiences.*

The Adelphi Calendar Project 1806-1900
Alfred L. Nelson and Gilbert B. Cross, General Editors
Theodore J. Seward, Jr., Systems Analyst

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Originally published by Greenwood Press as *The Sans Pareil Theatre 1806-1819, Adelphi Theatre 1819-1850: An Index to Authors, Titles, Performers*, 1988, and *The Adelphi Theatre 1850-1900: An Index to Authors, Titles, Performers and Management*, 1992.



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Book 2

Introduction

These digests are written by editors to give the "feel" of a season. They are a perfect place for theatre history. For example, the 1806-1807 digest rightly discusses the birth of the Sans Pareil and relates how John Scott, who had made his fortune with a laundry "washing blue," was induced by his stage-struck daughter, Jane, to take buildings behind 411 The Strand and create a theatre for her. It was christened the Sans Pareil (Without Compare), and a long distinguished history began. When Scott sold the house in 1819, it became the Adelphi (brothers), presumably because it stood opposite London's first neo-classical buildings of the same name (Greek Ἀδελφοί) built by the four Adams brothers between 1768 to 1772.

Editors try to capture the spirit of the times. While discussing the improvements to Ben Webster's new theatre in 1858, the *Illustrated Times* (Jan 1, 1859) praised the new ticketing arrangements: "admission money is paid [and] the theatre-goer has secured his seat for the night without any ulterior trouble, without any chance of having it taken from him." Significantly, the paper adds: "of another new feature in the new theatre, we have some doubt: all the check-takers and box-openers are females." Webster was ahead of his times in hiring women. In 1847, the *Theatrical Times* complained box-keepers were "noted for their incivility and excessively disobliging propensities" and referred to "the most rapacious and cormorantly inclined box-keeper." Such information is seldom found in traditional theatre histories.

Readers will find commentary on the performances and an assessment of their popularity. Reviews are used extensively throughout. If possible, there is a summary of the plot, criticism of performers and an account of scenic effects. For example, in the 1879-1880 season, the *Daily Telegraph* praises the sensation scene (but little else) in Dion Boucicault's *Rescued*. It "is to the carpenter and not the author that praise is due...A bridge is swung aside at the moment when a train bearing the hero and his fortunes is about to cross" and goes on to reveal what happens next. (The spoiler alert had yet to be born.) According to the same source, the audience's morality is affronted by the scene in which Lady Sybil makes advances to the engine driver.

Advertising found a home at the Adelphi. A critical note, published in the 1880s, laments those occupying the gallery receive an inferior, thin, folio sheet, heavily and "odoriferously" printed while those in the expensive seats are "given a scented, octavo programme advertising the perfumer." Programs had space for advertising, bills did not. It was a win-win situation. The enterprising expatriate Frenchman, Eugène Rimmel, not only invented the first non-toxic mascara but was responsible for the first "Smell-O-Vision" play. In the 1871 pantomime, *Little Snowwhite, a Fairy Tale* (by Charles Millward), Rimmel was credited with adding perfume to the waterfall.

The digests are a perfect home for details about performers—their appearance, popularity and ability. For example, the *Theatrical Observer* (December 11, 1844), looking back to the birth of the Sans Pareil, prints a carefully modulated description of Jane M. Scott's appearance and talent.

It was delicately hinted that the greedy public not only expected intrinsic merit for their money, but also that it must be hallowed o'er with beauty to secure the first impression. Now Miss Scott, in addition to some natural defects, had the smallpox and rickets unfavorably, but as genius comes in all disguises, she really had great talent, both as an actress and a writer.

Useful information indeed although the reader is left puzzling how it was possible to have smallpox and rickets *favorably*.

With the Adelphi are connected the names of many performers famous in their day: Frederick Yates, Edward Wright, Paul Bedford, John L. Toole, Madame Céline Céleste, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Mrs. Keeley, Ben N. Webster, Dion Boucicault, the Billingtons, as well as names whose only record is found in the playbills and programs. During the later seasons of the century, the two great draws were William Terriss and Jessie Millward, who, besides being lovers, took on the roles of "hero" and "heroine" at the Adelphi. The 1897-1898 digest is the appropriate place for an account of the murder of matinee idol "Breezy Bill."

Editors note such important theatrical developments as the royalty system, which began with the production of Boucicault's *The Colleen Bawn* in the 1860-1861 season. He proposed to Ben Webster they share the profits. Whereas the playwright had made £300 for his highly successful, *London Assurance* (1841, Covent Garden), he now found himself richer by ten thousand pounds.

Adaptations of contemporary authors flourished at the Adelphi and are recorded in the digests. In 1846, the *Theatrical Times* complained translations of foreign plays are preferred over those written by native talent. Moreover, native talent was spurned. "Some thousands of plays of all kinds are...submitted to the managers of our theatres for their approval. They are taken in, doomed never to see the light again."

It is true that in the mid-19th century, the Adelphi hosted some French operettas, including *La Belle Hélène*, but in 1867, the Adelphi gave English comic opera a boost by hosting the premiere of Arthur Sullivan's first successful comic opera, *Cox and Box*. Such information is found in the digests.

The endless demand for new plays discouraged any attempt to write thoughtful dramas, so adaptations and translations (particularly from the French) flourished. Many stories and novels by Charles Dickens were adapted for the Adelphi stage. The first was John Baldwin Buckstone's *The Christening* (1834), a farce based on the story "The Bloomsbury Christening." More of Dickens' early works appeared, including William Rede's *The Peregrinations of Pickwick; or, Boz-i-a-na* (1837). Edward Stirling adapted *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1838. An attempt to dispense with the novelist himself produced *The Fortunes of Smike; or, A Sequel to Nicholas Nickleby*, which did not prosper, and Stirling returned to the master with *The Old Curiosity Shop; or, One Hour from Humphrey's Clock* (1840). Soon Dickens was making arrangements with theatres to adapt his work. At least, he had some remuneration for his efforts.

While Dickens was a particular favorite of Adelphi audiences, native dramatists eventually began coming into their own. James R. Planché, William Buckstone, Mark Lemon, John Oxenford, Henry Pettitt, George Sims, Frederick Yates and Tom Taylor tried hard to raise the taste of audiences. Dion Boucicault staged more plays at the Adelphi than elsewhere—thirty-seven. He finally gained audience sympathies for the plight of the distressed Irish.

Editors draw attention to the differing genres as they grew and diminished in popularity. These designations reflect changing tastes, not only of the Adelphi audience but others. The patent houses lurched from crisis to crisis, but the Adelphi *generally* prospered. Originally opened as a place to perform songs, dances and recitations, the house evolved into the home of "Adelphi Screammers"—melodramas in the modern sense of the word, with appropriate terror and romance—all found amidst the most dramatic of settings.

The digests may be eclectic, but they are none the worse for it.

GBC

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1806-1807

Ed. John W. Brokaw

The merchant John Scott, founder of the Sans Pareil, made his fortune with a washing blue of his invention, "Old True Blue," "for bluing stockings, fine and family linen and cotton also for dying silk, tiffeny [sic], gauze and for writing and drawing a most transparent blue" (advertisement qtd. in Alfred L. Nelson's "'True Blue' Scott and His Daughter at the Sans Pareil," p. 1). Scott also sold magic lanterns. One advertisement tells of "thirty magic, magnetic and fanciful entertainments for the fireside with instruction for their use, being upon an entirely new principle such as has not been seen in this country, being just received from his newly established manufactory in Saxony" (Nelson p. 2). John Scott's daughter Jane, a pupil of Dr. Arne at one time, gave singing and pianoforte lessons in the years preceding her Sans Pareil debut and wrote songs, some of which she offered for sale. She had also, in the words of W. C. Forman, "a passion for the stage, and a good deal of native talent" (W. Forman, "The Story of The Adelphi," *Notes and Queries*, June, 1930, p. 419). The *Theatrical Observer* made the same points about Miss Scott and described the obstacles she faced and the support her father gave her.

Miss Scott developed strong symptoms of dramatic disease and though her extraordinary talent was undoubted by her father and friends, it was delicately hinted that the greedy public not only expected intrinsic merit for their money, but also that it must be hallowed o'er with beauty to secure the first impression. Now Miss Scott, in addition to some natural defects had the smallpox and rickets unfavourably, but as genius comes in all disguises, she really had great talent, both as an actress and a writer. Scott was induced to gut the back of his warehouse in The Strand, and fit it up as a theatre where his daughter might safely indulge her predilection for the stage. Here for some two or three years, assisted by some young people, her pupils, she dramatised and acted away to a subscription party of her own friends (December 11, 1844).

Scott must have been convinced by these amateur theatricals, for he decided to replace the makeshift building with a small new private theatre, probably constructed in 1804, which was transformed into a well-appointed house in 1806. As Nelson observes, the time was right for opening a new popular theatre, and the shrewd Scott was well equipped for his venture: Scott "had the ingredients for a theatre: the magic lantern, his knowledge of fabrics such as those used in curtains, drapes, and screens; his skill as a dyer and colourer; and a talented daughter who could sing and play" (p. 3).

"Old Scott," the *Theatrical Observer* said, "very wisely obtained a license for a minor performance chiefly provided by his clever daughter and, thinking of her alone, called [his theatre] *The Sans Pareil* and opened the doors to chance customers." The Theatre, a small house without a gallery, was built in 1806 by Mr. Jay of London Wall to the designs of the architect, Samuel Beazley (Howard, *London Theatres and Music Halls, 1850-1950*, p. 2). In fact, Jay was reconstructing the 1804 theatre. A notice of November 21, 1806 informs the public that "the theatre is perfectly dry, having been finished upwards of two years in a manner, the proprietors trust, will meet their approbation" (*Adelphi Scrapbook*).

In his discussion of one-man shows, Richard L. Klepac places Miss Scott in a long line of English solo actors: Samuel Foote, George Alexander Stevens, Charles Lee Lewes, John Palmer, John Collins, Charles Dibdin (who would give one performance at the Sans Pareil in 1808), Rees, Jack Bannister, and later and also at the Sans Pareil/Adelphi, Charles Mathews (*Mr. Mathews at Home*, pp. 9-

11). An evening at the Sans Pareil this season consisted of songs and recitations "written, composed spoken, sung, and accompanied by Miss Scott," followed by "an optical exhibition of visionary objects" and then a shadow play which included fireworks. It appears that after January 11 the second and third parts of the bill were abbreviated and re-titled, and Jane M. Scott's new entertainment, *Rural Visitors; or, Singularity*, possibly longer than her first entertainment, *The Rout* (advertised to run forty-five minutes), became the main attraction.

Strictly speaking, none of the entertainments this season was dramatic. Each piece has been entered in the calendar as if it were so that the reader will have an idea of what was performed. The "optical exhibition of visionary objects" was described as "something in the manner of the Phantasmagorias." It was, like the Paris and Lyceum Phantasmagorias, a ghost show, calling up the famous dead (including the Man in Iron Mask, Jane Shore and Ixion on the wheel). Richard Altick says the Lyceum profited "from the same popular relish for managed spectral visitations" that explained the popularity of Gothic novels (*The Shows of London*, p. 217). Obviously, the Scotts hoped to profit in the same way. If John Scott's machinery resembled that of the Phantasmagoria, "the source of light was a magic lantern placed at a distance behind a semitransparent screen a movable carriage and adjustable lenses enabled the images to be increased or decreased as the effect (the illusion of ominously advancing or retreating figures) required. The ghostly figures were painted on glass 'sliders,' the extraneous parts of which were blacked out so as to concentrate the light, and the audience's fearful attention, on the luminous images" (Altick p. 217). Part two of the Sans Pareil program, then—in Altick's phrase this "*frisson*-filled communion with visible spirits"—must have contrasted sharply with Miss Scott's rendition of "Sweet Content" or her recitation of "Picklewell" in part one. The third part of the entertainment, *Vision in the Holy Land, or Godfrey of Bouillon's Dream*, the narrative for which was written by Miss Scott, was a spectacle "representing, apparently in the air, an ancient grand battle in shadow, in which several thousand figures, armed in the costume of their time, are seen engaged."

The reviewers this season meted out both excessive praise and blunt criticism. An 18 December review (a news clip of which is in James Winston's *Adelphi Scrapbook*) said that one of Miss Scott's songs "was rapturously applauded" and that one of her anecdotes "convulsed the audience with laughter." A 12 January review deemed *Rural Visitors* "the best entertainment of the kind that ever appeared before the public." But the *Monthly Mirror* of 7 January was less polite: "The first part is particularly abundant in demerits: songs and stories by Miss Scott (a Dibdin in petticoats). The poor girl cannot help it, but her manner of performing her part is almost as unhappy as the matter of which it is fashioned. The phantasmagoric evolutions are a shade better, but on the whole, it is not a proper combination to offer the public for an evening's entertainment." George Frederick Cooke liked at least some of what he saw when he attended the theatre in 1806. His brief diary comment says much: "Miss Scott provided the first part of the entertainment at the Sans Pareil. The second and third parts of the entertainment are very pleasing" (quoted in Harold Scott, *The Early Doors*, p. 94).

It is not known whether The Season was a financial success. One review suggests attendance was not very good: "The audience was numerous but not full; but we are persuaded it will be bumper every evening, when more generally known to the public." At about the time of this review, in early December, 1806, John Scott reduced ticket prices from five to four shillings for box seats and places in the pit cost half a crown instead of four shillings.

According to James Winston, the Sans Pareil opened on Monday 17 November—not 27 November, the date most historians give. However, opposite that date, he enters "Sans Pareil open Nov 27." It seems likely the theatre opened on November 27, 1806, but we have entered performances starting on the 17th. Nicoll and Hartnoll, etc. give 27 November, 1806, as the opening night perhaps because

a New York announcement has a MS note "opened November 27." The advertisement in the London Times is quite clear, however:

SANS PAREIL, opposite the Adelphi, in the Strand, licensed by the Right Hon. the Lord CHAMBERLAIN. On MONDAY NEXT, November 17, 1806, this new Building will OPEN, with Amusements, as under: Part the First, An Entertainment, consisting of Recitation and Song, entitled, *THE ROUT*, which will be introduced in the following succession; Introduction; Song, The Bouquet; Recit. Ditto; Song, Captain Clark; Recit. How to prevent Mutiny; Song, Isabel; Recit. Picklewell; Song, Belfast; Recit, Oratorios; Song, The Gamester; Recit. Invocation; Song Sweet Content; Recit. and Song; Finale: the whole written, composed (with the exception of two Songs), and will be spoken, sung, and accompanied, by a Lady, being her first appearance on any Stage. Part II. *TEMPEST TERRIFIC*; which will introduce an Optical Exhibition of Visionary Objects, Illustrated with Historical Remarks, something in the manner of that admired Exhibition the Phantasmagorie [*sic*] but varying materially in the effect. The Illusions will appear with occasional introduction of other Subjects, neatly in the following succession: Ghosts after the manner of Sraepher [?]; iron Mask from the Bastille; Elfrida; Seward [Siward], Earl of Northumberland; The Maniac; Apotheosis of a lamented Hero; An animated Effigy; Jane Shore; Ixion on the Wheel. Part III. The *VISION in the HOLY LAND; or, Godfrey of Bouillon's Dream*: An entire new and interesting Spectacle, representing apparently in the air, an Ancient Grand Battle in Shadow, in which several thousand figures, armed in the costume of their time, are seen engaged, as said by Godfrey of Bouillon to have appeared to him while he led the Christian Army under the Walls of Jerusalem. To conclude with an elegant new-constructed ARTIFICIAL FIRE-WORK, in a Temple superbly illuminated. The whole accompanied with appropriate Music. Price of Admission, Boxes, 5s, Pit, 3s. Doors open at 7, begin at 8. Places for the Boxes may be taken from 10 till 2, any day after Wednesday the 12th instant, at the Theatre; but the admission price must be paid at the same time for the seats to be kept, for which Tickets will be delivered, and servants may be sent to keep places, but cannot detain them after the end of the First Part, which will occupy three-quarters of an hour, as, from the nature of the Second Part of the Exhibition, the house must be rendered dark, and places cannot then be obtained. The Nobility, Gentry, and Public in general, are respectfully informed, the Theatre is perfectly dry, having been finished upwards of two years, in a manner [which], the Proprietors trust, will meet their approbation. Artists of the first abilities have been engaged in the Decorative, as well as the Optical and Mechanical Part, and before the Curtain the comfort and accommodation of the Audience have been most particularly attended to. Persons taking Places may have a Day-light view of the Audience part of the Theatre, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday morning next, between the hours of 10 and 2. (*London Times*, Nov 15, 1806, Number 6893)

It is possible the opening was scheduled for the 17th and had to be postponed. However, there was an advertisement published for a performance on the 19th. The advertisement for the 27th, makes no mention of its being the theatre's opening night.

JB/FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1807-1808

Ed. John W. Brokaw

A news item dated 16 November 1807, points out the essential differences between the first and second Sans Pareil seasons: "the small theatre ... was opened on Saturday, 14 November. The company consists of juvenile performers, who appear to great advantage in some little pieces, the music and dancing of which deserves commendation" (clipping in James Winston's *Adelphi Scrapbook*). The simplicity of the 1806-7 season, with its recitations and magic lantern shows, gives way to more elaborate pieces and to a numerous company, as many as forty-five members appearing on stage. Contrary to what the news item suggests, there were five or six mature performers in the company, but the rest were indeed the children or pupils of Gabriel Giroux, the new associate manager, choreographer and ballet master. Because of this, the Sans Pareil did not attempt pantomimes or melodramas, though now licensed to do so. The principal pieces were ballets of action and ballet or burletta spectacles. (One recitation from the preceding season, *Rural Visitors*, was given by Jane M. Scott at her benefit, 7 March, 1808.)

Gabriel Giroux had been dancing in London since 1786. He and his children appeared regularly at the Royal Circus for several seasons before coming to the Sans Pareil. Five Giroux daughters performed at the Sans Pareil between 1807 and 1813, but only two, Caroline and Louisa, are named in the surviving bills for 1807-8. A February review praises the work of "Little Giroux." The principal dancer was Caroline Giroux. Born in 1799, she had danced at the Circus when she was three. In later years, as Mrs. Searle, she had a substantial independent career (Highfill, *et al.*, *Biographical Dictionary*, VI, 227-8). Gabriel Giroux helped with theatre management and stage production. He also worked closely with Miss Scott, then writing her first plays and doing her first ensemble acting. As one example of the collaboration between Giroux and Miss Scott, Giroux wrote the first piece of the season, the ballet *The Fisherman's Daughter*, and Miss Scott wrote the second piece, a musical entertainment *Successful Cruise*, which was described as "a continuation of *The Fisherman's Daughter*." Jane Scott wrote four pieces in all, as did Giroux. She showed her versatility and adaptability, always hallmarks of her work, in writing three pieces for the child performers. *The Magistrate*, written for the adult actors, was successful enough to be revived in three later seasons.

Gabriel Giroux's *Valdevina the Cruel; or, The Girl of the Desert* was a "new grand serious spectacle" in three acts with twenty-four roles, choruses and supernumeraries. Several promising young people performed in this dance spectacle, including Caroline Giroux, Master Leclercq (later the father of Carlotta and Rose) and Master Richard Flexmore. Flexmore became a skilled eccentric dancer and fathered Richard Flexmore (1824-1860), a more famous dancer and pantomimist. A 15 February review praised Giroux's *Valdevina* highly: "The scenery, dresses and properties are magnificent; the music, by Sanderson, is melodious and scientific; the performance of Little Giroux is beyond description, particularly in the second and last scene, where a picture is formed which would do credit to the first painters; in fact, the *tout ensemble* of this beautiful piece surpasses all that has been produced at any theatre" (*Adelphi Scrapbook*).

In addition to engaging Gabriel Giroux, the Scotts acquired their first scenic designer, Morris. In addition, they engaged an experienced bandleader and composer, James Sanderson, who had previously worked with both J. C. Cross and the younger Charles Dibdin. Sanderson contributed much to this theatre in its early years.

The Sans Pareil also began to establish itself as a variety house. This focus is apparent from the first evening, when the incidental entertainments included songs, dances, "imitations of celebrated performers" and fireworks. Among the entertainers were Mrs. McCartney, who as Miss Minton had

begun at Sadler's Wells in 1800, and Andrew Campbell, an amateur at this time, whose impersonations would win him popularity in his several years at the theatre.

The season ended on April 9, after some 112 performances. From July to early September 1808, the Covent Garden corps de ballet leased the house. On September 19, the elder Charles Dibdin gave his one-man show, *Rent Day; or, The Yeoman's Friend*.

JB/FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest Summer 1808

Ed. John W. Brokaw

The theatre opened its doors on 4 July 1808, for a short summer season. The corps de ballet from Covent Garden with such luminaries as Wybrow, King, and Thomas Blanchard performed five pieces. Two of them, *La Heroine Incomparable* and *The Maid of Hornsey* were played every night. Several of the performers brought their wives.

The company was under the management of Holland, Louis, and Grant—all of Covent Garden. Ryall arranged most of the choreography. It is impossible to determine how many nights the season lasted, as there are few existing records from the first decade of the Sans Pareil's existence.

During the evening's performance, there were songs by Woolf and King. Included among the titles were "Black-Eyed Susan," "May the King Live Forever," and "The Wig"—the last by Charles Dibdin, the younger. It was King who made Dibdin's "songs 'Giles Scroggins' Ghost' and 'Call Again Tomorrow' with many others, so popular" (Charles Dibdin's *Memoirs*, p. 54).

Andrew Campbell performed his popular imitations of familiar actors in their best-known roles.

During the pantomime *Beauty; or, Harlequin of the Black Isles*, Signor Saxoni was engaged for twelve nights to walk the tightrope. Charles Dubois, following in his famous father, Jean Baptiste Dubois's footsteps was "clown to the rope." This character was a buffoon who kept the audience amused while the ropedancer was not in motion. The clown attempted some of the tricks himself, and by his utter failure amplified his master's achievement.

Thomas Blanchard, the Pantaloon, had a long career. He was said "to be a magnet at the minors" (Dibdin's *Memoirs*, p. 136). He did reappear at the Adelphi in the early twenties and was successor to Richard Norman at Covent Garden, but the *Times* was not overly impressed with him.

Blanchard's Pantaloon is clever, but it wants humour. The real Pantaloons should be a kind of Polonius in Motley. Everybody admits that he deserves to be beaten and cheated, but then one is sorry for him, on account of his gray hairs and the foolishness of his old age as when the other "meddling fool" is stabbed behind the arras. The fault of Mr. Blanchard is that he excites no sympathy. If he is knocked down, or jumped upon, or even killed, you are glad of it (27 December 1828, qtd. in David Mayer, *Harlequin in his Element*, p. 43).

Mrs. Ridgway was the wife of the Harlequin who appeared with Charles Dibdin at Sadler's Wells. She had sons who later appeared at the Adelphi, and according to Dibdin, they possessed "much merit, and promise to follow the steps of their father who was, in his grade of performing, taking skill and versatility of talent together, unrivalled" (*Memoirs*, p. 90).

Besides the headliners, there were also those who made a living but not a splash—Miss Vallency (or Valancy) who played a barmaid was still playing small roles fifteen years later. For example, she appeared once as a stand-in at Drury Lane in 1823 dancing Columbine for the frequently ailing Ann Maria Tree in *The Golden Axe* (James Winston, *Drury Lane Journal*, p. 63).

Woolf sang the famous "Description of a Storm" by George Alexander Stevens, which became such a familiar favorite at the Adelphi in subsequent years.

The season was successful; a clipping in the *Adelphi Scrapbook* states, "on Saturday week the corps de ballet of Covent Garden Theatre will close their labours at the Sans Pareil in the Strand. It appears they have made a successful campaign by their efforts to please the public."

JB/GBC

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1808-1809

Ed. John W. Brokaw

The Sans Pareil opened late this season but remained open for more than 140 evenings between 3 December 1808 and 13 July 1809. Two companies performed at the theatre during this time. The resident Sans Pareil Company, under the management of Gabriel Giroux, ended its season 25 March (advertisement, 25 March LTM Collection). Holland of Covent Garden then took the house, as he had in the previous summer. However, there was no interval between winter and summer seasons and there was overlap in the repertory and the performer rosters. *The Bashaw*, *The Magistrate*, and *Mother White Cap* were given under both managements, *Mother White Cap* running for two months after March 25. In the absence of sufficient playbills, it is impossible to know all the actors who stayed on from the winter season, but advertisements reveal Jane Scott herself performed for the first month of the second season. James Kirby, making his first appearance at the Sans Pareil on 4 March, played Clown to the end of the summer, and Madame Louis danced Columbine in both February and July.

A small group of mature, skilled actors succeeded the largely juvenile company of the 1807-08 season this year. Some of these had been at Covent Garden when it burned in September 1808, including John Isaacs, Mrs. James F. Pyne and Slader. (It is possible that both S. Slader and Abraham Slader were at the theatre this season.) Lewin and Garbois, who were at Drury Lane when it burned in February 1809, came in the summer. Mrs. Garbois made her "first appearance on any stage" at this time as well. An important member of the company was James Kirby, at various times in his career clown, dancer, scene painter and acting manager. Denham returned for a second season, and Hunt, described by the younger Charles Dibdin as "a clever little man," stayed from January to April, when he went to Sadler's Wells. He returned to the Sans Pareil the next winter. Mrs. Ridgway was Columbine this summer, as she had been in the previous year.

Most of the pieces given through April were the work of Jane Scott. *The Magistrate*, her successful play of the preceding season, returned in December 1808, for thirty-five performances. She performed *The Rout*, a song and recitation piece from the 1806-07 season, at her March 1809 benefit. Miss Scott also wrote at least three new pieces for the present season. *The Bashaw; or, Midnight Adventures of Three Spaniards*, a "new musical melo Turkish piece," ran fifty-nine nights and was revived the next season. A laudatory review in the *Times* for 31 January said, "places at the Sans Pareil Theatre will soon be at a premium if the proprietor continues to bring forward such pieces as *The Bashaw* Miss Scott plays and sings the female Bashaw to admiration, nor does she look the worse for the assumed mustachios.... The other interludes are various and excellent and we are happy to add that the house is uncommonly well attended" (clipping in James Winston's *Adelphi Scrapbook*). The whole strength of the company appeared in this piece, as it did in *The Red Robber; or, The Statue in the Wood*, a "grand new serio-comic spectacle" which ran the first sixty-seven nights of the season. Miss Scott's first pantomime, *Mother White Cap; or, Hey Up the Chimney*, played from February to May. Kirby was Clown and Lardner Pantaloon. Hunt and Lewin played Harlequin and Madame Louis and Mrs. Ridgway Columbine.

The latter part of the summer saw brief runs of many pieces: comedies such as *The Glimmer; or Sir Solomon's Wedding*; the spectacles *Double Defeat; or British Tars and Austrian Troops* and *Female Courage; or The Banditti of the Rock*; the ballets *Rozelli and Rosa* and *The Fish and the Ring*; and the pantomimes *The Deserter of Naples* and *Harlequin Cottager; or The Wandering Fairy*. E. L. Blanchard in his "History of the Adelphi" notes that *Harlequin Cottager* was "written by and produced under the direction of Mr. Kirby, who not only designed and painted all the scenery, but acted Clown to the Harlequin of Mr. Garbois and the Columbine of Mrs. Ridgway" (*Era Almanac*, 1877, p. 2).

The Sans Pareil was a lively variety house once again. Henry Hengler walked the rope in the winter and the famous "Charming" Jack Richer did the same in the summer. Garbois leaped over ten men, and James Kirby danced on two ladders. Andrew Campbell gave his imitations of London actors. He also sang, as did Miss Samuels and Miss Ingle, Slader and Miss Woods. Goodwin, later ballet master at this house for a season, danced on the same program with Mrs. Ridgway, and he danced with Miss Twamley from the Opera House. Though Giroux's dance pupils of the preceding season had departed, several children performed. Master Aubun, an "infant phenomenon" whom Dibdin introduced at Sadler's Wells the previous spring, helped open the season on 3 December. He was advertised as a self-taught violinist, five years of age. Master Whale, "under seven years of age," danced a pas seul in January. Master James Wallack, "late of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane," performed in July.

This season the Sans Pareil enjoyed some stability in its staffing. Gabriel Giroux was now an experienced manager. James Sanderson was returning for his second season as bandleader and composer. Morris again designed and built the scenery. John Scott, free from day-to-day managing, concentrated on the stage machinery and on his "splendid artificial fireworks, unequalled in Europe" (news clip, 31 December 1808).

JB/FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1809-1810

Ed. John W. Brokaw

The Sans Pareil opened 11 December. It was a larger theatre than before because of the "new and commodious gallery" (*Morning Post*), which had been built after the summer season. Tickets were one shilling for the gallery and, as in the past, two shillings for the pit and four for the boxes.

The company changed substantially from that of 1808. Its strength was in singing and pantomime. Three singers stand out: William Broadhurst, John Isaacs and James F. Pyne; all later achieved some success at Covent Garden and the English Opera. Broadhurst, the younger Charles Dibdin thought, had a "perhaps unparalleled sweetness of voice, in a Man" (*Memoirs*, p. 97). Isaacs, a bass, sang in the 1826 world premiere of Weber's *Oberon* at Covent Garden (White, *A History of English Opera*, p. 256). In his three years at the Sans Pareil, according to the *Biography of the British Stage*, he became a "deserved favorite." James Pyne apparently relied on his voice alone to make his way in the theatre. The *Biography of the British Stage* asserted, "this pleasing vocalist ... has no ability as an actor." However, this was not cause for dismay, since Pyne was engaged "to sing and not to act." (At Jane Scott's benefit in March, Pyne and proprietor John Scott, "his first appearance on any stage," played the title roles in *The Two Misers of Smyrna*. Good fun rather than exquisite acting must have been the aim of this entertainment.)

Miss Scott's pantomime, *The Necromancer; or, The Golden Key*, was a great success, running the whole season. It was probably a somewhat different piece from week to week, with improvisations and interludes not announced on the bills. In fact, management's failure to say exactly what would or would not be presented on a given evening led to some disappointment and unruliness in the audience, disrupting *The Necromancer* on 11 and 12 January. These ructions resulted in a declaration of policy on the bill by management: "Whatever is named shall be produced but nothing but what is inserted in the bills and advertisements of the day shall be brought forward" (22 January). Auld was Harlequin this year, his first of three successive seasons at the theatre. Lardner returned as Pantaloon and James Kirby as Clown. Mrs. Elizabeth Pincott was Columbine most of the run. In her absence, Miss Ruggles began to establish herself in the role; she made a favorable impression on the Persian Ambassador, at whose command she took a benefit on 3 April when she danced Columbine.

At least two pieces by the prolific Jane Scott played every evening this year. Three works from prior seasons, *The Red Robber*, *The Bashaw* and *The Magistrate*, and a new piece, *Mary, The Maid of the Inn*, rotated throughout The Season. *Mary* was a Gothic verse melodrama derived from Southey's poem. Miss Scott complicated Southey's plot, and her surprise revelations at the denouement softened his stark vision. This successful melodrama was revived in the 1811 and 1816 seasons.

John P. "Jack" Bologna and a "Miss" H. Bologna (who might be either his niece, the daughter of Louis Bologna, or the Harriet Bath Barnwell whom Jack married in 1800) joined the company this season. Harriet was a principal dancer in both of the year's ballets and took minor roles in two other pieces. Bologna brought the shadow show back to the Sans Pareil for the first time since the 1806 season when John Scott operated his machinery. Bologna had been presenting such shows for several years when not engaged as Harlequin. His *Lilliput Island* opened January 11 and played at intervals some thirty-four times. It was described on the bills as "an interlude in five scenes." In addition to these shadow shows, Bologna presented another of his Lenten productions, "Bologna's Mechanical Exhibitions."

Several performers associated with the Sans Pareil for many years made their first appearance this season, most of them in minor roles: Godbee, Robert Stebbing, Swan, Mrs. Daly and Miss LeBrun. John Scott again managed the theatre, and James Sanderson returned as composer and bandleader.

JB/FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest Summer 1810

Ed. John W. Brokaw

Holland of Covent Garden again leased the theatre for the summer. This year, John "Jack" Bologna, Jr. joined him in the enterprise. A notice found in the *Adelphi Scrapbook* offered the following assurance: "Messrs. Bologna, Jr. and Holland are determined to strain every nerve in bringing forward such amusements as at least shall deserve the liberal sanction of a generous public" (25 July 1810).

John P. Bologna and his wife had been with Charles Dibdin, the younger, at Sadler's Wells and Dublin for several years. The announcements for this season claimed Bologna and Mrs. Wybrow were the first Harlequin and Columbine in Europe. Even allowing for the usual puffery of nineteenth (and twentieth) century theatre managers, this statement serves to remind the reader of the quality of performances at the Sans Pareil—even in its early days.

John Bologna was often billed as "Junior." The father, his wife and two sons, Jack and Louis, and daughter Barbara were all on the stage. John had some knowledge of chemistry and general science and was later to become a popular Lenten performer at the Adelphi. His "Pictorial, Optical and Mechanical Exhibitions" were popular for many seasons.

The season included several songs performed mainly by William Pearman, who was to become a major singer on the stage, and John Isaacs. The former sang "Bound Prentice to a Waterman" which became a favorite at the theatre. Isaacs suffered the terrible misfortune of losing his sight some twenty years later, leading to a benefit at Covent Garden where "the public so liberally expressed their commiseration" (Dibdin *Memoirs*, p. 102).

There were some dances, including a "hornpipe of three" and a "hornpipe in fetters." In the course of *Fortune's Gift* (28 May 1810), the comic dance from *Mother Goose* was performed by Richard Norman and Auld.

Master Edwards, four years old, performed "Protean exercises," but what forms they took is not described. On May 28, despite his youth, he did a "drunken and dying" scene and on June 25 "several feats of activity"—again not described.

The number of performances this season is impossible to calculate accurately because sources are limited, but it certainly lasted longer than the summer season of 1808. It was considerably less stressful than the season at the new Covent Garden Theatre, which had been truncated by the "Old Price" riots, lasting from 18 September to 15 December 1809.

Pieces remained essentially non-dramatic, in keeping with Scott's magistrate's license. There was an emphasis on pantomime and spectacle performed by some of the prominent names of the stage: Richard Norman, Jack Bologna, and Mrs. Wybrow. There were three ballets because the company was composed in part of the Covent Garden Corps de Ballet.

It was the last summer season for these Covent Garden performers, but it is safe to assume the public was satisfied Bologna and Holland had "strained every nerve" and gained "the liberal sanction of a generous public."

JB/GBC

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1810-1811

Ed. Frank McHugh

The auditorium of the Sans Pareil was slightly altered for the 1810-11 season. As the 3 December bill put it: "The House has been embellished in the Audience Part, the Back Seat of the Side Boxes elevated, the Frontispiece also elevated, improving the View of the Stage from the Gallery, and other alterations." The construction of the gallery in 1809, the improvement of sight lines this present season, and the addition of stage and upper-side boxes in 1814 completed John Scott's theatre.

The Scott family was again very active. One ballet, *The Soldier's Frolic*, was composed and danced by Goodwin, the new ballet master and choreographer. All other pieces were written by Jane Scott, that "gifted *artiste*, and I may say Genius" (Charles Dibdin, the younger, *Memoirs*, p. 97). Miss Scott acted in four of her pieces, giving well over a hundred performances. Proprietor John Scott managed the theatre and served as machinist. Bills call special attention to his "mechanical fall of snow" and other spectacular effects in the pantomime *The Magic Pipe; or, Dancing Mad*. John Scott's son designed at least two scenes for this same piece.

The Sans Pareil had evolved beyond the point when everything depended on Jane Scott's imagination and her father's business acumen. Maurice W. Disher recalls those first seasons: "While she acted her own heroines, John Scott, in his shirt sleeves, packed people closer to increase the takings by five pounds a night" (*Blood and Thunder*, p. 216). Perhaps another quality of the Scotts that Disher cites, their respect for the stage and their hospitality to actors, explains the rapid development of their company. At any rate, it is not one-woman shows that distinguish this 1810-1811 season, but pantomimes, farces and variety acts—all requiring a diverse and able company.

The Sans Pareil presented a pantomime every evening. *The Magic Pipe* ran for sixty-three consecutive nights, then gave way to sixteen performances of *The Necromancer; or, The Golden Key*, which had played in the previous season, and then returned for a run of thirteen more nights. Auld, Harlequin at the Haymarket in 1806, was the company's new Harlequin; Miss Ruggles danced as Columbine, and James Barnes appeared as Pantaloon. By 1829, the *Times* was declaring Barnes "the best *Pantaloon* on the stage." Later in his career, as A. E. Wilson said, "he was unique and unsurpassable; the most perfect type imaginable of senile imbecility, receiving knocks and cuffs with placid resignation and tottering about as if he perpetually expected to be knocked down and set up again like a nine pin" (*King Panto*, p. 115). The versatile James Kirby, who would be at Drury Lane in 1811, was principal Clown, occasionally replaced by young George Bristow, brother-in-law to both Grimaldi and Jack Bologna, who was just beginning his career in the minor theatres and the provinces.

In his study of the music hall, *The Early Doors*, Harold Scott notes the Sans Pareil and the Lyceum were the leading variety theatres in the West End of London during the early nineteenth century (p. 93). The performances at the Sans Pareil, E. Beresford Chancellor says, "were first of that heterogeneous character associated with the careers of some of the smaller theatres, and a medley of 'turns', much akin to those of a music hall, preceded the legitimate drama here" (*Pleasure Haunts of London*, pp. 123-4). A bill for the final evening of the 1810-1811 season shows the strength of the Sans Pareil in this respect and suggests the varied entertainments presented throughout the season but seldom announced on the bills. Many favorite songs were sung on 6 April: "Live and be Jolly," "Bonny Lad," "Old Times," "Bag of Nails," "Four and Twenty Lord Mayors' Shows," "Let Fame Sound the Trumpet," and "Miss Muggins." Goodwin, Miss Ward and Miss Lever danced a triple hornpipe. In addition, George Bristow starred in a scene from Dibdin's aqua drama *The Wild Man*, "by permission of the proprietors of Sadler's Wells." This scene, often given on benefit nights and first

played by Grimaldi, showed "the powerful influence of music over even the savage mind" (Dibdin's *Memoirs*, p. 102).

On other evenings this season, Miss Acres sang Vauxhall songs, and Mr. Rose, visiting from Astley's Amphitheatre, sang James Sanderson's "Lilly from Jamaica; or, The Negro in London." Herr Schmidt offered a trumpet concerto "performed for the first time on an instrument which lately cost one hundred guineas, being of silver, rimmed with gold, and the tone melodiously beautiful."

Henry Hengler, the Vauxhall ropewalker and father of Frederick Charles Hengler, founder of Hengler's Circus, danced "with baskets, also boys, tied to his feet and one on his shoulder." James Barnes more than once thrilled the audience when he made his flight from the gallery "with accompaniment on the trumpet."

The roster for this season names twenty-three actors and twenty-one actresses. Joining the company for the first time and for short stays were Bristow, Miss Acres from Vauxhall Gardens ("first time on any stage"), Asker from the Theatre Royal Dublin, and J. Lewis from the Theatre Royal Manchester. Goodwin, ballet master for this season, "late of Covent Garden," was probably the "Master Goodwin" who performed at Covent Garden 1796-1803, son of the Covent Garden performers Thomas and Eleanor Goodwin. Daly began his long tenure this season, joining his wife and such other stalwarts as Godbee, Robert Stebbing and C. H. Simpson.

The company presented eight pieces on the approximately ninety-two evenings of this season, which began on 3 December 1810 and concluded on 6 April 1811.

FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1811-1812

Ed. Frank McHugh

In 1811-12, the Sans Pareil excelled at pantomime. As in the preceding season, a pantomime was given virtually every evening. The casting, however, was less stable than in 1810-11. Auld played Harlequin for the entire season, and Miss Ruggles returned as Columbine for all but the last six evenings, when Miss Wells replaced her. Miss Ruggles, who had performed at the Sans Pareil since the summer of 1808, was an accomplished dancer. A review of the 1817 Olympic pantomime mentions the "known graces and agility" of her Columbine (*Theatrical Inquisitor*, November, 1817, p. 229). Miss Ruggles left the Sans Pareil after the 1811-12 season. James Barnes opened as Pantaloon, but stayed only until Christmas, when he left and made a great hit in *The White Cat; or, Harlequin in Fairy Wood*, with the Drury Lane Company, then at the Lyceum. Pantaloon was thereafter played by F. S. Montignani, Swan, Edwards or Daly. Lover (Harlequin) was most frequently Edwards (late of Glasgow), but sometimes Swan or Montignani. Of the latter, the *Monthly Mirror* for May 1811 said snidely. "It is whispered that Mr. Arnold's Monsieur Francesco Antonio Montagnani from Lisbon is a Mr. Muggins from Yorkshire." (394). "The celebrated Young Jones," played Clown most of the season. The forceful, "leather-lunged" James Jones, "the noisiest *biped* our critical ears ever encountered" (*Theatrical Inquisitor*, November, 1817, p. 389) was, the *British Stage and Literary Cabinet* said, "the quintessence of trick, roguery, grimace" (January, 1817, p. 32) and "one of the best *clowns* we ever encountered" (February, 1818, p. 51).

Jane M. Scott's new pantomime dramatizing the legend of the poison tree and titled *The Poison Tree; or, Harlequin in Java*, ran the longest and was the most timely of her pieces this year, playing sixty-five times successively, beginning the first evening of the season. It celebrated the British expedition against Java, 4 August to 18 September 1811, in which 9,000 men under Lord Minto and Sir Stanford Raffles conquered a Franco-Dutch army of 17,000. This pantomime was perhaps as elaborate as the Scotts could make it, with fifty-eight major and minor roles and fifteen scenes. It surely gratified the audience's patriotic impulses. A sign of this nationalism was the new patriotic song (announced on a 23 December bill) by Miss Scott and orchestra leader, Michael Parnell, which was apparently added as the piece gained momentum. The pantomime offered spectacle—a bridal procession with an incidental dance by the corps de ballet, and it provided both information and fantasy, presenting several views of Batavia and of a "superb orangerie and garden of Asiatic plants" and *The Poison Tree* concluded its run 4 February 1812. The pantomime that had opened the preceding season, *The Magic Pipe; or, Dancing Mad*, returned on 10 February for forty performances.

If Jane Scott did well by her pantomime performers with the openings she wrote for them, she seems to have done at least as well by her acting company, with such varied pieces as *The Vizier's Son*, *the Merchant's Daughter* and *the Ugly Woman of Bagdad*, a comic opera which ran sixty-two evenings and returned in the next season. *Mary, the Maid of the Inn; or The Bough of Yew*, a romantic verse melodrama was submitted to the Lord Chamberlain in 1811 but first given in some form in 1809. John Scott, proprietor, manager, machinist, specialist in magic lanterns and fireworks must have devised some powerful effects for such a Gothic piece as this.

The performers' roster swelled from the forty-four names of 1810-11 to fifty-eight this season. Signor Montignani, (whatever his true origins) was active as composer and performer. James Villiers, better known for his many years as a Sadler's Wells actor, appeared here for the first of nine seasons. Mrs. Nathan E. Garrick (from the TR Bath), actor and singer, joined the company for one season, as did James Pack, acrobat and equilibrist, who performed in the two pantomimes and in variety acts. Pack, touted in an 1812 Sadler's Wells advertisement as "The Protean Prodigy," later converted to

Christianity and ungraciously wrote a pamphlet (1819) denouncing the theatres and circuses of his time.

The most notable incidental entertainments of 1811-12 included the dancing of Montignani, the singing of Sarah Jane Garrick, and the contortions of Pack, who sometimes played musical instruments "with head downwards," but more often made springs and somersets [somersaults], "the whole in a neat and chaste manner" (23 January bill).

John Peter "Jack" Bologna (1781-1846), popular as Harlequin to Grimaldi's Clown at Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden, but also known for his Lyceum *Phantascope* and various other conjuring, hydraulic and fireworks exhibitions, engaged the theatre for Lenten entertainments. He gave twelve one-man shows in 1811-12.

Eleven pieces were presented in the 120 evenings of this season, which began on 18 November 1811 and concluded on 9 April 1812. Jane Scott enjoyed a benefit on 24 February, Pack on 3 March, Misses Stubbs and Ruggles on 5 March, and Simpson on 19 March.

FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1812-1813

Ed. Frank McHugh

In its two preceding seasons, the Sans Pareil had featured the knockabout comedy of pantomime. In 1812-13, the tone changed somewhat. Leigh Hunt has said, "there is something *real* in Pantomime: there is animal spirit in it" (*Examiner*, 15 January 1817). In the 1812-13 season, a different spirit pervaded the graceful dances of Gabriel Giroux and his four daughters and the melodramas and farces of the acting company, which included James Villiers, Robert Stebbing, R. H. Widdicomb, the Mintons, Mrs. Daly and the newly arrived Meredith and Huckel.

The season opened with spectacle rather than pantomime. Jane M. Scott's *Asgard the Demon Hunter; or, Le Diable a la Chasse*, as violent and funny in its own way as a pantomime, was a Gothic fantasy which gave the audience plenty of lurid situations and stage effects. At the climax of the piece the dissolute Baron Wildgrave, hard-pressed by the forces of the Inquisition who are closing in on him, takes the peasant Lilla, his victim, to a secret cavern beneath his castle. On the stroke of midnight, exactly as a hermit murdered that day by Wildgrave prophesied, the cavern "assumes the hue of fire." Wildgrave's mysterious confidant, Asgard, appears now in his true guise as a Demon of Darkness. Infernal hounds (acted by La Croix, Gardell, Florio and Solnar) attack the Baron and he falls into the arms of Asgard, "who descends with him in flames." At the moment of the Baron's descent (impressive enough to be featured on some of the playbills), the ghost of the hermit appears in the background "enveloped by celestial light." Westmacott Molloy was the company's new machinist, but it is quite possible John Scott assisted in the lighting of this melodrama.

The return of the Giroux family was very important. Gabriel Giroux had managed the Sans Pareil in 1807 and tutored the young Jane Scott. Prior to that, he had been ballet master at the Paris Opera, and he danced at the Haymarket and some minor London theatres. In his five-week stay this season, he contributed six ballets or divertissements and choreographed *Asgard* and *The Bashaw; or Midnight Adventures of Three Spaniards*. He and his daughters acted in several pieces in addition to dancing. Their acting did not please everybody: "If the Giroux' consult their interest they will speak as little as possible. As dancers, they certainly are of the first consequence to this theatre" (*Theatrical Inquisitor*, December 1812, 239).

A Giroux ballet was given every evening of the family's engagement. Their benefit, 21 December 1812, was a festival of dances, including two ballets performed for the first time at the Sans Pareil. In the course of these and two other pieces there were danced an allemande pas de trois, a dance from "The Sultan," a castanet dance, a Russian dance, two hornpipes, a Cossack, a minuet de la cour, a gavotte and a medley finale by all members of the family.

Perhaps influenced by Gabriel Giroux's return, Miss Scott gave two recitations similar to those of her early Sans Pareil years, "Music, Poetry and Painting," and "Marian the Constant and the Knight with His Visor Closed." She acted in nine of her own pieces, six of them new this season. As usual, she was indebted to other writers for some of the work she produced. For example, *Love in the City* was "founded on *The Romp* and written into verse by Miss Scott" (bill of 7 February 1814). *Love, Honor and Obey* was based on the "petite comedie of M. Patrat, *L'Hereuse Erreur*" (bill of 19 January 1815).

David Mayer notes that the character Black-Eyed Susan appeared in pantomime soon after Jerrold's melodrama of 1829, but that she had appeared much earlier—in fact in the Sans Pareil pantomime of 1812-13, *Davy Jones's Locker; or, Black-Eyed Susan*. Mayer says, "A summary of the pantomime in the playbill of the 1813 *Davy Jones* suggests how extensively the character of Black-Eyed Susan belonged to the theatre, equally suitable to pantomime arrangers and to such serious dramatists as

Jerrold" (*Harlequin in His Element*, 82-3). The arranger of the Sans Pareil pantomime was Jane Scott. Black-Eyed Susan, afterwards Columbine, was Miss Browne. William, afterwards Harlequin, was Swan. Pantaloon was Daly, and Clown was Young Jones (James Jones). The *Theatrical Inquisitor* was not much taken with this piece; "Miss Scott's industry has produced *Black-Eyed Susan; or, Davy Jones' Locker*" (February 1813, p. 68). So little, apparently, did the pantomime's plot control the harlequinade that in a special performance of *Davy Jones* on 16 March 1813, several scenes were withdrawn and replaced by scenes from the two popular pantomimes of the preceding season, *The Magic Pipe* and *The Necromancer*. Such medleys, however, were not unusual in the pantomimes of the time.

Incidental entertainment this season included much dancing by the Giroux, Swan and other members of the company. Mezzia (Messiah) and Miss Acres were very popular singers. Young Jones did his "wonderful tricks on a ladder" and Signor Rivolta gave Pandean performances on five or six musical instruments at the same time. There were three benefits, one each for the Giroux family, Miss Scott and Miss Acres. There were also eleven mechanical exhibitions by Bologna, Jr. during Lent and three presentations of Lloyd's Orrery.

Approximately 110 evening performances were given in the regular season which began 17 November 1812, and ended 24 April 1813.

FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1813-1814

Ed. Frank McHugh

The Scott and Giroux families combined forces for the last time this season. Appropriately, the playbill for the first week announced only two pieces, a melodramatic spectacle by Jane M. Scott, *Raykissnah The Outcast; or The Hollow Tree*, and a ballet by Gabriel Giroux, *The Fairy of the Fountain; or Cupid and the Giant*, "a new grand ballet in the opera style." George Reeve composed the music for both pieces. In his mention of the 1813-14 season, E. L. Blanchard singled out *The Fairy of the Fountain* for praise. "It was very attractive this year," he wrote in his "History of the Adelphi." That ballet was performed just eighteen times; but in a rather short season when no fewer than nineteen pieces were presented, many pieces ran five or six nights, and only three played more than thirty times—*Raykissnah*, the Christmas pantomime *The Magicians; or, The Enchanted Bird* and *Whackham and Windham*.

Both Miss Scott and Gabriel Giroux were very productive. Just how prolific Jane M. Scott had been was shown by a notice on the 28 February bill that *The Inscription; or, Indian Hunters* was "the 27th burletta written by Miss Scott and performed in this theatre." Nine Jane Scott pieces were produced in 1813-14, five of which had proven themselves in past seasons. Of her four new pieces, two would be revived in later seasons, one of these, *Whackham and Windham*, being perhaps her most original and successful comedy. The *Theatrical Inquisitor*, usually less than enthusiastic about Jane Scott's work (in August 1814, it would describe the pieces written for the Sans Pareil as "vile trumpery"), praised *Whackham and Windham*:

It does infinite credit to the literary talents, and scenic skill, of its fair writer, Miss Scott, and we augur that had it been acted at either of the winter theatres, it would have placed her in the first class of our modern dramatic authors: as it is, she must be content to know, that it is by far the best production we have witnessed this season: and that the treasury of her father has greatly profited by her exertions (February 1814, p. 128).

Giroux created five new pieces, *The Fairy of the Fountain*, *Florenski and Nina*, *Love in the Grove*, *The Milk Maid* and *The Treble Lover*. However, these were only part of his total contribution as ballet master, choreographer and performer.

In four of the first five weeks, only two pieces were announced for each evening. This fact is a reminder of how important incidental entertainments at the Sans Pareil were in this era, only a small fraction of which were ever included on the bills. For example, Andrew Campbell's "imitations of several distinguished performers" was the only variety act mentioned for the first week. Possibly the most popular of the incidental entertainers was the low comedian and singer Lund. John Scott knew the value of his new performer. In the bill for 29 November he asserts, "Mr. Lund will not sing or perform at a benefit announced at the Lyceum Theatre this evening as his name is improperly inserted, and without permission of the manager of this theatre, to whom he is exclusively engaged for the season." Other popular singers included the fine actor James Villiers and a Miss Watlen. Johannot sang on two evenings in March. On Villiers' benefit night Miller, Mezzia (or Messiah) and Hunt returned to sing favorite songs, and Widdicomb "by particular desire" sang "Bucks Have at Ye All!" In addition to the frequent Campbell imitations of famous actors, Rees Sr. gave his own imitations at least once. The dancing featured the Girouxes, Swan, Flexmore and other members of the company.

The performer roster lists only twenty-four actors and seventeen actresses for 1813-14. Bemetzreider makes his first few appearances this year but becomes an important dancer and actor in the next six seasons. Flexmore and Campbell return to the Sans Pareil after intervals of several years. When Campbell first gave his imitations, he was, according to E. L. Blanchard, a government clerk and amateur entertainer. This season he appeared sixty-four times as an actor, in addition to giving his entertainments. Flexmore, "Master Flexmore" in 1807-08, was a principal dancer in 1813-14. He was father to Richard Flexmore (1824-1860), the famous dancer and pantomimist, but David Mayer points out that Flexmore Sr., was well known in his own right and was one of the three most skillful players of the pantomime Lover [i.e. Harlequin], the others being James Parsloe and William West. "Each of these actors," Mayer says, "was better known as a 'posture master' than as a comic actor." In the role of Harlequin, these dancers "were exploded from mortars, dismembered, daubed with stove blacking, flung in the mud, laughed at, spurned" (*Harlequin in His Element*, p. 44). In the Sans Pareil pantomime of this season, *The Magicians; or, The Enchanted Bird*, however, Widdicomb played Lover. Young Flexmore played Clown for the first time.

Again, Bologna Jr. gave his mechanical exhibitions during Lent. A 23 March bill shows that his presentation was divided into four classes. In Class I, he exhibited various mechanical contrivances: a windmill, a clockwork piano, two automata figures and "the astonishing rope-dancer." In Class II, "automaton [*sic*] shadows" were projected. In Class III, an experiment in optics "portraying the shadows of the living and the dead" and "a grand display of experiments in hydraulics, of fire and water" were presented. In Class IV, fireworks were ignited, "forming Temples, Groves, etc., etc., without the smallest appearance of gun-powder or smoke."

There were benefits—all quite lively, to judge by the many visiting performers who appeared—for Miss Scott, Villiers, the Giroux family, Schoengen, Mrs. Batten and Robert Stebbing. This season of approximately ninety-eight evenings began 22 November 1813 and ended 12 April 1814.

FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1814-1815

Ed. Frank McHugh

This season the renovated theatre became the "Strand Theatre, The Sans Pareil"—a name it retained until the beginning of the 1819-20 season.

The house opened in late December 1814, after extensive reconstruction and the erection of a new front. The theatre, according to the December 1814 *Theatrical Inquisitor*:

has been completely rebuilt, considerably enlarged, and the alterations are of the most elegant and commodious description. Twelve new boxes have been added, including two stage boxes; and the pit will now accommodate eight hundred persons. The gallery is so constructed that the audience have a full view of the stage even from the back seats (p. 406).

E. L. Blanchard describes the interior after the rebuilding and as it still was in 1819 when Rodwell and Jones acquired the theatre:

The form of the interior was that of an elongated horseshoe. The proscenium, twenty-eight feet in width, had stage doors at the side, with a box over each. The cove above was decorated by fanlike irradiations from a semicircular base of rough gold [actually this decoration may date from 1824, according to a description in the *Drama* of that year]...There was one full circle of boxes, with an upper range on a level with the gallery, and boxes were constructed at the back of the dress circle, to which a lower rate of admission was charged. The gallery seated about three hundred. The house would hold very nearly two hundred pounds ("History of the Adelphi Theatre," *Era Almanac*, 1877, p. 1).

The *Theatrical Inquisitor* supplies more details:

The ceiling is a finished piece of workmanship, representing Venus and her attendants. The drop-curtain is also a beautiful production, representing Apollo and the Graces dancing round the statue of Cupid. The house is painted on a light blue ground, with ornaments after the Grecian style. The stage is between fifty and sixty feet deep, and forty feet wide, which gives ample scope for the scenery. Here are, likewise, two stage pillars, in imitation of stone, which gives the whole a grand and noble effect (pp. 406-7).

Because of the delayed opening, the season was short and the company small. Thirty-nine actors and dancers appear on the roster, but many stayed briefly or played minor roles. However, such excellent actors as Meredith, Villiers, Stebbing and R. H. Widdicomb appeared, and such fine dancers as Yarnold, Richard Flexmore, John Jones, Miss Cooke, and Miss Gibbs. Mrs. Riley (later Mrs. Bemetzrieder) began her association with the company this season. John Jones, "late of the King's Theatre," succeeded Gabriel Giroux as ballet master, and Lawrence followed Parnell as bandleader. Miss Scott, John Jones, and Lawrence—author, choreographer, and composer respectively—contributed eight new works to the eleven pieces produced in 1814-1815. A brief notice of the company's efforts in the *Theatrical Inquisitor* for January 1815 was more polite than laudatory: "The Sans Pareil continues to deserve and attract crowded audiences. Miss Scott is greatly improved—she performs better than usual. The ballet does infinite credit to the taste and skill of Mr. Jones" (p. 78).

Several bills insist at length on the originality of Miss Scott's comedy, *Whackham and Windham; or, The Wrangling Lawyers*. The 20 February bill, for example, says of it, "Never was a French piece but wholly original." The same claim could not be made for *Love, Honor and Obey*, which Miss Scott and Michael Parnell fashioned in 1812 from Patrat's *L'Heureuse Erreur*. However, the bills did contend that *Love, Honor and Obey* was the original of *Brother and Sister*, which played at Covent Garden this 1814-1815 season. (Parnell had become a member of the band at Covent Garden.) Dimond wrote the book and Bishop the music for the Covent Garden piece, and Dimond's reputation for readily "adapting" others' works no doubt strengthened the Sans Pareil's claim. The *Theatrical Inquisitor* for February 1815 reviewed *Brother and Sister* and found it pervaded by a "sombre dullness." The critic, without troubling himself to review (or possibly even to see) *Love, Honor and Obey*, then dismissed the protests of Miss Scott, "a lady of considerable talent and great dramatic industry." He said, "The contention is rather a sharp one. Where the blame lies, or whether there be any blame, is really not worth enquiry. The productions and complaints will soon sink together into an irrecoverable oblivion" (p. 150). In fact, oblivion did not immediately overtake either piece. *Brother and Sister*, "this highly favorite piece," played "as often as the run of new pieces would allow" at the Haymarket in 1816 (*Theatrical Inquisitor*, August 1816, pp. 140-1). Moreover, "Dimond's amusing plagiarism" got another expensive production at Bath in 1817 (*Theatrical Inquisitor*, March 1817, p. 229). Miss Scott's *Love, Honor and Obey*, meanwhile, was playing at the *Sans Pareil* as late as the 1818-1819 season.

Despite the expensive improvements to the theatre in 1814, ticket prices remained the same (the bills do not mention a lower price for boxes behind the dress circle): boxes were four shillings, the pit two, and gallery one. Henry Crabb Robinson attended a performance on February 20, and noted that he and his brother were "cheaply amused." Of the amusements he says, "We heard some respectable imitations by one [Andrew] Campbell. And a comic piece *Windham and Whackam [sic]* in which one, Meredith, acted in Dowton's style very respectably—that is producing effect by broad comic acting" (*The London Theatre, 1811-1866*). A January 31 bill states Campbell was imitating Kemble, Cook, Johnstone, Elliston, Farley, Emery, Munden and Kean. Crabb Robinson does not say whether he saw the opening piece, an apparently successful "new Scotch ballet divertissement" by John Jones called *Jamie of Aberdeen*, in which all the company's principal dancers performed. Nor does he mention the pantomime, *Harlequin Rasselas; or, The Happy Valley*, the last piece on the bill. *Harlequin Rasselas* opened February 9 and played twenty-two times. Yarnold, who had danced with the company since 1810, was Harlequin. William Templeton, newly arrived from Dublin and remaining only this season at the Sans Pareil, was Pantaloon. Richard Flexmore was Clown, as he had been in the preceding season, and Miss Cooke danced Columbine for all but two nights.

From the scant references to incidental entertainments on the bills this season, Mrs. Pearce and Minor, both newcomers, in addition to Huckel, emerge as principal singers. Shaw, Richard Flexmore and Yarnold, assisted by the corps de ballet, took care of the dancing roles. Jane Scott made at least one serious address to the audience, and Widdicomb a comic one, and Andrew Campbell did his imitations. The notice of a 16 March benefit for Stuck, the box bookkeeper, shows the full range of variety acts the theatre offered, perhaps on every evening. On March 16, Miller, Simpson, and Minor sang. Richard Flexmore did a "whole new comic dance." Miss Brady danced a broadsword hornpipe. Edwin Yarnold and Miss Hart danced a double hornpipe. Taylor tumbled and with Shaw did "a black and white" scene.

In addition to the benefit for Stuck, there were benefits for Miss Scott on 16 February and for John Jones and Edwin Yarnold on 6 March. Approximately fifty-nine performances were given this season, which began on 26 December 1814 and ended 18 March 1815.

FM

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1815-1816

Ed. Franklin Case

Under the management of its proprietor, John Scott, The Strand Theatre opened its new season 30 October 1815, with Miss Jane Scott's *Asgard*, *The Daemon Hunter*, *The Conjurer*, and *The Summer House*. The season closed 135 evening performances later on 6 April 1816, with performances of *The Old Oak Chest* and *Stratagems*. Of the season's works, six were ballets, seven were burlettas, one a comic pantomime, one a drama, one a divertissement, four were melodramas, one an operatic entertainment, and two were pantomimes.

Based on the number of performances, the most durable and admired of these works were: *The Conjurer* (a burletta, 49 performances); *Love in the Vintage* (a ballet, 46 performances); *The Witch and the Owl* (a pantomime, 44 performances); *The Old Oak Chest* (a melodrama, 39 performances); *Jamie of Aberdeen* (a ballet, 24 performances); *The Inscription* (a ballet, 29 performances); *Harlequin Rasselas* (a pantomime, 21 performances); *Asgard, the Daemon Hunter* (a melodrama, 18 performances). Apparently, this season's audiences thrived on ballet and pantomime, with melodrama enjoying its usual strong showing.

During this season, Miss Jane Scott's burletta *The Conjurer* was produced for the first time in England with these words of praise on the bill: "Now performing in Paris and through the provinces with enthusiastic approbation." For the opening of her melodrama *Asgard, The Daemon Hunter* on 30 October, an entirely new architectural front drop scene was introduced, "representing a grand imperial palace" with statues and banners celebrating Roman historical figures. *The Two Little Savoyards* was performed for the first time since September 1808, according to Nicoll's *History*. The bill emphasizes that the performance took place "with the original French music." *Harlequin Rasselas*, author unknown, was based on Dr. Johnson's tale, and its bill contains a detailed plot summary. Master Snelling (age 4) performed the flute selections in *Love in the Vintage*—his first public appearance. *Alphonso* was written from the renowned romance of *Gonzalve de Cordova*.

"Tippitywichee" sung during *Stratagems* was by Charles Dibdin, the younger. While at Sadler's Wells, Dibdin had begun a series of broad songs and extravaganzas sung by the Clown, Joseph Grimaldi. Of these songs, "Tippitywichee" and "Hot Codlings," became standards and suffered the dubious distinction of being appropriated by "piratical publications," as Dibdin put it. The *Theatrical Inquisitor* had this to say in January:

Miss Scott deserves much praise for her exertions to render this house deservedly attractive. The interior is really fitted up in a respectable manner, and several new pieces of merit have been produced, particularly one called *The Inscription*, apparently founded on Murphy's *Desert Island*. The pantomime [*The Witch and the Owl*] is also remarkably [sic] amusing (p. 77).

The theatre was dark for Martyr's Day, 30 January 1816, and for Ash Wednesday, 28 February 1816.

FC

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1816-1817

Ed. Franklin Case

Under its manager and proprietor, John Scott, the theatre opened its new season on 31 October 1816, with performances of Miss Jane Scott's *The Conjurer*, Leclercq's *Alasnum and His Cottage Queen; or, The Adventures of a Night*, and an unknown author's work, *The Sportsman and Shepherd; or, Where's the Wig?* For this season, the interior of the theatre was newly decorated and embellished from a design by Mr. Orme of the King's Theatre. The *British Stage* said:

This house is worthy of its name, since of all the theatres in London, it can claim the praise of being the prettiest. The decorations and embellishments are all new and in the best taste, and the *tout ensemble* must be allowed by everyone to be uncommonly pleasing. The pieces produced and the actors in those pieces are of similar merit...his daughter...both as an author and an actress, evinces remarkable ability. In the burletta of *The Old Oak Chest*...she is seen to great advantage in each of these capacities. The pantomime is far more laughable than either of those at the regular theatres. The Clown of Jones is not surpassed in drollery even by Grimaldi's (February 1817, pp. 31-32).

The twenty works attributed to Jane Scott certainly do attest to her skill as a dramatic author. The *Theatrical Inquisitor* (December 1816) was as fulsome in its praise as the *British Stage*:

If we speak of this theatre, it must be in terms of unqualified approbation. Everything is conducted with so much preciousness and care that we are lost in astonishment at their varied excellence. Those who wish a treat will do well to be of the party to *Madelon's Dinner*. The Clown of Young Jones furnishes an excellent dessert (p. 445).

In addition to the pieces, there were some lively interludes throughout the season, including a splendid whistler, a gymnast with remarkably strong teeth, and two highly spirited monkeys: Signora Jackini, the female, walking with a balance pole on the tight rope; and Signor Jacki, the male, performing on the slack rope. The bills indicate the popularity of such divertissements. For example, on 21 November 1816, *Whackham and Windham; or, The Wrangling Lawyers* included whistling, which the bill refers to as "performing with the mouth, without the aid of machinery or trickery, the most favorite airs, with appropriate cadences, equal to the finest execution, and after the manner of the voice flute." The virtuosity of the "Shropshire Whistler" was so admired that a later bill proclaims: "At the particular desire of the numerous frequenters of this theatre, the undernamed very famous burletta will be performed as an afterpiece during the week." This meant, of course, that the whistler would be heard again—and again. The monkeys, brought from the Ruggiere in Paris, were added to the 13 January 1817, performance entertainment, which included James "Young" Jones playing the violin at the top of two ladders, singing a comic song, and dancing in "real wooden shoes." In addition, Garthwaite, a gymnast, drew himself up to the top of the theatre by his teeth.

On January 7, 1817, in *British Stage* says "Mr. J. Jones, of the Sans Pareil, whilst fighting in the performance of *The Old Oak Chest*, a few evenings ago, accidentally broke his sword, a piece of it flew into the pit and wounded a lady on the head."

The Strand Theatre, The Sans Pareil, was a successful financial enterprise as noted in *British Stage*, February 1817: "We imagine the proprietor must be rapidly accumulating a fortune. His success is almost wholly to be attributed to the versatile talents of his daughter, who both as an author and actress evinces remarkable ability."

The season closed on 29 March 1817, with *The Crown of Roses*, *Mary, the Maid of the Inn; or, The Bough of Yew*, and *Camilla the Amazon; or, The Mountain Robber*.

FC

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1817-1818

Ed. Franklin Case

The new season began on 13 October 1817, with Miss Scott's *The Lord of the Castle*, Leclercq's *The Woodman Prince*, and *The Sportsman and Shepherd; or, Where's The Wig?* The title of *The Lord of the Castle* was later changed to *The Castle of Alberti; or, The Sacred Oath*. For the 27th performance, the bill contains the following note: "No money returned nor orders admitted nor children suffered to pass on any account."

The *Theatrical Inquisitor* of October states:

This popular establishment re-opened for the season on Monday, the 13th.inst.... after considerable embellishments in the decorations that have been long and much admired. A new melodrama has been produced from the ready pen of Miss Scott, called *The Lord of the Castle*, which was received throughout with long and loud applause till it terminated in a peal of protracted satisfaction. The ballet of *The Woodman Prince* is a pretty offering to Terpsichore and exhibits the graceful ability of Monsieur and Madam Leclercq to great advantage. The corps de ballet is particularly effective. We...cannot conclude without expressing our pleasure at a continued acquaintance with many old favourites among whom Messrs. J. Jones and Huckel, in their devious walks are entitled to undiminished commendation (p. 319).

The *British Stage* was also taken with *The Lord of the Castle*, "a melo-drama...in which serious and ludicrous incidents are very happily blended." This journal also praised *The Widow's Tears*, "a burlesque operetta founded on Bickerstaff's *Ephesian Matron*." It said this piece "bids fair to attain to considerable popularity; it is a very pleasant trifle, and extremely well performed." Additional praise was lavished upon the dancing in the person of Madam Charles Leclercq: "The principal female dancer at this house, Madam Leclercq, is one of the prettiest and most fascinating little creatures we ever witnessed; as a Columbine she would prove particularly serviceable at one of the winter theatres" (17 November 1817, p. 253). In December, Madam Leclercq did in fact dance Columbine in the pantomime *The Necromancer*.

This season was shortened because of a long mourning period for the deaths of Princess Charlotte and her child. The dark period lasted from 7 November 1817, through 21 November 1817. Adding to this period the regular dark dates in the season, the theatre was closed for 17 days.

The bill for 7 March 1818, which included *Whackham and Windham* and *The Three Crumps*, remarks that the theatre was "patronized by all the Royal Family." *The British Stage* (December 1817), notes "The comic songs of Mr. Huckel also afford much gratification":

Then I went to the Park and I saw the great gun
Which a present, 'tis said, from the Spaniards did come:
A very queer present, I swear by the Mass,
For we lend them our *gold*, and they pay us in *brass*.

On 14 March 1818, the season ended with performances of *The Fortunate Youth*; *The Woodman Prince*; *Love! Honour! and Obey!* and *The Three Crumps*.

FC

Sans Pareil Theatre Seasonal Digest 1818-1819

Ed. Franklin Case

The 1818-1819 season was the last under the ownership and management of John Scott. The theatre was sold to James Rodwell and Willis Jones at the conclusion of the season. From then on, with occasional exceptions, it was known as the Adelphi Theatre.

This season opened on 19 October 1818, with *Bachelor's Miseries; or, The Double Disappointment, Kiss in the Ring; or, Who Stole the Apples*, and *The Inscription; or, The Indian Hunters*. On the bill, Miss Scott is described as *not* related to "persons of that name now performing elsewhere." In *British Stage* on 19 October regarding *Bachelor's Miseries*, the following comment was made: "It is much to be regretted that in a piece so short, a great deal of room should have been found for some very indecent dialogue."

In this season, the Royal Family, as evinced by notations on the bills, admired a remarkable number of performances. Of course, visits occurred after the death of Queen Charlotte Sophia. The theatre was dark in mourning for her death from 18 November 1818, through 2 December 1818. The bill for *The Prince of Persia; or, The Dog and the Assassin* reveals that the actor Avery had received "reiterated bursts of applause from His Royal Highness, the Prince of Orange, the Emperor Alexander, the King of Prussia."

Master Bidder performed on 18 March 1819. His father exhibited him as "calculating phenomenon" and he also appeared in *Stratagems; or, The Lost Treasure*. George Parker Bidder became an engineer and was associated with George Stephenson and the construction of London's Victoria Docks. The bill proudly noted, "Master Bidder has had the approbation of the Royal Family and many persons of distinction."

Smollett gave an address on the closing of the theatre—3 April 1819. An advertisement states: "persons having any demands on this concern are desired to send in their accounts with all convenient speed, that the same may be discharged." And so the Strand Theatre, The Sans Pareil closed its doors for the last time before reopening under new management as the Adelphi Theatre.

FC

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1819-1820

Ed. Franklin Case

The 1819-20 season was the first under the management of Willis Jones and James T. G. Rodwell, who bought the theatre from John Scott. Lee, who had been employed by Robert W. Elliston, became stage manager. With Mrs. W. S. Chatterley, formerly of the English Opera House, he delivered an opening address written by William Moncrieff. The theatre was refurbished extensively. A new gas chandelier suspended from the dome was the "subject of universal admiration." The new owners' theatre was dark for 18 days because of the deaths of the Duke of York (1 day) and King George III (16 days), as well as Ash Wednesday (1 day). The newly-purchased theatre opened its first season as the Adelphi on 18 October 1819, with performances of *The Green Dragon; or, I've Quite Forgot* and *Tom Thumb*. The company now included James P. Wilkinson, Joe Cowell (from Drury Lane), and Miss Eliza Scott of the Haymarket. The Misses Dennett were on hand to introduce, as E. L. Blanchard put it, "graceful dances between the pieces."

One of the featured actresses this season was Mrs. Frances Alsop, a daughter of the famous Mrs. Dorothea [Dora] Jordan. Reviewers of her early Covent Garden performances found her inferior to her mother: "Her singing is sweetly expressive, and she sweeps the light chords of the harp with a truly tasteful finger. Her proportions are diminutive without neatness, and her features alike divested of grace and intelligence" (*Theatrical Inquisitor*, May 1817, pp. 323-24).

Rather extravagant staging took place, particularly in works such as *The Fairy of the North Star; or, Harlequin at Labrador*, first performed 27 December 1819. This pantomime involved 16 scenes with a view of the palace of Labrador, a view of Dover, a medical laboratory, and a country inn, the "Rose and Crown."

Some pieces were not greeted with the kindness of genteel applause. *Love and Chase*, performed 6 December 1819, was referred to as "an agreeable bagatelle ably supported by the talents of Messrs. Reeve, Wilkinson, and Chatterley, the last was less somnambulant than usual" (*LTM Scrapbook*).

The theatre was not devoid of charitable feelings towards those less fortunate outside its doors. For example, the performance on 19 January 1820, of *Run For Your Life* had the whole of its "receipts go to the City Charitable Fund for the houseless poor. The Lord Mayor attended as special patron" (*LTM Scrapbook*). The *British Stage*, February 1820, reported "the receipts were £101..7s..6d. Yet this is a minor Theatre, which the Drury-Lane Manager, whose vast contribution amounted to but little more, would willingly suppress, as a nuisance."

Again, there was royal interest in the theatre. The bill for *The Fairy of the North Star; or, Harlequin at Labrador* on 27 January 1820, announces: "The Prince Regent has been graciously pleased to command that this theatre shall be opened every evening, as usual, excepting that of the Royal Funeral."

The season closed on 25 March 1820, with *Rochester; or, King Charles the Second's Merry Days* and *Ivanhoe; or, The Saxon Chief*.

FC

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1820-1821

Ed. Alfred Nelson & Gilbert Cross

During the second season of their tenure at the Adelphi, James T. Rodwell and Willis Jones continued to emphasize dance and song. While most pieces were defined as burlettas, a casual glance at the bills for this season indicates that almost all the thirty-seven pieces played are farces or comic ballets. The exceptions are *Zamoski* and *St. Cuthbert's Eve* (romantic melodramas) and *Kenilworth* and *Ivanhoe* (historical melodramas). With these exceptions, the entire season was limited to short farcical burlettas featuring dancers like the Dalys, the Kirbys, Walbourn, Simpson, St. Albin, and Miss Garbois.

The management boasted on the early bills that it had acquired "performers and pieces of the first merit, anxious to deserve a continuance of that patronage they so fully experienced last season." The company was basically the same as last season. Though the number of actors increased from 41 to 77, most of the newcomers were bit players who played single roles in the pantomime or in one of the melodramas. The number of actresses fell from 27 to 25. Major figures missing were Starmer, Gay, Lane, Willis, and Bemetzrieder among the men and Mrs. Alsop (the daughter of Dora Jordan) and Miss Garcia among the women. Added to the company were these important names: Brisac, Callahan, Dennis, Phillips, Miss Garbois, Mrs. Tennant, and Mrs. Harriett Waylett. Mrs. Tennant was a Mrs. Vaughan, formerly a great singer now on the way down. The *British Stage and Literary Cabinet* commented: "Mrs. Vaughan has appeared...under the name of Tennant; [she] looks as pretty as ever, though her singing does not seem to be so excellent as it formerly was" (December 1820, p. 346).

The old standbys Walbourn, Daly, St. Albin, Paulo, Reeve and James P. Wilkinson remained. The latter was praised by the *Mirror of the Stage* (27 January 1823), as one of the

very few original actors of the present day...The laugh which invites is enjoyed from the genuine flow of nature, as pure as pure as unconstrained. We admire to see a performer act, as it were, internally (a want of which is too prevalent, more especially with comic pretenders), language to be the secondary means of communicating the business and character of the scene—to discover in an actor's look and gesture the 'spring of action'. Such admiration may be ever awakened by an acquaintance with the portraits of this gentleman. The simpleton, the eccentric, and the boor alike receive from his judicious touch the unfading glowing colours of reality—he makes them his own...There is no swaggering into good opinion (p. 1).

Miss Collier, an actress who had joined the company from the Theatre Royal, York, was involved in a serious accident during a performance of *St. Cuthbert's Eve* on 14 October. The actress, as *The British Stage and Literary Cabinet* reported, "having to mount a ladder to appear at the battlements of a castle, when near the top, she was seized by a sudden giddiness and fell on the stage. A surgeon was sent for, and she was conveyed home much hurt" (December 1820, p. 346). Miss Yates had to take her part. Although Miss Collier evidently recovered, appearing in November as Donna Beatrice in *The Deuce Is in Her*, she last appeared on 8 February 1821. After that date, there is no record Miss Collier ever appeared at the Adelphi again.

One piece certainly pleased the audience. It was *A Burletta of Errors*, based on John Dryden's *Amphitryon*. Dryden's play was adapted from the comedies of Plautus and Moliere and published in 1690. Jupiter imitates Amphitryon in order to enjoy the favors of the latter's wife, Alcmena. Jupiter orders Mercury to imitate Sosia, Amphitryon's slave. The comedy centers on the successive arrivals

of the two Amphitryons and two Sosias at Amphitryon's palace and climaxes with the meeting of the disguised Jupiter and Amphitryon. The play was lengthened from two to three acts on 20 November 1820.

Reeve's benefit, 18 December 1820, was billed as "Under the patronage of the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor and sheriffs of London, who intend, on this occasion, to honor the theatre with their presence."

Greenwood's benefit was in April, and Rowbotham came over from the E.O.H. Some years later, *The Mirror of the Stage* commented of the latter, he "is correct, persecutingly correct. He speaks and acts by compass and rule, he is a turner of syllables to an indescribable fineness, there is no fancy work; it is all plain and smooth, yet still without point; it is the carved work of a bedpost" (26 July 1824, p.129).

Signor Paulo (Paul Redige) was a performer destined to achieve a measure of fame. In this season, he appeared as Clown in two pantomimes and as Friday (another clown role) in *Robinson Crusoe*, a pantomimic ballet. He was the son of the "Little Devil" of Sadler's Wells.

On Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent, Bologna Jr. engaged the theatre to present "An entirely new Pictorial, Optical, and Mechanical Exhibition called 'The Panoramic Mirror; or, Nature's Reflector.'" On the same bill was a magic act conducted by Rosenberg.

Lest the public (or John Larpent, the Examiner of Plays) should think otherwise, Bologna thoughtfully included this disclaimer on the bills: "The above performances have nothing of a Theatrical Nature in them; they are calculated to shew the beauties of nature, and may be visited by the most scrupulous." A sample beauty of nature was a "View of Yarmouth with Lord Nelson's monument and the surrounding country. The effect of a declining summer afternoon, with the coming on of night, and the rising of the moon...enlivened by a representation of the landing of the troops from Holland during the late war."

The wheel had come full circle, for in 1812 Bologna had presented his "Mechanical Exposition" at this same theatre then called the Sans Pareil.

There was a reminder of the problems of visiting a theatre in the 1820s. James Winston wrote in his scrapbook: "A regular filch was caught in the pit of the Adelphi Theatre on Wed. evening. On searching his pockets, they contained 7 silk handkerchiefs, 3 pairs of gloves, a French snuff box, an opera glass, and several bunches of keys."

From June 4-21 (after the regular season), the French equilibrists, Chalons, Davoust, and Company, performed feats of agility and strength. Davoust would climb a cord to the top of the house, walk with his feet against the proscenium, his head downwards, play with hoops to prove he was not wired, beat drums, eat and drink, and waltz with his head downwards.

Such marvels did not pass unnoticed. Robert William Elliston, lessee of Drury Lane, attempted to lure Monsieur Chalons to Drury Lane for a masked ball on 18 June 1821. The Frenchman refused the overtures, but James Rodwell, hearing of the approach, wrote what the *British Stage and Literary Cabinet* (July 1821, p. 224), termed a "petulant epistle." Elliston's "sublime reply" began: "Rodwell—I have heard of a 'puddle in a storm' and a 'puppy in a passion'—at the one I am amused, the other I scorn."

Rodwell repaired to Drury Lane in haste, seconded by the singer, P. P. O'Callaghan, intending to belabor the "Great Lessee" with a horsewhip. Elliston proved equal to the challenge and produced a

"night-preserver," an instrument of self-defense formed of several short pieces of strongly bound cane with a knob of lead at both ends. The Adelphi proprietor was struck with a blow to the forehead and fell, bleeding profusely, to the floor. O'Callaghan, who managed to restrain Elliston until help could be summoned prevented worse mischief. The Bow Street magistrate, before whom the next act of this melodrama was played out, gave Rodwell short shrift, assuring him that Elliston would have been perfectly justified in *shooting* him. The whole matter fizzled away as such puddles do in storms, and Elliston, with "matchless impudence," inserted Mons. Chalons' name in his bills anyway. Rodwell and O'Callaghan agreed to pay twenty pounds each to both theatrical funds and were fined one shilling. (See also James Winston, *Drury Lane Journal*, edited by Alfred Nelson and Gilbert Cross, pp. 31-34). Fines did no good. Elliston was accused of two cases of assault in 1824—the same year O'Callaghan was jailed for a month for the same crime.

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Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1821-1822

Ed. Alfred Nelson & Gilbert Cross

During the recess, the theatre underwent extensive alterations and embellishments. Exits were enlarged, and the interior was completely redecorated and beautified.

Just half as many pieces were offered as in the previous season. This was mostly due to the unprecedented popularity of Moncrieff's extravaganza, *Tom and Jerry; or, Life in London*, based upon Pierce Egan's famous work of the same name. First played 26 November 1821, it was presented each night from then on until the end of the regular season (except on those Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent when serious music replaced dramatic entertainment), for 94 times, never with more than one other piece on the bill.

The *Drama* said of it: "Several of the scenes are very laughable—particularly the night row at Temple Bar and All Max in the East in which the meeting of all the celebrated beggars and ballad singers of the metropolis is displayed" (22 February p. 207).

A correspondent to the journal, J. L. B., was not so taken with the Tom and Jerry craze:

Shoot folly as it flies says the poet; yet if *Life in London* is designed as a check upon our vices, candour must decidedly pronounce it a failure...our theatres teem, for the most part, with 'nothing but inexplicable dumb show and noise'. And it is doubtless this circumstance that restrains many of our living bards from writing for the stage...Who would risk their fame and feelings on the stage when our minor theatres are nightly thronged, by means of the lucubrations of Mr. Egan, an author enjoying as great a share of popularity as Lord Byron himself? (22 May pp. 321-22).

The Christmas pantomime, *Beauty and the Beast; or, Harlequin and the Magic Rose*, was played 54 times. The only melodrama, *The Corsair's Bride; or, The Valley of Mount Etna*, by Planché, saw 21 performances. Appearing in the latter was Watkins Burroughs. Of him, the *Mirror of the Stage* said in 1823:

Burroughs, we think, would have been twice the actor had he played to the mind and not the eye—the judgment of men and not the approval of novel-reading mantilla-makers. His action in the melodrama is good, but his voice, when it should demand, whines, when disclaim, cracks. His walking gentlemen are his best performances, though sometimes coxcombical, lavender water and otto of roses, we cannot forget when he appears (6 October 1823).

Short ballets and farces labeled burlettas completed the season's offerings. An anonymous but popular piece of the decade, *Bruno; or, The Sultan's Favorite*, with music by G. W. Maddison, was given 33 times. It was, the *Drama* pointed out in October 1821, "A spirited translation of a lively trifle produced last season at the French Theatre in Argyle Street." The reviewer had this to add:

The subject is the death of a favourite white bear of the grand sultan (who is possessed with a *mania* for *learned animals*) and the tricks of his minister, aided by a pair of strolling English exhibitors of wild beasts to conceal from his knowledge the loss of his favourite...The bustling activity of Wrench, the dry humour of Wilkinson, and the whimsical unconsciousness of Keeley, who share the burden of the action, contribute mainly to the success of the piece (pp. 300-01).

James R. Planché wrote seven of the pieces played this season. (He had written 12 for the previous season.) Planché and Moncrieff were responsible in large measure for the success of the Adelphi under Rodwell and Jones. Their works were to be staples of dramatic fare at the Adelphi for years to come. Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry* defies classification, witness the genre description on the bill—"An entirely new, classic, comic, operatic, didactic, moralistic, Aristophanic, localic, analytic, Terpsichoric, panoramic, camera-obscura-ic, extravaganza burletta of fun, frolic, fashion, and flash." The play is in the tradition of *The Beggar's Opera* and Jonsonian comedy.

For years to come, Benjamin Wrench's Corinthian Tom and Reeve's Jerry Hawthorn were to enliven the Adelphi stage while Logic, Primefit, Regular, and Dusty Bob became household names. Female roles were important too. Kate, alias the Hon. Miss Trifle, alias Sir Jeremy Brag, alias Nan, the match girl; and Sue, also alias the Hon. Miss Trifle, alias Captain Swaggery, alias Mrs. Mummery, the fortune teller, alias Poll, the ballad singer, parts originally played by Mrs. Baker and Harriett Waylett, were roles to which any comic actress would aspire.

The theatre was dark during Passion Week. On Easter Monday, 8 April, Monsieur Alexandre engaged the theatre for his one-man show entitled *The Adventures of a Ventriloquist*. The bill proclaimed that Mons. Alexandre "will display the various astonishing vocal illusions for which he has been so justly celebrated and distinguished on the continent, and which have been represented with such signal approbation before most of the crowned heads and princes of Europe." This entertainment in which Mons. Alexandre sustained numerous characters, including assorted animals and fantastics, was presented daily until 20 July. It was written by William Moncrieff and first presented under the title *The Adventures of a Ventriloquist; or, The Rogueries of Nicholas*. Later it was billed under the subtitle.

The *Theatrical Observer* (17 April 1822) was particularly taken by Alexandre's entertainment:

His powers of ventriloquism are of the very highest order, and in some instances, his performances are truly astonishing. The characters which he introduces have nothing very new or striking about them, but he contrives to put them into some very entertaining situations...The scene at the tooth-drawer's is too long, and a little curtailment would be of service throughout. His most original and extraordinary efforts, without doubt, are his imitations of animals, dogs barking, cats mewing, a child crying; [they] are admirable, and then his plaining [sic], sawing, and tuning the guitar, together with frying eggs and other things, are so good they should be witnessed by everyone who has a couple of hours to spare for such enjoyment (p. 522).

Monsieur Alexandre extended his entertainment by of popular demand and delivered a farewell address on July 20, which concluded: "England has been justly styled the stranger's home. I have found it too the liberal patron of a stranger's talent. The recollection of your past kindness shall stimulate me to merit it in future by every exertion of my abilities."

There was a benefit for a Mr. Bromley of Drury Lane, a teacher of elocution, on 22 July 1822. The *Theatrical Observer* mentions it but gives no details of what was played.

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Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1822-1823

Ed. Alfred Nelson & Gilbert Cross

The season opened 7 October 1822 with *Tom and Jerry* and *The New Marriage Act*. William Oxberry (from the TR Haymarket) and Salter (from E.O.H.) were important additions to the company. Of the latter, the *Mirror of the Stage* said in 1824: "No gentleman on the minor boards has a greater share of general and useful talent. His old men are strong and sturdy, his flippancy valets...are rather heavy...Without being actually *great* in anything [he] must be respectable in *everything*" (16 February p. 20).

During the first week, a double tragedy happened. Benjamin Wrench sprained his leg severely and Reeve's wife died, thus causing the temporary absence of two of the Adelphi's stars. At this time, neither William Walbourn nor Oxberry could be released from summer commitments at other theatres. As a consequence *Tom and Jerry's* spot on the bill was filled by last season's Christmas pantomime, *Beauty and the Beast*, and a farce, Moncrieff's *The Green Dragon; or, I've Quite Forgotten*.

The *Mirror of the Stage* was critical of *Tom and Jerry*:

A well-governed stage has been justly described to be 'an ornament to society'... but can it be said for a moment that where the characters in a drama are prostitutes, thieves, and vagabonds, where the language is a tissue of disgusting ribaldry and obscene jests, where vice is upheld and virtue debased, can it be said, we repeat, that *such a piece* is likely to improve our morals, our virtue or our manners?...We are no canting Methodists, no puritanical casuists (18 November 1822, p. 125).

The piece was resumed on 17 October accompanied by a new farce. *The New Marriage Act* had expired, as the Adelphi *Scrapbook* reported: "The voice of disapprobation at the end was so loud that the manager came forward to say that it should be carefully revised or withdrawn." After Christmas, the pantomime, *Harlequin's Holiday; or, Who Killed the Dog?* replaced the farce. A week later, the subtitle of the pantomime was changed to *The Cockney Sportsmen*. Nothing helped, and *Harlequin's Holiday* perished by 27 January, its place taken by alternating short pieces.

Green in France, a spin-off from the ever-popular *Tom and Jerry*, began in January. The *Drama* summarized the plot as follows:

The three choice spirits, Tom, Jerry, and Logic, have entered into matrimony with those chaste ladies, Kate, Sue, and Jane, and, after three months devotion to the shrine of Hymen, resolve on a continental tour; this is accordingly undertaken in company with Green (Wilkinson) of Tooley Street, a true specimen of Cockney foolery and ignorance. The ladies are, however, very unwilling to trust their 'lords' away from their aprons, and therefore determine to follow them to France (January 1823, p. 47).

Advice was offered to John Reeve to "place his hands *before* him, or to *look* at the personage who is *speaking* to him, or to whom he is *himself addressing*, and to give up all attempts at singing until he has improved himself in the science of music" (p. 49).

A popular piece, *No Dinner Yet*, had a simple plot concerning the attempts of Sponge to find a meal. The dialog was lively and contained several puns. The *Mirror of the Stage* praised both main actors. Wilkinson "may justly be said to be inimitable. Buckingham as Doric, a sort of speculative

builder, was very clever. There is much novelty in this piece, inasmuch as there are not any female characters in it—a thing very rare in modern times" (24 February 1823, p. 44).

This season no entertainments took place on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent, the theatre being dark on those days. On 24 April 1823, Wilkinson and Reeve combined to present their one-man entertainments on the same bill. Wilkinson opened the program with his *Trifles Light As Air*, a combination of songs and impressions. Reeve's contribution was *Bachelor's Torments; or, The Sweets of a Family*. It featured nine characters personified and two songs: "'Tis a Folly to Talk of Life's Troubles," and an extravaganza, "First Vid de Grace Extraordinaire," composed by George B. Herbert. Reeve concluded the show with imitations of London performers. Apparently, the program was successful, for the initial schedule of four nights was changed to six nights a week. On 14 June, the entertainments ceased, and the theatre was dark until 23 June when Reeve assumed Wilkinson's part of the show along with his own, announcing that since Wilkinson's summer engagements precluded him from continuing, he (Reeve), "At the request of the numerous frequenters of this theatre, has undertaken to attempt the whole entertainment." Reeve's entertainments continued four nights per week until Saturday, 6 September 1823.

"C." wrote to the *Drama* in August 1823 of Reeve's performance:

The ease and success with which he goes through the whole of the entertainment, the first part of which was originally written for a performer so different in his style of acting, is a decided proof of Mr. Reeve's extraordinary versatility, and when to this is added his justness of conception, mastery of features, admirable style of comic singing and rich vein of genuine humour, I am justified in asserting that a union of such qualities would render him a most valuable acquisition in the retinue of Thalia... . It would be a want of justice to Mr. Reeve to omit noticing the rapidity with which he changes his dresses in the last part of his entertainment—his excellence in this particular exceeds anything I have hitherto seen (p. 46).

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Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1823-1824

Ed. Alfred Nelson & Gilbert Cross

During the summer recess, backs were added to the pit benches. The band had been enlarged and new players added to the Company. Most important of these were Meredith (from the Theatre Royal, Bristol), James Kirby, Mrs. Searle (the former Miss Caroline Giroux), and Mlle. Maria (from the Italian Opera House). Missing from the Company were Buckingham, Herring, Oxberry, Paulo, and Miss Jerrold. Miss S. Pitt had become Mrs. Wilkins.

On the first night, 6 October 1823, there was no main piece, unless a three-act novelty billed as a new comic burletta *The Prince and the Player; or, A Trifling Mistake*, could be counted as such. It did not last beyond the first week. A ballet, *Dancing Mad*, suffered a similar fate. During the second week, *Capers at Canterbury* was revived. The *Mirror of the Stage* said it was "A very agreeable trifle...Wilkinson did his best and was entitled to more praise on the ground that the part in itself [Jacob Grogan] possessed so little material for its attainment." Nevertheless, it was performed only six times. *Opposition*, a popular comic ballet on the same bill, scarcely did any better. The *Mirror of the Stage* said, "The dance of *Opposition* still amuses; we wish however St. Albin would not smile so much and screw himself into a corner like a great hoyden" (20 October 1823, p. 91). The same journal, on 17 November took issue with a cocked hat the ballet master had acquired, "Why man, you are all felt and feather! That beaver must surely bear the spoil of a whole poultry yard" (p. 127).

The management tried to cash in on the current Frankenstein craze with a play by Richard B. Peake, *Another Piece of Presumption*. The *Drama* summed it up thus:

Mr. J. Reeve, an author, attends with Mr. Lee, the stage manager, the rehearsal of a new piece of his entitled *Another Piece of Presumption* of which the plot runs thus. Frankenstein, a tailor, wishes to make a man out of nine of his workmen. He administers poison to them, and then clubbing heads, hands, and legs, produces a nondescript—a being without a name. This unknown, who bears the head of a parish scholar and is consequently a linguist, runs about with a dictionary in his hand for the explanation of new terms, and goes on doing mischief in every way, acquiring new sensations until he perishes by the overthrow of a market cart...Mr. Wrench was condemned to this buffoonery and very little did he seem to like it...it was announced for repetition but with considerable opposition (October 1823, pp. 142-43).

Repeated failures forced Rodwell and Willis Jones on 27 October to revive *Tom and Jerry; or, Life in London*; it ran for fifty-four performances. The reaction of the *Mirror of the Stage* on 3 November 1823 was predictably ferocious:

That excrescence *Tom and Jerry*, that filthy drug at which the gorge rises, has been again brought forward...why rake up the rotten remains of *Tom and Jerry* and once more strive to make filthiness fashionable? [Pierce Egan] has partly succeeded in introducing the cant of St. Giles in more or less abundance into the drawing room—so pestilent has it become that it is as common to substitute 'chaff' for 'jest' and 'fly' for 'conscious', with many other 'holiday terms' as the occasion for using them demands...We are no Methodists, but we are frequently irritated at the breaks even in common dialogue which the carnage of Mr. Egan's brains have rendered so pestering they are slugs, vermin in our everyday walks; they sicken us (pp. 111-12).

A month later, *Tom and Jerry* shared the bill with another important piece, *The Quadrupeds; or, The Manager's Last Kick*. This was Samuel Foote's *The Tailors* as adapted by Samuel J. Arnold of the English Opera House. Proving extraordinarily successful, it became a staple of Adelphi fare for a number of years to come. It was played forty-three times this season. The *Drama* had nothing but praise. "Almost the whole business devolves upon one performer, Mr. J. Reeve, and in it he is himself alone...his imitation of Kean was...the best and most legitimate we have ever witnessed...The wooden steeds were marshalled admirably, in emulative excellence of the real stud at Drury" (January 1824).

The pantomime that Christmas was *Dr. Faustus*, and *The Drama* said of it:

The grand attraction of the piece was a panoramic representation of the bombardment of Algiers...we have a grand view of the bay with the British fleet moving proudly on, and the mind is gradually kept engaged up to the critical moment when the engagement is at the hottest, when the towers, and brigs, and forts, and all are enveloped in smoke, and, as a grand finale, an allegorical representation of Neptune presenting the Crown of the Ocean to Britannia with the British Lion trampling on turbans, chains, and fetters, and growling most magnanimously as the bills describe (January 1824, pp. 309-10).

Romantic and melodramatic plays were popular. Thomas Dibdin's version of Fielding's *Tom Jones* was damned by the *Mirror of the Stage* as "inefficient and intolerably dull" (16 February 1824, p. 29). Three adaptations of Walter Scott novels, *St. Ronan's Well*, *Heart of Midlothian*, and *Waverly* proved more successful.

The *Theatrical Observer* in its review of *The Heart of Midlothian* felt called upon to chide the players at the Adelphi. "In general the performers here are apt to fall into caricature, possibly from habits acquired by the long run of pieces which require that style of acting...when they have characters to personate containing some portion of nature...a restraint should be laid on their customary *breadth* of acting" (7 January 1824).

Other actors were gently chastised in the journals. The *Mirror of the Stage* took exception to Tyrone Power's performance in *St. Ronan's Well*. He "should remember...impudence and neglect may soon deprive him of his popularity." Watkins Burroughs was damned with faint praise: "Burroughs did not *rant* so much as usual and was consequently endurable" (26 January p. 13). Of Mrs. Charles Baker, the journal reported, "Her manner is too negligent and at the same time approaches to rudeness. If she considers it worth her while to remain upon a minor stage, she should at least assume a more becoming deportment" (8 March 1824).

On Thursday, 25 March 1824, *The Red Indian; or, The Shipwrecked Mariner and His Faithful Dogs* featured Mr. H. Simpson's kennel of canines. The sequel to *Tom and Jerry*, titled *Green in France*, which had been introduced the previous season, was not attempted. However, *The Death of Life in London; or, Tom and Jerry's Funeral*, a burlesque of *Tom and Jerry*, failed and was withdrawn after the second performance.

During Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays, Monsieur Henry put on his version of the one-man entertainments Reeve, Bologna, and Wilkinson had performed in previous seasons and which Mathews and Yates were to popularize later. It consisted of magic acts, mechanical and chemical experiments, and phantasmagoria. The most important element was his experiments with laughing gas (nitrous oxide). This marked the first time this gas had been demonstrated in public, and the medical profession was to seize upon this boon to mankind and put it to extensive use before

long. The *British Journal of Anaesthesia* claimed this was the first public use of the gas for entertainment. Henry invited volunteers from the audience to inhale the gas from rubber bladders. The effect on one man was striking. He bounded all over the stage to cries of "humbug" and "nonsense" from the spectators who refused to believe the effect was not staged.

Monsieur Henry's show was so popular that he extended it beyond Lent—until 5 June. After Lent, he increased the number of performances from two to four per week. All told, he gave forty performances. Another feature of the season was the lectures by John Thelwall whose fiery radicalism had got him into trouble in the past. Here, however, he engaged the house to present three lectures billed as "Oratorical and Critical Lectures on the Drama and Poetry of Past and Present Times." The first of the talks was given on 5 May 1824, that "Being the Anniversary of the Birth and Demise of our Immortal Dramatist." He compared the excellences of Shakespeare and Milton and eulogized the former. On Friday, 7 May, he focused upon *Paradise Lost*, and a highlight was his recitation of Satan's soliloquy. On his final appearance, May 12, he lectured on Shakespeare's history plays.

On 21 July 1824, a charity performance was held in aid of the Sons of St. Andrew to help the distressed and afflicted.

Performances of *Ella Rosenberg* and two farces *Two Wives; or, the Wedding Day*, and George Rodwell's favorite, *Where Shall I Dine?* were performed. Only a few of the regular company acted in these pieces. The rest of the casts came from local theatres.

NC

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1824-1825

Ed. Alfred Nelson & Gilbert Cross

Extensive alterations to the interior of the house took place during the recess. A passage through the boxes was constructed; other changes were described in the *Drama*:

A dress circle has been formed, and the whole has been entirely redecorated in rather a novel and tasteful manner. The gilt ornaments to the front of the boxes are laid on a ground composed of rose-colour and white stripes giving it a pleasing appearance of lightness and elegance. The private boxes are lined with rich crimson flock paper with silk draperies to correspond. The proscenium gives the appearance of a variegated fan, most richly embossed with burnished gold, and the scenery is equally superb. The orchestra has been enlarged sufficiently to contain a band of upwards of forty performers (October 1824, p. 53).

The opening was delayed to allow for "immense preparations" for *Valmondi; or, The Unholy Sepulchre*, a Gothic melodrama replete with ghosts, demons and other supernatural elements. The management spent lavishly for scenery, costumes, decorations and machinery for this piece, billed as a romantic burletta spectacle. Wilson created a new drop scene. The Adelphi chorus was augmented by "gentlemen of the Italian Opera House," thus forming "perhaps the most numerous and effective chorus ever heard on the English stage," as the bill proudly put it. Alexander E. Gomersal played Kelmar, a man cursed with immortality, wandering over the earth in search of death, while Power played the title role, a ruined man forced to become a poacher. The highlight of the piece was the procession of the *auto-da-fé* in Act III. In format the piece resembles an oratorio—an unholy oratorio, but one, it was claimed, that conveyed a moral lesson. The *Drama* commented:

This piece takes its origin from the same source as *Der Freischütz*, and from the success, which has attended the representation of that opera, we fear that the town will be inundated for some time with German horrors in all shapes. The scenery of the piece is magnificent and costly, and the music is very fine, particularly the invocation...the performance must be curtailed, and we would suggest that much of the singing might be left out with advantage, particularly the serenade, which was very ridiculous. It was not over till a quarter to twelve, too late by nearly two hours...Mr. Power should infuse a little more energy into his portraiture of the villain Valmondi (October 1824, p. 55).

Valmondi achieved only moderate success and was withdrawn 2 December in favor of *The Life of an Actor*. This piece by Richard B. Peake was based upon Pierce Egan's work. Like *Valmondi* it embraced the whole strength of the Company and ran as the main piece (70 times) until the end of the regular season.

New players this season were Miss Boden, and Miss Parrock. Villiers and Paulo returned, the latter to act as Clown in the pantomime and as a comic character in *Valmondi*. Thus, counting the pantomime, there were only three pieces that could be considered as "main pieces." A farce, *More Blunders than One*, was reasonably successful, and, for once, Power was praised. The central character is an Irishman with the unlikely name Larry Hoolagan who was

performed by Mr. Power with a great deal of humour...it was generally supposed that the author had him and him alone in his eye when he was engaged in the composition. The piece has a great deal of broad humour in it, and there is also the

recommendation of agreeable incident which, united to smartness of dialogue, places it much above the general run of minor theatre composition (*Theatrical Observer*, 15 December).

The same journal was also pleased with the Christmas pantomime, which was founded upon the

powers of Mother Red Cap, a personage whose name has, we believe, often excited terror in the minds of the younger sort of creation...[carries out] feats furnished with bad rhymes and a substantial cane...Two lovers, Harlequin and Columbine, are the objects of her malignity...in all her machinations our friend Mother Red Cap is defeated by the intervention of the Fairies of the Rose...There was, of course, the usual number of clowns whose sagacity and intellect are according to the prescribed regulation of pantomimes, lodged in their lower extremities (December 15).

Sixteen pieces were played only once, an indication of the management's growing desperation. Monsieur Henry repeated his tour de force of the previous season. The title was *Table Talk; or, Shreds and Patches*, but in a few weeks, the main title was dropped in favor of the subtitle. The entertainment featured sleight of hand tricks followed by his playing on the musical glasses, where he performed, among other pieces, the "Chorus of Huntsmen" from *Der Freischütz* and was rapturously encored. Part of the optical illusions consisted of producing images of Edmund Kean and Miss Foote. There was also a "Lecture on Hands" (cf. George Alexander Stevens' "Lecture on Heads"), and, of course, the laughing gas experiments. This show ran on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent and was extended until 31 May for 52 performances. As with the previous year, a post-season benefit was held for the Sons of St. Andrew. The stage manager, Lee, had a benefit on June 1, 1825. Wilkinson's benefit, 28 February, presented a short version of *Valmondi*, and a masquerade scene in which Wilkinson sang "Trotting Along the Road" while mounted upon a real ass. Among other features of the benefit were an Indian juggler, Ramo Samee, and "the admired combat on horseback" from *Quadrupeds* by Messrs. Smith and Sanders.

A melancholy event took place on 14 March. After an illness of two months, James T. Rodwell died. It was said that the anxiety and overwork in producing *Valmondi* had hastened his end. The theatre closed that evening. This death marked the end of the Rodwell-Jones partnership. The Adelphi was sold before the start of the next season to Daniel Terry and Frederick H. Yates.

NC

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1825-1826

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season opened under the new management of Daniel Terry and Frederick H. Yates. The sum paid by them for the Adelphi Theatre was given as £25,000 by the *Era Almanack*, 1877, but the *Theatrical Times*, 1847, mentions that the terms have been "variously stated at £21,000, £25,000 and £30,000." The lowest figure seems unlikely if Jones and Rodwell had paid 25,000 guineas [£26,250] in 1819 (the equivalent of more than a million dollars today). The interior of the theatre had been refurbished. This description appeared in the *Times* 11 October: "The house has been newly embellished, not without some taste, and apparently at considerable expense: fresh linings and gildings having been afforded to the boxes, lamps and chandeliers to the stage, and a looking-glass of large dimension, besides crimson cushions in abundance, to the refreshment room."

There were some valuable additions to the company. Both managers were well-known performers. Terry, a friend of Sir Walter Scott and adapter of some of his novels for the stage, had appeared at Drury Lane, Covent Garden and the Haymarket. Yates had appeared at Covent Garden and had considerable experience in Edinburgh and some provincial towns. In addition to acting, he had established a reputation as an entertainer in one-man performances, chiefly imitations, in the style of Charles Mathews. Thomas Potter Cooke came from Covent Garden, Mrs. Fitzwilliam from Drury Lane, and Gouriet from Covent Garden.

The management proposed "to place its entertainments on a higher footing than they have hitherto occupied." Evidently, a good beginning was made as the *Times* said of the performances, "Upon the whole they were decidedly of a higher order than any which had before been presented at the theatre; and were received with general satisfaction by the audience crowded in all parts." The great success of the season was *The Pilot*, being played to crowded houses and having a run of more than one hundred nights. The author, Edward Fitzball, wrote, "It was asserted, and I have no doubt of its truth, that the managers cleared upwards of £7,000 pounds by the production...and I must admit that much of this was due to their own exertions and talents" (*Thirty-five Years of a Dramatist's Life*, I, 162). There is further comment on the improved quality of the performances on 3 November: "Taken altogether, the entertainments at this theatre are extremely well-arranged and amusing, and incomparably above the standard of minor-house performances in general." By the end of December, however, the *Times* had few compliments for the pantomime, *The Three Golden Lamps; or, Harlequin and the Wizard Dwarf*, which did not give the impression of the long preparation claimed for it on the bills. The scene-shifting especially seemed clumsy and time-consuming. A trio was considered indecent. One scene was deleted after the first week. *Christmas Boxes* was "a clever production" though it "trenches a little too much on the indelicate and improper."

Overall, melodrama and humor seemed to be the keynotes of the season's productions. *The Anaconda*, which was favorably received, included both. Anticlimax was achieved by the appearance of the snake of very moderate size.

One other production worthy of comment was *Success*; it appears to be the first attempt in England to introduce a "Revue" a genre already popular in Paris (James R. Planché, *Recollections*, 1872).

From the *Times*, it appears that the performers acquitted themselves well, especially T. P. Cooke and John Reeve in *The Pilot* and *The Anaconda*. The critic expressed surprise that they had not been engaged at one of "the two great theatres."

Artistic effects were achieved with the scenery for new pieces, and there was great ingenuity shown in the machinery.

A numerous audience attended major productions. *The Anaconda* must have had family appeal as the children (and the gallery) loudly applauded the serpent (*Times*, 24 January 1826). The audience was not always appreciative. On December 26 1825, the police had to be called to deal with a disturbance in the gallery, which rendered two of the pieces inaudible.

Monsieur Henry again gave the Lenten Entertainment continuing into Passion Week. This was in the same style as previous seasons with some variation in content.

After the season, Yates's *Reminiscences* drew a crowded audience on the first night, but there was a disturbance in the gallery. "Volleys of shot...were poured into the pit." Yates acted promptly and "sent an officer into the gallery to seize the offenders."

From April to June there were 30 performances of Yates's *Reminiscences*, for which there was mostly favorable criticism in the *Times*, though some of the entertainment was considered indifferent. The second part of Yates' program was *Mr. Chairman*, a dramatic monologue which Fitzball claimed to have written, though he gave the date as 1829 (*Thirty-five Years of a Dramatist's Life*, I, 193).

The theatre opened again on 26 June 1826, for a benefit for the Royalty Theatre, which had been destroyed by fire. On 10 July, Mrs. Cruse took the theatre for one night, after which the theatre was dark until the next season.

AL

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1826-1827

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season opened on 7 October 1826, again under the management of Terry and Yates. The *Times* of 9 October reports, "The house appears to have been either vigorously scoured or fresh gilded. It is extremely clean and neat...The house is very warm." A new act drop had been painted by Charles Tomkins, who was a talented acquisition by the scenery department. The dancing in the ballet is commended, being "of a higher standard than has usually been given in minor theatres." The whole entertainment appeared to give satisfaction to a crowded house.

Two performers, highly praised in the previous season, are noted for their experience elsewhere during the summer: Thomas Potter Cooke, "whose fame acquired as Tom Coffin in Paris seems to have added new attraction," and John Reeve, "who comes with increased strength after his success at the Haymarket." A newcomer to the Adelphi Theatre, Mrs. Hughes, is described as "a pleasant available actress." She appears to have been an asset to the company, appearing in various roles. A duet by her and Salter was encored in a performance of *Luke the Labourer* in October (the *Wasp*, 27 October 1826), although the piece as a whole received adverse criticism, chiefly on moral grounds. The audience was made to sympathize with Luke, who had been dismissed for habitual drunkenness. Luke's wife dies of starvation (surely a cause for sympathy) and Luke has his revenge on his former master. The moral judgment is made because the disaster really results from Luke's drinking habits. The performance had merit. The acting on the whole was excellent and the music "pretty." The critic concludes, "We have no doubt it will run the season." The piece was performed nightly with a break of nine nights until 2 December, one week later in December and again at intervals during March 1827, and the first week of April, being one of the last night items. It was taken off on 13 November "owing to the indisposition of T. P. Cooke," whose presence was evidently essential to the success of the play, and resumed on 23 November, "T. P. Cooke having recovered...from his serious indisposition."

The *Times* reviewed the pantomime, *Harlequin and the Eagle*, on 27 December 1826. The criticism is worth quoting in full as it contrasts sharply and very favorably with the one accorded to *Three Golden Lamps* in the previous season.

Last night, a pantomime founded on the popular Irish story of Daniel O'Rourke's *Journey to the Moon* was performed at this theatre with the most perfect success. Considering the complexity of the machinery in entertainments of this nature, the tricks and changes were well conceived and managed with great facility. One of the most entertaining of these was the sudden appearance of Pantaloon in the middle of the pit at a time when he was supposed to be quietly seated in a chair preparatory to his being shaved. Paulo, as the Clown, distinguished himself particularly and Kirby, the Harlequin, and Miss Daly, the Columbine, performed some pretty dances. At one period there was so loud a call on Kirby for the hornpipe that he was obliged, in order to escape the displeasure of the audience, to come forward and dance the sailor's hornpipe. The scenery was very creditably executed, especially a view of the old and new London Bridge, and the pantomime promises, if we may judge from its reception at its first representation, to be a favourite.

At the same time, Drury Lane presented *The Man in the Moon*. The *Times* gives an interesting comment on the piece in relation to the Adelphi. Under the title "Behind the Curtain" and signed "The Opera Glass" is the following:

It is said, how truly we know not, that last year the subject of the pantomime to be performed at the Adelphi was given to Drury Lane, and by them rejected with some impertinence. If rejected at all, we should hope the latter part were incorrect. But when it was known, through some of those channels by means of which the best guarded secrets sometimes escape, that the Adelphi was getting up a pantomime on the subject, the Drury Lane people immediately took up the rejected subject, the manuscript of which they had never returned, and set it up as a rival. If these circumstances be exact, it is, to say the least of it, but shabby conduct.

The criticism that followed stated that the piece lacked "a well-conducted plot." Harlequin was only moderate, and Miss Barnett's Columbine, "a poor effort." There were "many clever scenes, ingenious tricks and transformations...exquisite scenery and many pointed jokes." The pantomime was well received.

The audiences at the Adelphi, as in the previous season, had at least one lapse from good conduct. *Theatrical Observer* of 13 February 1827 gives an account of a fight in the pit during a performance of *The Pirate's Doom*.

The regular season ended on 7 April; Yates' Entertainment, which began with *Portraits and Sketches*, followed by *Mr. Chairman*, (later replaced by *Stop Thief*), was given on Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent and continued until 12 May. On the bill for 7 May, he explained the necessity of "curtailing his successful season" as alterations adjoining the theatre were to be commenced and would block the entrance.

AL

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1827-1828

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season opened on 1 October 1827, again under the management of Terry and Yates. During the summer, improvements had been made to the interior of the theatre, most of them apparently to accommodate larger audiences. It had been "entirely re-decorated"; the dress-circle had been enlarged; there were two new orchestra boxes and the proscenium had been extended in height and breadth. The *Times*, describing the Adelphi Theatre as "unquestionably the first of the winter minors," reviewed the opening night performances. Terry, Yates, Reeve and Thomas Potter Cooke "evinced their accustomed excellence. These four gentlemen, in their several departments, would be sufficient to uphold the character of any theatre; but there are some additions to the *corps dramatique*, which, though inferior to any of those mentioned, are likely to prove very useful acquisitions. Amongst these, we may notice John Baldwin Buckstone, who appeared as Bobby Trot."

Buckstone was, of course, the author of *Luke the Labourer* though he was not identified as such in the previous season. When he joined the Adelphi Company, he was invited to take a share in the production. He remained with the Adelphi Theatre for some years as both actor and dramatist, even after being engaged for the summer months at the Haymarket, where he later became manager.

The ballet performed on the opening night did not please the critic of the *Times*. The stage was too small and the performers too crowded together for the production to give pleasure to the audience. It ran for only a fortnight. As a whole, however, the opening night was a success. "The house was full throughout the evening."

Several new pieces were brought out in October. On 9 October, *A Libertine's Lesson* was reviewed. The critic found the play to be lacking in interest. "Rakes have so often been reformed upon the stage," he commented, "that there is little attraction in witnessing their reformation; and the blows which they make at our moral feelings are generally made with such deliberate preparation that they are easily parried without difficulty and seldom prove hits. The rake of last night was as insupportable as people of his class generally are, and would not have been tolerated in any society but that of a minor theatre." However, he found the casting excellent and the actors deserving of every commendation. Mrs. Yates, in her first appearance at the Adelphi Theatre, was loudly applauded and "looked as amiable as the virtue she was meant to represent, and would have made her part effective, had it been within the limits of possibility." Apparently, the piece was well received, but the critic felt "it could never prove a favorite. The sooner it is withdrawn, the better it will be for the theatre." It did not have a long run. It was given for only a fortnight in October and nine nights in December.

The banality of this piece was the cause of the critic's disapproval of it. By contrast, he had nothing but praise for a moral play produced in the same month, *Thirty Years; or, A Gambler's Life*. "A new and serious burletta...was produced at this theatre last night, and met with a reception almost unprecedented, even in the successful productions of the present management." The piece was outstanding for the excellent acting of T. P. Cooke, Yates and Mrs. Pope, "and above all for the moral it inculcates, (a circumstance not always conducive to the success of a new piece). The frightful picture which it draws of a gambler's life is by no means over-charged." From the length of its run, it seems to have remained popular. It was given again during the next season.

One production that had a longer run than *The Libertine's Lesson* but seemed more trivial was *Nelson*. Both pieces are attributed to Edward Fitzball, though his name does not appear in the

sources. The material seemed trivial for a play about a great national hero. One example will suffice. There was the spectacle of

a young pawnbroker promenading the ice-bergs of the Arctic Seas, in a pair of very wide and very short nankeen trousers, with a Jew's daughter from Wapping, who follows a sailor in disguise, and a runaway grocer for his companions. This precious trio, after a skirmish with the Esquimaux, are on the point of being devoured by a Greenland bear when the animal is shot by the boy Nelson, who had given it chase.

The scenery was well done, but the production suffered from a mishap not unusual on the first nights in performances where elaborate contrivances are essential. The machinery not working adequately spoiled some of the intended dramatic effects. T. P. Cooke, under whose direction *Nelson* had been produced, "in giving this piece out for repetition, promised it would be in better sailing trim tomorrow." Despite Cooke's illness at the end of November, which necessitated cast changes, the piece had an uninterrupted run until 19 January 1828, and was given for two more weeks in February.

By Christmas six entirely new pieces and nine revivals had been played. The pantomime, *Harlequin and the White Mouse*, was successful. As at the beginning of the season, the *Times* drew attention to the smallness of the stage, but this time with credit to the production. "The usual pantomime evolutions, and the bustle so necessary in that kind of entertainment were exceedingly well managed, considering the limited extent of the stage." The scenery was commended. One piece of stage business caused some surprise "occasioned by the Clown throwing what appeared to be a little boy into the pit—it was, of course, a stuffed figure." This seems to have been a variation on Paulo's trick in the previous season's pantomime when he himself unexpectedly appeared in the pit.

New pieces were given into the last month of the season. On 3 March, the critic of the *Times* again mentioned the performers to whose excellence he had referred at the beginning of the season. *Presumptive Evidence*, which he thought would "be a favourite," gave scope for the talent of Yates and T. P. Cooke, and the performance of Mrs. Yates was praised. In the last week of January, in *Paris and London*, for which Tomkins had painted a moving panorama depicting a journey from Calais to Dover, John Reeve "exerted his comic powers with great success, keeping the house in a continued roar of laughter" (*Era Almanac 1877* and the *Times*).

This successful season ended in April. After Henry's entertainment, finishing at the end of Holy Week, only one other performance was given, an entertainment by Yates, *Faces Under a Hood*, on 14 April. There is nothing to indicate whether more performances of this had been intended, or whether the breaking up of the partnership between Yates and Terry accounted for the early closing of the theatre for the summer. Terry was in financial difficulties which caused some embarrassment to Yates as his name and that of the Adelphi had been linked in the press with Terry's in this matter. Yates' denial of this in the *Times*, 24 April 1828, was printed as follows:

The paragraph in your paper of to-day, as extracted from a publication called *The World*, contains an allusion to myself and the Adelphi property, which it is highly necessary I should immediately contradict. The Adelphi Theatre is not in involvements; it has more than answered the expectations formed on it. Mr. Terry's embarrassments are totally unconnected with myself or this property and I am suffering a considerable pecuniary loss from his conduct. Every part, therefore, of this paragraph, is a direct falsehood, as far as regards the Adelphi property and myself.

Thus, the season and the partnership between Terry and Yates were at an end, and Yates left to review his position as manager for the next season alone or to seek another partner.

AL

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1828-1829

Ed. Alfrida Lee

This season Charles Mathews, a very popular comedian from Drury Lane, joined Yates in management, paying £17,000 for a half share of the Adelphi. Improvements were made to the interior of the theatre. The *News* critic reported it was re-burnished and gilded and "the front tier of the dress circle reminds one of the lower tier of the boxes of the English Opera House." A new proscenium had been constructed.

The season opened on 29 September with a farce, light-heartedly showing how the partnership had come about and giving Mathews, who appeared as different characters, an opportunity to display his versatility. Billed with *Wanted*, *A Partner was My Absent Son*, a piece with little appeal. Mathews succeeded in making the chief character "excessively amusing"; however, "some parts of the dialogue were grossly indecent, and were plentifully and deservedly hissed" (*Times*, 30 September 1828). It ran for only nine nights. Early in November, *A Day's Fun* met with disapproval. The critic of the *News* described the humor as "broad without being laughable; coarse without the redeeming quality of piquancy." It is significant that the piece was withdrawn after the second night and not revived.

However, other productions had sufficient merit to gain favorable reviews. Of *The May Queen*, given in October, the critic of the *News* wrote, "On the whole, this piece is well acted, and well worth seeing."

Vocal music was more prominent during this season than the previous one, chiefly owing to more quality singers being engaged. Performers now included Mathews, who undoubtedly surpassed John Reeve (who had left for Covent Garden) both as an actor and a singer of comic songs. *The Mason of Buda*, brought out in October, described in the *News* as an opera, gave opportunities for John Sinclair and Miss Graddon, new to the company, to show their talent. Sinclair, who sang extensively at Covent Garden, had trained with Banderali in Milan and sang in Italy, where Gioacchino Rossini had written a part for him in *Semiramide*.

The *Times* described it as "a lively little piece, full of bustle and activity, and no inconsiderable portion of amusing and interesting incident...It is, however, indebted for much of its merit to the composer (Mr. G. H. Rodwell) whose music, though not of the first order, is respectable." The *News* described the piece as "the vehicle for some very pretty music, avowedly by Mr. Rodwell, but we suspect, in many instances, rather arranged and adapted, than *composed* by that gentleman." The *News* had some reservations. "Sinclair has, perhaps, the best voice of any tenor singer now before the public...but sentiment or soul...is wanting to invest that organ with that degree of witchery it might otherwise possess"; and of Miss Graddon's voice, it "is a pleasing soprano...high enough, but not always free from harshness; and she is too lavish of ornament, sometimes imperfectly executed." The piece "was given out for repetition amidst loud cheers in a very crowded house."

On 9 November, the *News* was able to report, "The Adelphi seems to be going on prosperously, a succession of crowded houses witnessing the disposition on the part of the public to be pleased with the fare provided for them at this little theatre." Mathews seemed well pleased with his venture. On 19 November, he wrote to the Rev. Thomas Speidell, "Our houses are prodigious. The other theatres are doing as wretchedly as possible," and on 23 November, "You will, I am sure, be pleased to hear the following report from the only critic to whom I pay attention in the City of London—namely our treasurer, made yesterday, 'Last week produced the greatest receipts ever known at the Adelphi.'"

Incidental songs enlivened *The Pilot* (given thirty-nine times). No less than eight numbers, including two duets, appeared on the bill for 10 November. The singers were Mathews (who had taken over John Reeve's role as Captain Boroughcliff), Sinclair, Miss Graddon and Mrs. Hughes. The program of songs varied during the run. Towards the end of the season, songs were prominent in the production of *No*. This piece was described in *The News* as "a laughable trifle" and John Sinclair's singing was praised. He had "one very desirable quality in a singer, distinct enunciation."

Dancing, however, seemed less prominent than in previous seasons; ballet was not attempted on a large scale. Fewer child dancers' names appeared.

Occasionally, a critic made a scathing comment on a piece given at the Adelphi. *The Earthquake*, given in December, caused the *Times* to write, "A worse piece has not been presented at any theatre for a long period...Altogether the new piece is quite unworthy of the character which this theatre has lately acquired, and the sooner it is withdrawn, the better it will be for both reputation and profit." The attempt at showing an earthquake on a small stage made it absurd. The production had the extraordinary result of provoking someone, signing himself Christianus, into writing to the *Times* to express feelings of moral horror at the idea of an earthquake, an act of the Almighty, being represented on the stage and offered as entertainment. He charged the managers with "an affront to the Supreme Being."

The pantomime, which followed later in December, was popular. According to the *Times*, it was received with unanimous applause. The *News* critic made special mention of the "construction of a moving figure after the fashion of Cruikshank—from various fruits, etc., [which] is clever and deservedly applauded...Upon the whole," he added, "the pantomime merits approbation. It has one great virtue, that of comparative brevity, and the diversion it produces never flags." The dancing of Miss Barnett received commendation.

A noteworthy production in January 1829 was *Mons. Mallet*. The *Times* commended the performance of Yates, Mathews, and others, and said "A Mr. Buckstone, whom we do not recollect to have seen before, did much justice to the part of Jeremiah Kentucky...His busy, lively manner told extremely well." If the critic were the same as in October 1827, he might have been expected to recognize Buckstone, of whose performance as Bobby Trot, he had commended. The good opinion was not shared by the *News*, which said, "Mr. Buckstone...seems to think that all humour consists in rapidity of utterance." Of Mathews he wrote, "Mathews' performance is deserving of highest praise. Munden being gone, he has no equal." The success of the first night was summed up. "The house was crammed to the ceiling, but a full house in this favourite place of amusement is so much a matter of course, as to cease to be a subject for remark." Only one adverse criticism of the piece was made in both newspapers: it was too long—apparently, it lasted three hours.

The Red Rover, given in February, was well reviewed. The *Times* critic concluded, "the whole representation met with most favourable reception on the part of the audience. It was given out for repetition, by Yates, amidst the loudest applause."

All the above is evidence of a very successful season. In March 1829, Mathews was able to write to H. B. Gyles, a friend who had been a prominent amateur actor: "The Season has been the best since Yates has been in it—ininitely beyond my hopes, and that we have not had one night since 29 September under our expenses; of this no theatre in the metropolis can boast but ourselves."

The close of the season in April was followed by an entertainment by Yates and Mathews, given, with one short break, three times weekly until 15 July. This was as successful as the season had

been. On 28 June, the *News* reported, "In spite of the advanced state of the season—the heat of the weather, the indefatigable exertions of Mathews and Yates continue nightly to fill this theatre with a laughing audience." What more could Yates and Mathews have wished?

[Extracts from Mathews' letters are taken from *Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, V, 5f, 20]

AL

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1829-1830

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season opened on 29 September 1829 with rather less éclat, but perhaps more assurance, than the previous one. No new pieces were offered, only established favorites. The *Times* and the *News* (in which the Adelphi is described as a "mirth-inspiring house") point to the popularity of the pieces chosen.

There were some changes among the performers. Thomas Potter Cooke, a great favorite with the Adelphi audience, had gone to the Surrey Theatre. John Reeve and Mrs. Edward Fitzwilliam, both popular at the Adelphi, were once more in the company. Charles Mathews appeared less often until he gave his *Comic Annual* after the regular season had ended. He wrote to C. T. Harding, "It was my determination at the end of last season, not again to act regularly at the Adelphi; for this reason, Mr. Reeve was engaged."

The highlight of the season was *The Elephant of Siam and the Fire Fiend*. The chief performer was an elephant of considerable size for which "an entirely new stage had been constructed." Certainly, some reinforcement was necessary. The idea of engaging the elephant was apparently an inspiration of Frederick Yates. It is reported in *The Memoirs of Charles Mathews*,

Mr. Yates, having gained his partner's slow leave, engaged the celebrated acting elephant (Mademoiselle d'Gelk) for the ensuing opening; fortunately as it turned out, for the success of that part of the season, when another female actress of great popularity made a strong opposition to the minors—Mademoiselle d'Gelk and Miss Fanny Kemble shared the town between them—each the greatest in her line.

The elephant, whose salary was reported in the *Theatrical Journal* to be twenty pounds a night, was not brought in to perform irrelevant exercises; each action was an integral part of the plot. The critic of the *News* made particular mention of the "docility and sagacity" of the elephant. The piece as a whole appeared to be entertaining and spectacular. Yates gave a prologue, which was "not the least amusing part of the evening's entertainment" (*Times* 4 December 1829). As well as the elephant, human performers were praised. A general comment was "it is perhaps one of the most magnificent things of the kind in scenery, dresses and decorations, which has been produced for some time on any stage."

The *News* was struck by the enterprise of the managers in giving a pantomime at the end of December in addition to the elephant. "With the great attraction of the elephant at this house it is almost an act of supererogation to have produced a pantomime—the spirited managers, however, deemed it a duty to treat their holiday friends with their accustomed fare, and they have catered for them most successfully." Novelty was again apparent in this, which seemed to have been a good production and was well received. A dwarf, Señor Santiago de los Santos, was the outstanding attraction in the piece. "He had scarcely anything to do in the piece but danced prettily enough; and when the clown produced him as the kernel of the Barcelona nut, the audience was convulsed with laughter."

The elephant took part in an entertainment on 30 January. The rest of the evening was made up by a display of magic by Habit of Moscow and optical illusions by H. Childe, a former slide-painter who had invented "dissolving views" (Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 218). The elephant trainer was Huguet. This was the first year the Adelphi was not dark on Martyr's Day.

Some adverse criticism, however, came from the *News* in February 1830. *Supper's Over* was a poor affair. "The actors seemed to consider the piece beneath their notice, by not having learned their parts." As John Reeve was the chief character, this is perhaps evidence of his inability to remember his lines. As the popularity of *The Elephant of Siam* never declined, the critic found much to commend. "We are much pleased to find that this theatre overflows nightly; it would be hard, indeed, if the exertions of its liberal proprietors were not crowned with the success they so richly merit."

This good opinion did not prevent the *News* being scathing about *The Heart of London* in February. It was "the very lowest and most blackguard affair we ever witnessed." The Lord Chamberlain's office was blamed for allowing the production; nevertheless, the *News* had no doubt it would be a success. It was played until the end of the season.

The elephant appeared in the Lenten entertainment, performing "Olympic exercises," in addition to being "the great performer" in *The Elephant of Siam*, which was given every evening except Wednesday and Friday each week.

Mlle. D'Gelk was heard of again. During the summer, a coroner's inquest was held on Baptiste Bernard, one of its handlers. Apparently, Bernard had stabbed the beast with a pitchfork some two years previously in a drunken rage. The elephant had not forgotten of course and gained its revenge. The verdict was the deceased "died from wounds and bruises received from the elephant. Decedent five shillings."

During Passion Week, there was a lecture by C. H. Adams, illusions, laughing gas administered by Childe, and harmonica solos by Tait.

Mathews appeared, without Yates, in his *Comic Annual* from the end of April until the end of June 1830. This production had considerable originality, and its success led on to more Comic Annuals in the future.

This completed another season with which the managers had every reason to feel pleased. On 31 May 1830, Mathews again wrote to H. B. Gyles, "I have done very well at the Adelphi: the boxes especially have kept up right *arnest* [*sic*] well."

AL

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest Summer 1830

Ed. Alfrida Lee

In 1830 there was a summer season, the performances not being given by the Adelphi Company but by that of the English Opera House, whose theatre had been burnt to the ground on 16 February. George Bartley, the manager, in his closing speech, expressed their plight. He commented on the necessity of having new scenery, dresses and decorations for every piece, "old and new, every species of property, every book and manuscript and every sheet of music having been destroyed." The season, he said, was not a prosperous one, owing partly to the smallness of the theatre and the extra expenses "notwithstanding very liberal sacrifices on the parts of the performers." The *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* had commented on the disadvantage of such a small theatre for operatic productions (XXX, 334). The cost of leasing the theatre may have been considerable, but it seems that the terms were satisfactory on both sides as the E. O. H Company performed at the Adelphi the following summer.

Despite the difficulties, twenty-eight new pieces were given, four of these requiring many different scenes. New pieces were presented even late in the season. Music, of course, predominated. Three of Mozart's operas and one by Marschner were included (the music arranged by Bishop or Hawes) and overtures by Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Paer, and Halevy were given frequently. Most of the pieces were not, however, of this enduring quality and were usually billed as operettas or operatic farces. The chief composers were Hawes (musical director), and George Rodwell (musical director of the Adelphi). Among the authors were John B. Buckstone, who had written for the Adelphi, Richard B. Peake and James R. Planché.

The scenery was created by Tomkins and Pitt, as in the winter seasons, but new names, in addition to those of Godbee and Mrs. Stillman, appear for the wardrobe: Head and Mrs. Murry. O. Smith, who performed with the Adelphi Company, is mentioned as being in charge of the "melodramatic department."

The quality of the acting, especially that of Miss Kelly, was praised. On 2 July, the *Times* wrote, "There is certainly no actress on the stage who possesses, in anything like the same degree, the influence which she is capable of exercising over the audience. This is sometimes overdone as it detracts from the intention of the drama. Notwithstanding this fault (for it is one) Miss Kelly's acting of *The Sister of Charity* can hardly be surpassed"; and on 10 September in the review of *The Irish Girl*, the critic said: "It is a very flimsy affair, but the admirable acting of Miss Kelly brought it through triumphantly. The character of the Irish Girl was evidently written for her, and around that, which in other hands would have been exceedingly insipid, she threw a halo of interest, which attracted and enchained the strongest feeling of the audience." Mary Ann Keeley, whose acting was not apparently up to the same standard, also earned a creditable mention. In *Sister of Charity*, she "played the part of Ninetta with great effect." In *The Skeleton Lover* she played "particularly well." Robert Keeley in the first mentioned piece was "very amusing," but in *Skeleton Lover* "rather overcharged the nonsense that was written for him." Hunt "acquitted himself very agreeably," and the other actors "exerted themselves laudably." Overall, the efforts of the company had considerable merit, and the fault in productions lay elsewhere.

Some of the authors, unnamed and two unknown, did not serve the company well. *Skeleton Lover* was condemned for "nastiness" and as a "piece of vulgarity." Again the *Times* critic: "its chance of future success will depend mainly upon the unsparing curtailment of the objectionable passages; and which they were; the folks behind the scenes cannot be at a loss to discover." However, "some portions of it were deservedly applauded." With or without alterations, it was performed intermittently

throughout the season, including the closing night. The author of *The Irish Girl* was dismissed as "certainly not the most felicitous of writers."

The worst condemnation was of the translation of *Don Juan*. The authorship has been attributed to John B. Buckstone. It is billed as a "free translation of the opera of the same name." Whether he was the translator or worked from another translation is not known. His name does not appear on the bill, and though successful in much of his writing for the Adelphi, he seems to have done badly by *Don Juan*. The *Times* said: "The translation is extremely bad...the dialogue...vapid and pointless."

However, musical compositions and productions generally seem to have been of a high standard. George Rodwell's music for *Skeleton Lover* was "of a very pleasing character and extremely well adapted to the drama," and the piece "well got up." In *Don Juan*, "the arrangement of the music has been effected by Mr. Hawes, and the manner in which it has been performed is extremely creditable to his taste." The Adelphi was not ideal for such a production. The *Times* wrote,

the theatre is much too small to do justice to the efforts of the actors; it gives no assistance to the best parts of the singing, and exposes all the imperfections which attend the other parts in a most striking light. The care and good taste which have been bestowed upon the getting up of this opera deserve a more favourable opportunity than can be afforded them here.

Financially the season does not appear to have been a success. On October 1, the *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* stated, "Mr. Arnold [presumably Bartley, the manager, was intended] has met with slender recompense for his exertions having seldom filled the little theatre of the Adelphi."

In his closing speech, George Bartley mentions *Don Juan*, "Mozart's great work," as the outstanding piece introduced in the season. This production alone is evidence of the efforts made by the manager and all the company not only to maintain their standards but to extend their range, and this was no mean achievement in a small theatre. Bartley's hope of a new theatre was not to be fulfilled until 14 July 1834.

AL

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1830-1831

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

When the Adelphi Theatre opened for the season on 4 October 1830, its managers, Charles Mathews and Frederick Yates, announced on the bill "a splendid new theatre and Chinese saloon have been completed in the incredible space of seven days" (4 October 1830). The *Times* described the changes more fully in an article published the next day: "The decorations are brilliant and tasteful. The prevailing colours are pale yellow and blue, and the fronts of the boxes are ornamented with a profusion of scroll-work and flowers, executed in gold. The general appearance of the theatre is light and elegant."

The season included 26 plays that were performed a total of 189 times. Among the most popular were John Buckstone's Christmas pantomime, *Grimalkin the Great*, which played 39 nights, his *King of the Alps and the Misanthrope*, which ran for 42 performances, and Edward Fitzball's *The Black Vulture; or, The Wheel of Death*, which opened the season and ran for 36 performances. The hit, however, was *The Wreck Ashore; or, A Bridegroom from the Sea*, yet another Buckstone melodrama, which opened on 21 October 1830, and was repeated 80 times. Critics concurred with the audiences' enthusiasm for the piece. The *Athenæum* pronounced it "one of the most amusing...and interesting [plays]...of any that have been produced for years" (18 December 1830, p. 797). The *Times* proclaimed on 5 October "much skill has been displayed and much expense incurred in getting up this spectacle. The scenery, chiefly the work of Tomkins, is well painted; and the different changes and transformations are adroitly executed." Particularly outstanding was the performance of O. Smith (Richard John Smith) whose characterization of the pirate Grampus was described by H. Barton Baker as "a wonderful piece of melodramatic acting" (*History of the London Stage*, p. 429). Smith was one of several actors renowned for playing the slave Obi in John Fawcett's pantomime *Obi; or, Three-fingered Jack*. He became known as O Smith.

As the 1830-31 season progressed, the *Athenæum* observed and commented upon Yates' and Mathews' management style. Noting that the audience was particularly displeased with a burlesque of *The Pilot* presented in December 1830, it said:

We rather wondered that the audience gave themselves so much trouble, because this is the only theatre we know of at which they are not permitted to have their opinions attended to—a new piece is generally advertised for 'Monday and every night during the week.' We know not whence the managers acquired this right, but it is well for them that they are allowed to keep it (4 December 1830, p. 765).

At the end of the season, the critic commented again on the managers' techniques. "They have discovered the sorts of entertainment which suit their audiences...we do not mean to assert that they are always successful; but it comes to nearly the same thing—for, if they do not hit the house the first time, they keep discharging their pieces at it until they do" (2 April 1831, p. 221). He concluded, "the season has been, as usual, a profitable one. Indeed while the present managers continue in possession, we do not see how it can be otherwise."

In addition to the terrifying acting and thunderous voice of the villainous O. Smith, Adelphi audiences were treated to comic characters created by John Reeve and John Buckstone, gallant heroes played by Frederick Yates, and touching heroines performed by his wife. Watson Nicholson argues in *The Struggle For a Free Stage in London* that Mathews and Yates had collected a company of actors who had gained the respect and admiration of the public. He quotes a letter to the *Tatler*, which said, in part, "I trust you do not put the Adelphi on a level with its restricted neighbours. Can Covent Garden

produce a list of comedians equal to Mathews, Yates, Reeve, Buckstone and Wilkinson?" (17 November 1830). The *Times* proclaimed Reeve "one of the best *farceurs* on the stage" (17 November 1830), and Charles Mathews' appearances in *The May Queen* (29 November 1830) and *The King of the Alps* won special praise from the critics. Mathews closed out the theatre's season with his one-man entertainment, *Mathews' Comic Annual Vol. 2*, written by his son, Charles J. Mathews, and Richard B. Peake. One critic wrote of the elder Mathews' performance: "We hold it to be one of Mr. Mathews' best volumes...What is weak in it he strengthens and enriches; what is old he makes new; what is commonplace, he exalts" (Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles J. Mathews, Comedian*, vol. 4, p. 79).

As the Adelphi Company closed out their season, the managers presented ten appearances by the French company of Mons. Potier with a repertory of twenty-one plays. These ran during June in alternation with Mathews' *Comic Annual* but received little attention in the London press. Among the principal performers were Mons. Potier, Mons. Guenée, Mons. Préval, Mlle. St. Ange, and Mlle. Florval.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest Summer 1831

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

In the summer of 1831, the English Opera Company, under the management of Samuel J. Arnold, occupied the Adelphi theatre for its second season due to "circumstances still preventing Mr. Arnold from having a theatre of his own" (*Athenæum*, 16 July 1831, p. 460). During its residency, which began on 4 July 1831, the company presented 23 plays in 75 performances. They included primarily operettas, operatic farces, and burlesques. Commenting on this fact, the *Theatrical Observer* said: "We understand that it is the intention of Mr. Arnold to confine the performances this year as much as possible to melodramas, vaudevilles, and ballad operas. We think him quite right. The capabilities of the house are not sufficient for the performance of legitimate opera, and it is, therefore, far better not to attempt it" (6 July 1831).

The play, which opened The Season, *The Feudal Lady*, gained a negative reaction from the critics. The critic for the *Theatrical Observer* wrote on 6 July 1831, "It is quite out of our power to say one word in its favor." The play ran only four nights. The managers replaced it with an equally unsatisfying piece, *The Irish Girl*. Declared "utterly devoid of all merit as to composition or plot" by the *Theatrical Observer* (12 July 1831), it closed after six performances. The management then premiered *The Haunted Hulk* by Edward Fitzball on July 12. This heavy schedule had apparently begun to take a toll on the actors because the *Theatrical Observer's* reviewer wrote "none of the actors were perfect in their parts" (13 July 1831). He indicated "the failure of *The Feudal Lady* had caused this drama to be brought out prematurely; which, by the way, was bad policy." It appears that only John Poole's *Old and Young* pulled the company out of its early-season doldrums. It proved a success and ran 31 performances.

The most popular production of the summer was Richard B. Peake's *The Evil Eye*, which opened on 18 August 1831, and ran for 36 performances. The *Theatrical Observer* critic praised this musical romance for its "pointed dialogue, highly dramatic situations, picturesque scenery, good music, and excellent acting" (19 August 1831), declaring that "we know no author of the present day who invariably shows so much tact in arranging the stage-business, or who possesses so correct a knowledge of dramatic effect, as Mr. Peake" (20 August 1831). The same critic noted the English Opera House "was but indifferently attended in the early part of the season; but ...from the moment [*Evil Eye*] was upon the stage, the theatre began to look up" (1 October 1831).

A notably unsuccessful offering was an entertainment called *Harmony Hall*, presented on 9 September 1831, the day after the coronation of William IV. Described as "a loyal effusion to commemorate the coronation of Their Gracious Majesties," the play struck the critic for the *Theatrical Observer* as "a most trashy affair" (10 September 1831). It was withdrawn after a second performance, which reportedly "converted the theatre into the temple of discord, nothing but hootings and yellings of 'Off! Off!' being heard during its progress" (*Theatrical Observer*, 12 September 1831).

The English Opera Company boasted several major players during the summer of 1831. Fanny Kelly played several soubrette roles, and John Reeve remained at the Adelphi to take on the principal comic male roles. O. Smith also joined the company that summer, as did Mary Ann Keeley, Harriet Cawse, and Frank Matthews. Reeve received the title of "first comic actor of the day" from the *Theatrical Observer* (6 July 1831), despite the fact that he frequently did not know his lines on opening nights. The *Theatrical Observer* credited Miss Kelly with saving several weak scripts from total failure, noting, "never did that highly gifted actress perform better, or exert a more powerful control over the feelings of her audience" than in *Sister of Charity* (22 July 1831).

As the season ended on 28 September 1831, the *Theatrical Observer* noted that it had "proved a profitable one, which is mainly to be attributed to the very great attraction of ... *The Evil Eye*" (29 September 1831). Mr. George Bartley, the company's stage manager, spoke for the management at the end of the final performance, announcing that Mr. Arnold had "every reasonable hope of receiving [the audience] next summer in a new and commodious theatre" (*Theatrical Observer*, 29 September 1831), but it was not until 14 July 1834 that the Royal Lyceum opened its doors.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1831-1832

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The 1831-32 season opened on 3 October 1831, less than a week after that of the English Opera Company. The writer for the *Athenæum* noted "the constant occupation by the English Opera Company has prevented any novelty in the way of decoration; but the house does not appear to need it" (24 September 1831, p. 621). Indeed, the conditions of the theatre seem to have had very little bearing on its popularity, for this was to become one of the Adelphi's most successful seasons. The company performed 27 plays for a total 212 performances. Although it was rumored during the season that Charles Mathews was negotiating to sell his share of the Adelphi to Mr. Liston (*Theatrical Observer*, 14 December 1831), nothing came of this arrangement, and Mathews remained in partnership with Frederick Yates.

The highlight of the Adelphi's 1831-32 season was John Buckstone's melodrama, *Victorine; or, I'll Sleep on It*, which delighted audiences and critics alike, running for ninety performances. This moral tale focused on a woman who, faced with the choice of two suitors, goes to sleep and dreams about what her life might be like if she married the less desirable of the two. The *Spectator* announced in a review reprinted by the Adelphi management "the idea is good, the acting is as near perfection as may be, and the effect is excellent." The *Morning Herald* exclaimed, "the scenery and appointments can be exceeded by none." The *Times* concurred, saying, "the whole piece has been got up with great care" (19 October 1831). Most attention focused on Elizabeth Yates' performance as Victorine, which was labeled "realistic" and "perfect" by the critics. The descriptions of her acting note its truth and effectiveness; the *Athenæum* called it "the most *real* exhibition now on the stage" (17 December 1831, p. 821). These accolades explain why historian Westland Marston called Mrs. Yates "clearly one of the forerunners of realism" (*Our Recent Actors*, Vol. 1, p. 20).

Another highly successful offering that October was a burlesque called *Hyder Ali; or, The Lions of Mysore*. The piece parodied a controversial melodrama by the same name, concurrently playing at Drury Lane, which involved wild animals. The *Times* reported on 27 October 1831, "Mr. Yates was in treaty with the pantomime actor (M. Martin), for himself and his beasts, before there was any notion of bringing them out upon a stage supposed to be dedicated to the legitimate drama, and...the higher prices offered by the proprietor of the Drury Lane put an end to the negotiation." Yates' response was to have his resident playwright, John Buckstone, construct a burlesque of the popular piece. Critics and audiences loved the show; the *Athenæum* commented that the actors' impersonation of the wild animals promised "to be more profitable and less expensive than the real ones...It is a most amusing parody on the others" (29 October 1831, p. 708). Only one person went on record as having disapproved of the Adelphi production. Charles Mathews told the Parliamentary Select Committee on Dramatic Literature that he had not consented to it and that "it should not have been done if I had been present" (Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, IV, 489).

In addition to these two successes, Buckstone contributed five other plays to the Adelphi's repertory that season. He "was principally engaged at the Haymarket [as a comic actor, but] all his more ambitious plays were for the Adelphi" wrote Maurice Disher in *Blood and Thunder* (p. 220). Buckstone suited his plays to the talents of the Adelphi Company, with leading male roles for Frederick Yates, leading female roles for Elizabeth Yates, secondary female roles for Fanny Fitzwilliam, and comic roles for himself and John Reeve. Frank Rahill writes in *The World of Melodrama* "plays everywhere...were written more or less with the special talents of particular companies in mind...but the practice of carpentering pieces to a company was developed to a higher degree at the Adelphi than elsewhere" (p. 166). This perhaps explains why so many of the pieces met with such great acclaim.

In addition to the triumphs of Elizabeth Yates and John Buckstone, the 1831-32 season featured the debut of Madame Céline Céleste, the French actress who would later manage the Adelphi. Her first appearance was as Hope Gough in William Bernard's *The Wept of the Wish-Ton-Wish*. It was a non-speaking role. Although the play received indifferent reviews, Mme. Céleste was praised for her dancing and stage-fighting abilities. The *Theatrical Observer* said she "displayed some fine specimens of expressive gesticulation" (23 November 1831), hinting at the actress' future success on the Adelphi stage.

Scenery and spectacle, designed by Mr. Tompkins and Mr. Pitt, merited special attention during this season. *Robert Le Diable*, the result of a collaboration by Fitzball, Buckstone, and the composer, Giacomo Meyerbeer, received great praise for its tableaux vivants, which were "most beautifully arranged, generally admired and greatly applauded" (*Athenæum*, 28 January 1832, p. 68). The scenery for *The Forgery; or, The Reading of the Will* by Buckstone included reproductions of two paintings.

The Examiner reported on 11 March 1832:

Two scenes were greatly admired: the first was a realization of Wilkie's "Village Politicians," the other of his "Reading of the Will"; both were very good—the latter, indeed, was most excellent; it could not have been so well done on any larger stage; the characters exactly filled the scene in most perfect grouping...the artist has reason to be satisfied with the arrangement of the manager. He has done ample justice to his original.

Finally, a burlesque called *The Printer's Devil; or, A Type of the Old One*, presented in March 1832, was "based on Hogarth's 'The Idle Apprentice,'" according to Martin Meisel *Realizations*, p. 116. He notes this would not have been the case if not for the talents of Tompkins, and Meisel notes "the Adelphi was the theatre most given to the embodiment of illustrative fiction as pictorial drama" (p. 251).

The Adelphi season of 1831-32 closed with benefits for Elizabeth Yates (5 April 1832) and John Reeve (12 April 1832). The bill for the latter date indicates that this was a command performance since it features the Royal Coat of Arms. Charles Mathews presented his *Comic Annual of 1833* during May, June, and July, once again garnering critical acclaim. The final performance at the Adelphi this season was the 7 August benefit for the widow and children of John Isaacs, featuring four plays that were not part of the regular Adelphi repertory and several actors from other companies.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1832-1833

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The 1832-33 season at the Adelphi commenced on 1 October under the management of Charles Mathews and Frederick Yates. The production staff remained as it had been in the two previous seasons, with George H. Rodwell as musical director, Mr. Tomkins and Mr. Pitt serving as scenic designers, Mr. Godbee and Miss E. Rayner supervising the costumes, Mr. Foster managing properties, and Mr. Evans overseeing the machinery. As in the past, the management focused on the sensational melodramatic comic burlettas and burlesques to draw its audiences. The *Athenæum*'s description of the theatre as "a bazaar of fun, horrors, and strong scenic effects" (13 October 1832, pp. 668-669) aptly summarizes this season when twenty-five plays were performed in 182 performances.

The most popular play of The Season was *Cupid*, which appeared on the bill eighty-seven times. Little critical comment on the production appeared in the press, and the playwright's identity is uncertain. The burlesque of the myth of Cupid and Psyche capitalized on the comic talents of John Reeve and Laura Honey and remained a favorite of the company. Following *Cupid* in popularity was John Buckstone's *Henriette the Forsaken*. This melodrama ran for 60 performances and received high praise from audiences and critics alike. The *Athenæum* praised it as a "decided and well-deserved hit" and noted Frederick Yates' "admirable" acting (10 November 1832, p. 733). The *Times* said that "the interest throughout is...exceeding well kept up; and many of the scenes are truly affecting" (6 November 1832). Once again, the scenery attracted critical comment as the *Times* noted, "the scenery is remarkably well painted." The *Theatrical Observer* reported that "the getting up of the ball-room and suite of apartments in the new drama of *Henriette the Forsaken* at the Adelphi, we have heard, cost the managers upwards of 100 guineas" (10 October 1832).

The successes of *Cupid* and *Henriette* are perhaps not as remarkable as the failures of so many other productions during this season. Reviewers referred repeatedly to the disappointing aspects of productions or pointed out the dissatisfaction of the audiences. The opening show of the season, an adaptation of *Rip Van Winkle* by William Bernard proved to be "not so successful as some of its predecessors have been on the stage," according to the *Athenæum* of 13 October 1832 (pp. 668-669). It ran for only 42 performances. A farce called *Mr. Busy* began and "terminated amidst unequivocal marks of disapprobation" from the audience, because it was an "exceedingly lame and impotent affair" (*Times*, 4 December 1832). *The Howlet's Haunt*, which opened a week later, was "received in solemn silence" (*Times*, December 1832) by the audience and ran for only 12 performances. The *Athenæum* declared, "no particular honour is due to" *Twenty Thousand Pounds; or, London Love*, calling it "simple even to childishness" (9 Feb 1833, p. 92). Buckstone's *Jacopo the Bravo; or, A Story of Venice* achieved considerably more success but opened so near the end of the season that it ran for only 26 performances.

The month of March brought Lenten entertainments by Frederick Yates and John Reeve and, although *The Era Almanac* reported that "the Lenten entertainments of Mr. Yates proved unusually attractive in March" (p. 4), the *Theatrical Observer* wrote on 2 March 1833 "the *materiel* and execution [of] the performance is every way inferior to" Mathews' performances of the same genre. Reeve's one-man show apparently opened on a bad note with the performer "not able to complete what he had purposed" (*Times*, 23 February 1833), but continued to run for 10 more performances. Mathews' own entertainment opened on 29 April 1833 after a week's delay occasioned by a flu epidemic in London. His show, written by Charles J. Mathews and Richard B. Peake, merited the usual praise for the star's performance and some disapproval of the script, but it ran for 30 nights in alternation with the English Opera House's summer season.

As Frederick Yates closed The Season after benefit performances for himself, John Reeve, and Fanny Fitzwilliam, he thanked the audience for "that patronage which has pleased our hearts, I humbly confess, by filling our pockets" (*Times*, 1 April 1833). The *Athenæum* also reported "the season has been, we believe, a prosperous one; and the success which the management has again met with has been, we are happy to say, again well deserved" (13 April 1833, p. 236). Thus, we may conclude that the lack of a blockbuster hit like *The Wreck Ashore* or *Victorine* did not ultimately hurt the managers' profits.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest Summer 1833

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The plans of Samuel J. Arnold to build a new English Opera House before the summer season of 1832 did not come to fruition and as a result, the company lacked a permanent home that summer and during the summer of 1833. The latter season at the Adelphi, which commenced on 8 April, proved to be a trying one for the management, as witnessed by this early report by the *Theatrical Observer* that the "season has commenced most inauspiciously, the house being every night very ill-attended" (14 April 1833). The apparent cause of the low attendance was a flu epidemic, which also prevented Charles Mathews from returning to London in time to begin his *Comic Annual* performances. In a letter to H. B. Gyles, his amateur actor friend, on 17 April 1833, Mathews wrote: "I should have opened with, I think, another good entertainment on Monday [22 April], but the epidemic...is a panic with a vengeance—worse than cholera, though not so fatal" (Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, IV, 162).

A remark in the *Theatrical Observer* on 22 April indicated, however, that the epidemic actually helped boost business at the Adelphi: "Mr. Arnold has benefited by the influenza greatly, for since the closing of other houses, his audiences have quadrupled" This jump in attendance did not ultimately save the season, though, because the *Theatrical Observer* reported on 20 May: "We are sorry to hear it reported that Mr. Arnold has resigned the responsibility of manager of this company for the present in consequence of the badness of the houses" (*Theatrical Observer*, 20 April, 1833). In his autobiography, James Robinson Planché writes Arnold asked him to take over the management for the season but that he was unable to serve his old friend in that capacity (*Recollections and Reflections of James Robinson Planché*, I, 192). Finally, the *Observer* reported on May 31 "Mr. Arnold intends resuming his interest in the concern in July." Then in the middle of June, this development was reported:

It was intended to have closed this theatre on Thursday last until the beginning of July, when Mr. Arnold renews his managership, but we understand that the company have made an arrangement by which they will continue to perform on their own responsibility. Mr. Arnold lost 1000 pounds this present season, before he withdrew from the concern (*Theatrical Observer*).

During the English Opera Company's management of the Adelphi, problems continued to plague them. The *Athenæum* reported the leading actors sacrificed their own salaries for the good of the company: "For some time after the company resolved to take the theatre into their own hands, the receipts were very moderate; and, while this was the case, the salaries of the humbler classes were paid in full, the principals acting for nothing" (22 June, 1833, p. 404). In fact, one member of the company, Benjamin Wrench, even tried to negotiate with the Adelphi's proprietors for a reduction of the rent. According to the *Theatrical Observer* of 17 June, "Mr. Wrench waited on Messrs. Mathews and Yates, for a short time since, and after stating the situation in which the performers were placed, requested them to make a reduction in the rent of 10 pounds per week; they, however, refused, saying that they could compel Mr. Arnold to pay the full amount he had agreed for." Arnold finally returned to the Adelphi in July and finished out the season, which ran through 21 September. Despite all the financial struggles, 33 plays were staged, and 114 performances given.

The summer season of 1833 included many revivals of old favorites which ran briefly and then closed. Among those plays were *The Bottle Imp*, *The Middle Temple*, *Gretna Green*, *Wanted*, *A Governess*, and *The Evil Eye*. Richard B. Peake proved to be the most popular playwright of the summer, with seven of his plays appearing on the bills. The most popular play of the summer,

William Bernard's *The Mummy*, ran for 71 performances and "succeeded in attracting [audiences] beyond anything that the season has produced" (*Times*, 4 June 1833). Another favorite proved to be Thomas Serle's *The Yeoman's Daughter*, which, although written for Fanny M. Kelly, was successfully acted by Harriet Waylett. The *Athenæum* pronounced the musical drama "very well written" and praised the performance of Mr. Salter as well (27 July 1833, p. 500).

Throughout the season the *Times*' critic repeatedly remarked about the small size of the Adelphi stage and its unsuitability for large-scale productions like those done by the English Opera Company. However, when Planché's opera *The Court Masque; or, Richmond in Olden Time* opened on 9 September, critics forgot about the limitations of the theatre and saw only the merits of this landmark production. The *Athenæum* lamented, "it is a pity that the most creditable piece of the season should not have been produced until within a fortnight of its termination" (14 September 1833, p. 620). The critic went on to describe the acting as "above average," but paid particular attention to the style with which the production was mounted. He wrote that Planché "has gracefully thrown over the whole, the mantle and manners of the period... [The] dresses and general arrangement give good evidence of [his] intimate knowledge of these very essential matters." The *Theatrical Observer* remarked upon Planché's great "tact and dramatic skill" (11 September 1833) and gave particular attention to the visual elements of the production. "The opera has been got up with great care as far as regards scenery and dresses, all of which were new, picturesque, and appropriate; the first dress worn by Miss Murray is an exact copy of Holbein's celebrated picture of Anne Boleyn" (*Theatrical Observer*, 10 September 1833). The production marked a significant attempt at historical accuracy by James Robinson Planché and the Adelphi designers, Tompkins and Pitt.

At the end of the season, Thomas Serle addressed the audience on behalf of S. J. Arnold by conveying his "sincere thanks for the patronage with which you have honoured this establishment during a period of calamity and general depression almost unparalleled in theatrical history" (*Times*, 23 September 1833). He also noted that "many difficulties have hitherto prevented the building of the new English Opera House, but that those vexatious impediments have been gradually removed...and there is now every reason to hope that a very few months will enable him to welcome his friends and the public in a theatre worthy of them." He pledged that Arnold would restore "the English Opera at least to that degree of credit which it had acquired for some years before the disastrous event which drove him to an asylum where all his energies have been cramped and his main object defeated." Indeed, the summer of 1833 was the last season that Arnold and the English Opera Company occupied the Adelphi Theatre.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1833-1834

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The opening of the 1833-34 Adelphi season brought more changes to the interior of Yates' and Mathews' popular house. The *Theatrical Observer* announced that "although this theatre will not have been closed more than a week, it will present on its reopening night quite a novel appearance, having been entirely redecorated in that short interval, to effect which more than 100 workmen having been employed" (27 September 1833). After the 30 September opening, the *Theatrical Observer* reported "the house has assumed quite a new face; the blue silk draperies and fringes have been removed from the fronts of the boxes, and burnished gold ornaments substituted which have a very pleasing effect" (1 October 1833). Of particular interest was the box engaged by the Duchess of St. Albans, which had been constructed from two previously existing boxes (*Theatrical Observer*, 27 September 1833). H. Barton Baker reports that the Duchess (formerly Miss Melton) was a special friend and patron of Yates who "frequently came to his assistance" during times of financial hardship (*History of the London Stage*, p. 423). Perhaps it was for her "particular desire" that a special performance of *Victorine* was presented on 22 March (see bill). The season closed on 4 July 1834, after 24 plays had been presented in 191 performances.

Yates and Mathews faced some significant personnel problems as the 1833-34 season opened. According to the *Theatrical Observer* of 26 September 1833, the Company had grown to 140 performers, including four leading actresses: Harriett Waylett, Fanny Fitzwilliam, Laura Honey, and Elizabeth Yates. That publication had noted on 16 September 1833, that the contention of these four ladies for the "first business...will give the manager sufficient employment." Indeed the *Observer* had anticipated a problem, which did surface with the opening of the first show, *Lekinda, The Sleepless Woman*. On 1 October, he explained: "Mrs. Honey played the part of Mme. Poupette which was intended for Mrs. Fitzwilliam, but in consequence of a misunderstanding, the latter lady threw up her engagement at this theatre." In a self-congratulatory tone, he added, "We foresaw that Mr. Yates would have great difficulty in reconciling the clashing interests of his ladies." Despite this problem, Baker wrote, "this house could boast of companies which made the name of the minor theatre famous throughout the dramatic world" (p. 423).

As in the previous season, none of the 1833-34 offerings achieved the popularity of *The Wreck Ashore* or *Victorine*, but John Buckstone's burletta, *The Rake and His Pupil; or, Folly, Love, and Marriage*, did run for 53 performances. When it opened on Nov. 25, the *Theatrical Observer* proclaimed that it "bids fair to rival in popularity the most attractive of the Adelphi pieces" (27 November 1833). The *Times* agreed the play "must be added to the long list of deservedly successful pieces" presented at the Adelphi (26 November 1833).

Elizabeth Yates received special acclaim for her acting again this season by starring in Henry Holl's *Grace Huntley*. Proclaimed "a real Adelphi drama" by the *Athenæum* on 2 November 1833 (p. 740), the melodrama featured Mrs. Yates as an innocent girl married to an unscrupulous criminal. The *New Monthly Magazine for 1833* declared, "We must observe that the acting of Mrs. Yates...is just as near perfection as anything on a stage can be. She is a Garrick in petticoats" (pt. III, p. 351). The play ran for 48 performances.

Another favorite of The Season was a musical extravaganza by Pitt called *Lurine; or, The Revolt of the Naiades [sic]*. The play's spectacle attracted the most attention from critics like the critic for the *Times*, who said: "We have seen nothing at any of the minor theatres that in point of brilliancy at all approaches it. The scenery, by Messrs. Tompkins and Pitt, would do credit to any theatre" (14 January 1834). The *Athenæum's* critic seconded that opinion when he wrote: "The machinery and

the general getting up of the piece touch closely, when we consider the difficulties to be surmounted in so small a theatre, upon the wonderful" (18 January 1834, p. 52). An interesting note concerning this production appears in Mathews' biography. The co-manager apparently did not approve of the production's concept when first introduced by his partner. He wrote to his wife on 15 December 1833, "I wrote my objections to the 'harem-scar'em' scheme...I told him it was, in my opinion, disgraceful:— but what a mockery it is of Yates asking my consent!" (Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, IV, 248).

Mathews had, in fact, spent much of the season away from London recovering from various illnesses. He returned to the city in April to present "a succession of selections from his old entertainments" (Mathews, p. 281). The resulting pieces were billed as two different shows: *Mathews at Home, Comic Annual*, which ran for 26 performances, and *Mr. Mathews at Home with His Comic Annual*, which ran for 10 nights. Critics responded with their usual praise, calling Mathews "a living Hogarth" (*Times*, 5 May 1834).

When the regular season closed at the end of March after benefits honoring Elizabeth Yates, John Reeve and Laura Honey, Yates proclaimed this to be "a most successful season—the shortest we have ever played under, but the most brilliant" and bragged that "no expense is spared for your amusement" (*Times*, 24 March 1834). Unfortunately, according to Mathews' widow and H. Barton Baker, the managers' profits did not reflect the plays' critical and popular success. Baker writes, "somehow, [the Adelphi] could not be made to pay; whether it was badly managed, or managers lived beyond their means, or the public were not sufficiently liberal in their support, it would be difficult to determine" (p. 423). Anne Mathews indicates throughout the fourth volume of her husband's biography that the actor-manager constantly struggled in his later years to make ends meet. It appears that by the end of the 1833-34 season the extravagance, which had made the Adelphi so popular, began to take a toll on the theatre's managers.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1834-1835

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The final season of Charles Mathews' joint management of the Adelphi Theatre with Frederick Yates opened on 29 September 1834, after considerable redecoration and remodeling of the theatre's interior. The opening night bill announced, "the audience part of the theatre has been re-painted and re-decorated, a new movable stage constructed, and the stage encreased [*sic*] to double its former extent." The season ran for 163 nights; 29 plays were presented; the theatre closed on 11 April 1835. Because Mathews was indisposed during the bulk of the season, Yates had almost complete responsibility for the theatre's management.

John Buckstone once again scored the hit of the season with *The Last Days of Pompeii; or, Seventeen Hundred Years Ago*, a melodrama based on Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel. The play ran for 64 nights and received lavish praise from the critics and copious applause from audiences. The *Times* declared, "the scenery and dresses appeared to be new, and were both appropriate and splendid, and the eruption of Vesuvius in the last scene conveyed to the spectator a good idea of the terrors of that awful, natural phenomenon" (14 December 1834). The *Morning Post* exclaimed in a review reprinted by the theatre's management, "On the boards of no theatre, whether major or minor, and by no manager, great or small, could the numerous scenic incidents and complicated mechanical effects of such a drama be more perfectly displayed than as witnessed last night on the boards of the Adelphi Theatre, under the superintendence of Mr. Yates."

Yet another spectacular production, *Celestia; or, The World in the Moon* by Dalrymple, received plaudits from the critics when it opened on 2 February 1835. The *Times* declared that the "splendour of decoration and brilliancy of scenic effect surpasses anything that we have hitherto witnessed at this house." The house machinist and scenic designers Tompkins and Pitt merited these remarks from the same critic: "The story...affords an ample field for the imagination of the painter...and [the] skill of those very important personages in all melodramatic pieces, the machinist and fire- worker." The work of costumers, Godbee and Miss E. Rayner, was recognized when the *Athenæum* declared that the "dresses are very splendid" (7 February 1835, p. 114).

Buckstone provided yet another successful script with *The Christening*, which opened on 13 October. The 49-performance run and the play's enduring popularity with Adelphi audiences throughout the decade may be attributed to the source of the piece. Although it was unacknowledged in the theatre's publicity, Charles Dickens claimed the popular comedy had been pirated from his "The Bloomsbury Christening," which had appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* that previous April. Dickens protested the "kidnapping" of his "offspring" in a letter to the editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, writing: "I find that Mr. Buckstone has officiated as self-elected godfather, and carried off my child to the Adelphi, for the purpose, probably, of fulfilling one of his sponsorial duties, viz., of teaching it the vulgar tongue" (Dickens, I, 42). Ironically, he reviewed the play favorably in the *Morning Chronicle*, saying "we hope and believe [it] will have a long run" (14 October 1834). The editors of Dickens' letters claim only "the title, the type of name given to the godfather...and some jokes and phrases were borrowed" (Dickens, I, 42). Nevertheless, the play "christened" a long and profitable relationship between the Adelphi and the writings of Charles Dickens.

Repeatedly throughout The Season, critics referred to the crowding of the houses and the enormous size of the audiences in attendance. For *The Christening*, the house was "filled from top to bottom" (*Times*, 21 October 1834). During *Oscar the Bandit*, which opened a week later, the *Times* referred to the "continued and clamorous plaudits of an overflowing house" (21 October 1834). When another Buckstone melodrama, *Agnes De Vere*, opened on 10 November, "the house was crowded in

all parts" (*Times*, 11 November 1834) and during *The First Night* by Thomas Parry, "the house was crowded to an overflow in every part" (*Times*, 28 November 1834). Yates' Martyr's Day performance of his one-man show, *Mr. Yates' Views of Himself and Others* attracted such a crowd that the *Times* reviewer commented upon the "total incapability of the house to contain so dense a throng as waited in the lobbies for admittance" (31 January 1835). These reports verify the description of the Adelphi by a contemporary writer in 1835 as "by far the most fashionably attended theatre in London" (Quoted by Mander and Michenson, *The Theatres of London*, p. 17).

Ironically, Charles Mathews apparently saw little of the monetary rewards of this critical and popular success. Forced to tour the United States to supplement his income, Mathews fell ill while overseas and never regained his health. On 31 January 1835, Mrs. Mathews wrote this bitter letter to her son:

It is alarming to find that, in the fullness of 'the Adelphi's success,' no emolument arises to any but the performers and the tradesmen. Out of these enormous receipts, *all gone* without a shilling your father can call profit. The building is not large enough to pay for splendor and salaries which Drury Lane cannot now afford. This should be seen to. It is a fallacy to say the concern prospers because the houses are filled (Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, IV, p. 339).

Though Mathews cut short his American tour and returned home to recuperate, he never appeared on the British stage again. He died a poor man on 28 June 1835, at the age of fifty-nine.

In Mathews' absence, Frederick Yates took over the daily management of the Adelphi operations. In addition to acting in several productions, he frequently received credit in the bills and reviews for having supervised (or directed) the productions. Playwright Edward Fitzball commended Yates' creativity when he wrote, "Yates...had great discernment when an original idea was stated to him, however absurd it might have appeared to others; he could extract the wheat from the chaff" (Fitzball, *Thirty-Five Years in a Dramatic Author's Life*, I, 261-62). Writing in an 1839 review of a production of *Jack Sheppard* at the Adelphi, an unidentified critic observed, "Yates has earned a deserved celebrity for producing what are called 'effects;' and often have we seen things done upon the little stage of the Adelphi that put to blush the effects of other managers." (Quoted by Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 251.) Yates' unfailing theatrical instincts, in combination with Charles Mathews' immense comic talents, resulted in the vast popularity of the Adelphi Theatre between 1830 and 1835. With the exception of the following season, Yates was to continue to steer the theatre to greater success in the second half of the decade.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1835-1836

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The Adelphi's 1835-36 season was financially and artistically the least successful season of the decade. In fact, the Adelphi Company and its management offered more interesting action backstage than it did on stage. They produced thirty-seven plays during the 157-night season, none of which ran for more than 43 performances, indicating a lukewarm audience and critical response. Remarks in the *Times* and the *Theatrical Observer*, however, hinted that perhaps the lack of artistic achievement could be attributed to management problems and personality conflicts behind the scenes.

The theatre opened its doors on 28 September 1835, under the management of Frederick Yates and Charles J. Mathews, who had inherited his share in the theatre from his father, Charles Mathews. Yates had little to do with the day-to-day operations of the theatre since he was serving as the acting manager at Drury Lane in the fall of 1835 (Pollock, *Macready's Reminiscences*, p. 359). The younger Mathews, who aspired to be an actor, faced several obstacles to financial success in his first experience as a manager. The company had lost some of its most popular actors, including Yates and his wife, Elizabeth, and comedian John Reeve, who was touring the United States. Historian Thomas Marshall notes that these "disadvantageous circumstances," along with the reduction of ticket prices at the Covent Garden Theatre and the severe competition that caused, "rendered Mr. Mathews' commencement so great a failure that after considerable loss, he consented to Mr. Yates' letting the theatre for the remainder of the season to Messrs. Ephraim Bond and company...and eventually disposed of his share" (*Lives of the Most Celebrated Actors*, p. 193).

On Nov. 12, 13, and 14, 1835, there was "no performance in consequence of extensive preparations for Monday, the 16th" when Louisa Cranston Nisbett took over the management (bill, 9 November 1835). The closing of the Adelphi for any reason other than a religious holiday or National mourning was extremely rare during the 1830s and this move indicates that drastic action needed to be taken to prevent greater financial loss. Apparently, Mathews and Yates secured the assistance of the infamous Bond brothers, who are variously described as gamblers and moneylenders by contemporary sources. As proprietors of the Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Street, they employed Mrs. Nisbett as manager. On 16 November 1835, as promised in the bills of the previous week, she and "Mrs. Honey, Miss Murray, the Miss Mordaunts, Mr. Wrench, Mr. Williams, Mr. Mitchell, and others from the Queen's Theatre, in addition to the present powerful Adelphi Company," reopened the theatre with three new productions, *Zarah*, *The Station House*, and *The Rival Pages*.

Mrs. Nisbett opened the season's most popular play, John Buckstone's *The Dream at Sea*, on 23 November 1835. The play received little notice in the press, but apparently won some favor with the public since it ran for forty-three performances. Thomas's suggestion that the Adelphi felt the pressure of competition from lower ticket prices at other theatres is borne out in an advertisement that appeared on the 23 November bill for *A Dream at Sea*, which assures the public that "no means shall be left untried to sustain the present unparalleled success" and that "every effort shall be made to place it out of the power of the CHEAP theatres to compete."

Despite this and other noble proclamations by the management, the Adelphi continued to struggle. It opened play after play with no sustained success. On 23 December 1835, Mrs. Nisbett played her last performance there and returned to the Queen's, and all the other principal players she had brought with her except Mrs. Honey had left by January 2, 1836. Mrs. Stirling (also known as Fanny Clifton) made her Adelphi debut on 26 December 1835. She replaced Mrs. Nisbett and soon became a favorite with audiences and critics alike.

The traditional Christmas pantomime, *The Elfin Queen; or The Battle of the Fairies*, sustained a respectable run of 43 performances but received the scorn of the *Times* critic, who remarked on the size of the actresses who played the fairies and declared that "the pantomime...is not so good as that description of entertainment has usually been at this theatre" (28 December 1835). Late January and early February saw the opening of two other moderately successful plays, George Soane's *Luke Somerton* and Buckstone's *Rienzi; or, The Last of the Tribunes*. Each production brought live horses to the stage, which seem to have both awed and frightened audiences. (See *Times*, 19 January 1836 and 4 February 1836.) Neither production became the hit the management desperately needed.

February brought more conflicts to the Adelphi's management. The 9 February edition of the *Theatrical Observer* reported that "determination...to shut this Theatre has been abandoned" and that it "arose out of a dispute between [management] and some members of the company which has ended by the dissatisfied parties leaving the theatre." The writer refers to "strange stories concerning the quarrels, the jealousies, and the heart burnings at this theatre." The exact source of these conflicts is a mystery. We may find some clues, however, in the hint that on 4 February Laura Honey "was apparently not very well pleased with her part" (*Times*) and the fact that she abruptly left the theatre on 13 February. On 18 February, the *Theatrical Observer* reported "the cause of Mrs. Honey quitting this theatre is said to be her jealousy of Miss Daly, who is about to become the wife of one of the lessees," Mr. Bond. Mrs. Honey's departure did not go unnoticed by the *Times* critic, who noted in his 24 February review of *The Balance of Comfort*, "the absence of Mrs. Honey is a drawback on the amusements of the evening."

The season came to a close with Lenten entertainments by Edward Elton, Mrs. Fanny Fitzwilliam and Benjamin Webster. The final productions of the season were revivals of old Adelphi favorites, *Victorine* and *Oscar The Bandit*. Perhaps the highlight of the season for the Adelphi's faithful audience was the announcement on closing night by the stage manager, Mr. Gallott, that in the next season "the theatre will be under the sole management of one who has long and indefatigably laboured for our amusement—that of Mr. Yates, assisted by the oldest and greatest favourites" (*Times*, 28 March 1836).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1836-1837

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

Novelty was the order of the day during the Adelphi's 1836-37 season under the management of Frederick Yates. The first of the season's 40 plays opened on 29 September 1836, and was entitled *Novelty*. It featured the popular comedian John Reeve. Described as "little more than a framework for his American adventures," the play by William Leman Rede was a vehicle for Reeve's return from his U.S tour (*DNB*, Vol. XVI, p. 853). Two of the Adelphi audience's favorite plays were revived on the opening bill, John Buckstone's *The Wreck Ashore* and *The Christening*, and the manager's wife, Elizabeth Yates, addressed the audience at top of the bill. Assisting in the production of the novelties and other shows were musical director William H. Callcott, costumers Mr. Godbee and Miss E. Rayner, and scenic designers Pitt and Gladstone. Adelphi stage manager, actor, and playwright, Edward Stirling wrote in his memoirs, *Old Drury Lane*, that "in 1836, Yates collected a company seldom if ever surpassed for talent" (I, p. 89-90). Within two weeks of opening night, the *Athenæum*'s critic observed, "The old audience of this theatre seem to have returned with the old management and old favourites" (15 October 1836, p. 740).

The most significant novelty to appear at the Adelphi during the 1836-37 season was the American blackface comedian Thomas D. Rice, whose delineation of "Jim Crow," the black coachman he observed in Cincinnati in the early '30's, had won him fame throughout the United States. (See Nevin, "Stephen C. Foster and Negro Minstrelsy," *Atlantic Monthly*, (November 1867), p. 610). His Adelphi debut occurred on 7 November 1836, in Rede's *A Flight To America*. He remained at the theatre for a total of twenty-one weeks, "then considered something extraordinary," according to Blanchard's "History of the Adelphi" (*Era Almanac*, 1877, p. 5.). The management devised several vehicles for Jim Crow including *The Peacock and The Crow* and *The Virginian Mummy*. Rede even provided a role for Rice in his adaptation of Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, which opened at the end of the season. The 31 January 1837, edition of the *Theatrical Observer* reported that Yates paid Rice £40 a week while Blanchard claims that he cleared £1,100 during his first season at the Adelphi ("History" p. 5).

Rice's impersonation of the crippled black man who sang, "Eb'ry time I weel about, I jump Jim Crow" was hailed by the *Times* of London as "a source of profit to the management and amusement to the public," one which would be impossible to imitate (8 November 1836). A "Jim Crow" craze swept through London. Stirling remembered, "Organs, street singers, concerts, were all 'jump Jim Crow mad'" over the latest Adelphi novelty (*Old Drury Lane*, I, p. 92). *The Flight to America* ran for 68 performances.

On 24 January 1837, the *Times* proclaimed "Novelty is the great attraction at this house." Currently, Yates was showcasing the "Real Bedouin Arabs," a troupe of tumblers who were described as "the most active and elegant tumblers that ever exhibited before an English audience." In his March 11, 1837, review of *Hassan Pasha*, the tumblers' dramatic vehicle, Charles Rice called their performance "the most astonishing thing of the kind I have ever seen" and reported that they were greeted with "four tremendous rounds of applause" (*London Theatres in the 1830's*, p. 30). Once again, Yates scored a hit with a novelty.

Among the "standard" fare offered by the Adelphi this season were several revivals, including Buckstone's *Victorine*, Fitzball's *The Flying Dutchman*, and Henry Holl's *Grace Huntley*. One premier, *The Doom of Marana* by Buckstone, was only moderately successful, being dismissed by the *Athenæum* as "little better than sheer nonsense" (15 October 1836, 740). The reviewer commented that the Adelphi audience would not notice the weaknesses, however, because Buckstone and Yates

knew their audiences' tastes. He wrote: "the author, who knows his audience quite as well as the manager, drowns their reflection in a flood of laughter while the manager blinds their eyes with the brilliancy of his scenic display." Another Buckstone script, *The Duchess de la Vaubalière*, ran for forty-nine performances and was praised for its "excellent scenic effects" and "exciting incidents" (*Theatrical Observer*, 4 January 1837).

Because of an extension of the theatre's license by the Lord Chamberlain, the management was permitted to continue its season beyond the Easter holidays. (See Nicholson, *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London*, pp. 367-368.) During these final weeks, the Adelphi produced its second play based upon the writings of London's most popular author, Charles Dickens. *The Peregrinations of Pickwick* by Rede opened on April 2, 1837, after only eight volumes of *The Pickwick Papers* had been published and with only six days preparation (*Theatrical Observer*, 4 April 1837). Although critics noted that the opening performance was "rather imperfectly done" (*Observer*) and needed to "be shortened by at least one third" (*Times*, 4 April 1837), both agreed that it was a successful dramatization of Boz's stories. F. Dubrey Fawcett writes in *Dickens on Stage* that Dickens felt "wrath and dismay" over the production (p. 45). Despite Boz's negative reaction, the production ran through the end of the season.

The Adelphi closed on Thursday, 4 May after 185 performances, including benefits for Elizabeth Yates and John Reeve. Frederick Yates reported in his farewell address that his novelties had given the theatre a "very profitable season" and that previous engagements "compelled us to close a fortnight earlier than by law we are allowed to" (quoted in *Theatrical Observer*, 8 May 1837). The principal members of the company moved on to the Surrey Theatre for the three weeks and afterwards played in Liverpool (*Theatrical Observer*, 24 April 1837).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1837-1838

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The Adelphi season of 1837-1838, under the management of Frederick Yates and Thomas Gladstane, was distinguished by a series of outstanding performances by new and old members of the company. The house opened on 29 September 1837 (after having been redecorated during the recess) with popular favorites Elizabeth Yates, O. Smith, Cullenford and Wilkinson on the bill, and introduced John F. Saville and Tyrone Power that evening. As the season progressed, the talents of Céline Céleste, Harvey Leach, and Louisa Nisbett were added to the bills. During the season, 31 plays were presented in 192 performances.

Opening night featured the return to the Adelphi of the Irish comedian Tyrone Power who starred in Samuel Lover's adaptation of his novel, *Rory O'More*. Power (grandfather of the American stage star and great-grandfather of the American movie actor) received unanimous praise for his sincere and natural performance as the Irish peasant. Thomas Marshall quotes a critic who wrote, "it is impossible to do justice to the quiet unexaggerated humour—the complete Hibernianism—of Power in this character" (*Lives of the Most Celebrated Actors*, p. 139). Compared favorably with the broad style of Adelphi favorite John Reeve, Power seems to have introduced a new style of acting to Adelphi audiences. Marshall's source continued: "Is it not surprising that a public which has the capacity for appreciating such acting as Power's should take delight in the more and meagre buffoonery of John Reeve? The latter can well be spared at this house." Tyrone Power earned twenty pounds a night in the role and repeated it ninety times during the season. He also appeared in Irish characters in *The Groves of Blarney*, *Pat and the Potatoes*, *Irish Tutor*, *More Blunders than One*, and *Omnibus* during the 1837-38 season.

Elizabeth Yates, wife of the Adelphi's manager, had been the theatre's leading lady in the first half of the 1830's. Audiences and critics felt her absence during the 1835-1836 season, but in 1836-37, she regained her prominence. *Valsha; or, The Slave Queen* by Joseph S. Coyne, which opened on 30 October 1837, was to be her star vehicle during this season. The *Times* described her performance as "the best piece of melodramatic acting that has been witnessed for a very long time...almost painfully intense by its strictness to nature" (31 October 1837). The *Morning Post*, quoted on the bill, described the "fullness of her tragic powers" and their effect on the audience when, during the play's final scene, "silence like that of the grave attended her last moments. Not a word was heard as she moved across the stage." Elizabeth Yates played *Valsha* sixty-six times during The Season.

Praise was given to *Valsha*, rather more for its elaborate spectacle than for the performances. The cast boasted more than one hundred actors and the scenery was apparently nothing short of magnificent. According to the *Theatrical Observer*, it cost 1,000 pounds to "get up" (13 November 1837). The final scene, the execution of *Valsha*, which took place on the ramparts of a castle, received breathless praise from critics. The *Times* said: "The whole stage...is sunk many feet, so that great height is given to the general view of castle walls and ramparts. The manner in which the ascent of [*Valsha*] and her execution is seen...is also a *chef d'oeuvre* of scenic triumph and the apparent fall is actually electrifying by its seeming reality." The *Athenæum* critic, who like the *Times* writer did not like the script, nevertheless proclaimed "so admirable a scene as the last, both as to design and execution, has rarely, if ever, been presented either on the English or foreign stage" (4 November 1837, 820). The writer for the *Times* concluded, "This piece will be an era in the history of melodramas."

Melodrama was indeed the Adelphi's claim to fame, and the opening of William Bernard's play of that genre, *St. Mary's Eve*, brought another notable performer to the theatre's stage. Mme. Céleste, who

had appeared there in mute roles in the early 1830s, made her first appearance in this play which was "written for her and adapted to her peculiar talent of delineating intense feeling with great care and felicity" (*Times*, 2 January 1838). Ernest Watson claims that *St. Mary's Eve* was "notably above the level of the ordinary melodrama of the day" and that Mme. Céleste's performance exceeded expectations (*Sheridan to Robertson*, p. 357). Watson quotes the *Theatrical Examiner's* review of 6 January 1838, which praised her "attention to all those minor details that give life and reality to domestic acting, and are but too little regarded by English actresses." Her style was appreciated by Adelphi audiences, for she continued performing there and eventually became the theatre's manager in the 1840s. Watson declared that Céleste "was to melodrama what Vestris had been to burlesque. She brought to it the naturalism of French art as well as the refinement" (*Ibid.*, p. 357).

While employing some of the best actors London could offer, Yates never failed to keep his eye open for a novelty to spice up his bills. He hit upon one of his greatest successes when he out-bid the two Patent theatres (*Theatrical Observer*, 2 February 1837) and engaged a dwarf named Harvey Leach, who was billed as Signor Hervio Nano, the Gnome Fly. Leach's act, which was incorporated into two plays, *The Gnome Fly* and *The Major and the Monkey*, involved acrobatic feats of daring (in the person of a fly or a monkey) such as walking on the walls and ceiling of the theatre. The *Times* wrote, "he climbs...along the side of the theatre, gets into the upper circle in a moment, catches hold of the projection of the ornaments of the ceiling of the theatre, crosses to the opposite side, and descends along the vertical boarding of the proscenium... . In a word, [he] performs some of the most astonishing feats ever exhibited within the walls of a theatre" (1 February 1838). Leach appeared 54 times at the Adelphi in the 1837-38 season.

One performer was noticeably absent from the bills of the Adelphi during the season. John Reeve, veteran comedian and favorite of Adelphi audiences, died on 24 January 1838. In his farewell speech on 18 May, Frederick Yates spoke of the "severe loss I sustained...[of] one of [the theatre's] brightest ornaments," (quoted in the *Times*, 21 May 1838). He went on to proclaim, however, the season's success and promised to give his "undivided attention...next season to the catering for your amusement."

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1838-1839

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The Adelphi Theatre underwent a complete renovation during the period between the end of the previous season and the opening of the 1838-1839 season on 1 October 1838. According to an account in the *Times*, "the ceiling [was] heightened and made into the form of a dome and the whole of the boxes, proscenium, etc., decorated, painted and gilded with great taste." The writer observed, "the whole bears an appearance of cleanliness, elegance, and comfort" (2 October 1838). Frederick Yates and Thomas Gladstane promised their audiences a satisfying season by hiring Laura Honey, Mary Ann Keeley, John Webster, Frank Matthews, Edward Wright, and Edward Stirling. Indeed, even though the season was shorter than previous ones (only 144 performances) and featured fewer plays (24), it was one of the most successful seasons of the decade.

Much of that success was due to Edward Stirling and his adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*, which opened on 19 November and ran through the end of the season. The *Times* described the production as an "unprecedented success" (20 November 1838) while the *Athenæum* was far more reserved in its praise, "The best that can be said of the Adelphi *Nickleby* is that the principal characters are well 'cast', dressed, and personated" (November 24, 1838). Although the play opened after only eight parts of the novel had been serialized, Dickens himself was pleased with the production. After seeing it during the first week of its run, he wrote to his friend John Forster, praising "the skilful management and dressing of the boys, the capital manner and...the careful making-up of all the people...Mrs. Keeley's first appearance beside the fire...and all the rest of Smike was excellent" (*Letters of Charles Dickens*, I, 459). Mrs. Keeley's performance as Smike received universal praise, and equally appreciated were O. Smith's portrayal of Newman Noggs and Yates' delineation of Mantalini. Once again, the Adelphi's association with the writings of the beloved "Boz" brought acclaim and profit.

Most managers might have been satisfied with the success of *Nicholas Nickleby*, but not Frederick Yates. He constantly sought "novelties" and new attractions to present to his audiences. He began the season with the Bayadères, a troupe of eight Indian dancers. Much was made in the London press of Yates' efforts to outbid and out-maneuver other managers to secure the dancers' services, and the *Times* reported on 3 September 1838, that he would pay them 5,000 guineas for the season. The young women appeared in *A Race for a Rarity*, *The Law of Brahma; or, the Hindoo Widow*, and *Arajoon; or, The Conquest of Mysore*, whose plots were merely frames upon which to present occasions for the Indians to dance. The Bayadères received unanimous praise in the London press for their exotic dancing, and they remained at the Adelphi throughout the fall.

Thomas Rice returned to the Adelphi during December and played throughout the year. He revived his popular "Jim Crow" vehicle, *A Flight to America* and premiered two other plays written especially for him, *Jim Crow in His New Place* by Thomas P. Taylor and *The Foreign Prince* by an unknown playwright. Like the shows written for the Bayadères, these plays were acknowledged by the press to be vehicles for the "display of Rice's peculiarities" (unidentified review on a New York bill 31 December 1838). Audiences apparently did not care. They continued to pour into the theatre to see Rice; Yates and Gladstane paid him 40 pounds per week for his services (*Theatrical Observer*, 1 January 1839).

The fourth major "attraction" of the season was the appearance of a giant, Monsieur Bihin, who was featured for 57 performances in Stirling's *The Giant of Palestine*. Loosely based upon Tasso's *Siege of Jerusalem*, the play provided the giant with numerous opportunities to display his strength against various enemies. The Belgian performer's ability as an actor was never mentioned in the reviews,

and his physical attributes, not the script or the interpretation, were the primary attraction to curious critics and audiences alike.

As the season reached its end, Yates premiered the Adelphi's fourth adaptation of Dickens, Stirling's version of *Oliver Twist*. Although the show only played for sixteen performances, the performers received high praise from the London critics. The *Athenæum* wrote that "Mrs. Yates...as Nancy...is fearfully true to nature. O. Smith is the burglar [Sikes] every inch of him" (2 March 1839, p. 174). Frederick Yates, as Fagin, gave "a most faithful and appalling picture of the heartless sordid villain; we have never seen a finer histrionic portrait," declared the *Theatrical Observer* on 4 March 1839. Mary Ann Keeley apparently played Oliver adequately, despite Dickens' warnings in an earlier letter to Yates that if the part, "be played by a female, it should be a very sharp girl of thirteen or fourteen" (*Letters of Charles Dickens*, I, 388). Critics disagreed on the success of Stirling's adaptation, which was one of six versions of the novel that had appeared on the London stage since March of 1838 (*ibid.*). The *Times* wrote, "a vast deal of the interminable slang of the novel is got rid of...and so far the auditor at the Adelphi is better off than the reader of the book" (26 February 1839). In contrast, the *Athenæum* critic lamented, "the actors...have to contend with a very poor dramatic version of the story." True to the management's practice of presenting novelties at the Adelphi, these accomplished performers shared the bill with a performance by the "celebrated Parisian monkeys."

After a benefit for Elizabeth Yates on 21 March, Yates and Gladstone closed the Adelphi for the season on 23 March 1839. In his farewell address, Yates "congratulated himself on having made a lucrative and successful season" and promised the audience greater pleasures in the future (*Theatrical Observer*, 26 March 1839).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1839-1840

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

In the final season of the decade, managers Frederick Yates and Thomas Gladstone, increased their profits and their reputations by presenting works by some of England's most renowned contemporary playwrights in productions that dazzled audiences with their magnificent scenic effects and costumes. The company, which presented 31 plays in 179 performances, included such favorites as John Buckstone, Paul Bedford, Frederick Yates, James H. Hackett, Thomas D. Rice, and Mary Ann Keeley. When the theatre opened on 1 October 1839, the *Times* wrote, "the house now presents a very elegant and commodious appearance" (1 October 1839).

John Buckstone returned to the Adelphi as playwright and actor. Seven of his scripts were produced, including *The Christening*, *Abelard and Heloise*, and *The May Queen*. By far the most successful of his plays (indeed the most successful of the decade) was his adaptation of William Harrison Ainsworth's sensational novel, *Jack Sheppard*. The piece, which opened on 28 October 1839, and ran for 121 performances, was one of seven adaptations, which played in London theatres that fall. While critics generally deplored the novel and occasionally denounced its dramatic cousins, Buckstone's version, according to Martin Meisel, was the most successful (*Realizations*, 271). The *Times*, after grudgingly acknowledging that the play would be a hit, proclaimed: "The drama is a much better thing than the book, because the adapter has avoided the blunders and absurdities of the [novelist], and extracted with great skill all that is really good in the original" (29 October 1839).

Buckstone's script was well acted by the Adelphi Company, according to the available accounts. Mary Ann Keeley took on the breeches role of the criminal, Jack Sheppard, and Lyon (in the absence of O. Smith) played his antagonist, Jonathan Wild. Reviewers frequently singled out Mrs. Keeley for praise. In the *Morning Herald*, she was cited for the "genius with which she invested" the character. Not everyone was convinced. John Forster sniffed "Mrs. Keeley, Mr. Yates, and Mr. Bedford display much-misplaced power" (*Examiner*, 28 October 1839), but the *Theatrical Observer* declared a day later, "the acting was unquestionably excellent." Even more appealing than the performances, however, was the play's spectacular scenery. Created by Thomas H. Pitt and William Telbin and based upon on George Cruikshank's illustrations of the novel, the sets and special effects received universal praise. In his description of the first act, the *Times* critic wrote: "The whole stage of the theatre is sunk about eight or ten feet.... The storm on the Thames is introduced with a very surprising mechanical effect, and the distant view of St. Paul's Cathedral...is excellent." Even the disapproving John Forster admitted that the "scenic effects are really most surprisingly good." The *Times* gave the final word when it wrote, "The scenery is superior to anything that has been shown for many seasons."

Works by William Bernard and William Moncrieff also took prominent places on the bills in 1839 and 1840. The season opened with Bernard's *The Kentuckian*, featuring the American actors, James H. Hackett and Thomas D. Rice, and with Moncrieff's *Mount St. Bernard; or, The Goldsmith of Grenoble*. The latter piece garnered praise for its scenery from all the critics, including the writer for the *Theatrical Observer* who declared, "We have never witnessed more beautiful scenery than is exhibited in this highly interesting piece" (9 October 1839). Bernard's *Rip Van Winkle* was also revived as a vehicle for Hackett, but it only ran for 10 performances.

Three revivals of plays by Edward Fitzball were presented: *The Pilot*, *Esmeralda*, and *Nelson, England's Glory*. Another old favorite, Douglas Jerrold's *Black-Eyed Susan*, was revived with an appearance by T. P. Cooke. Richard Peake contributed two scripts, which featured the acting of Frederick Yates: *HB*, a farce and *The Devil in London*, a local color drama. Of the latter, the

Theatrical Journal said on 25 April, "notwithstanding all the puff and parade about eighty young ladies being engaged in it, it is positively unendurable...the eighty ladies dressed in armour exhibited (as happily phrased by a contemporary), one hundred and sixty of the worst legs that ever ambulated on the Adelphi boards" (p. 158).

The Adelphi's prolific resident playwright, Edward Stirling, was not without representation in 1839-1840. His highly acclaimed *Nicholas Nickleby* was revived for six performances in October. In March, a sequel, *The Fortunes of Smike*, opened. The latter was praised by the *Theatrical Observer* as "quite as effective as its predecessor," yet it failed to achieve a long run. Martin Meisel writes that "the original freshness had gone, as indeed, it had from the last chapters of the book [*Nicholas Nickleby*] itself" (*Realizations*, p. 64). Despite good performances by Mary Ann Keeley as Smike, Frederick Yates as Mantalini, and Buckstone as Newman Noggs, the show "did not enrich the box office" as its predecessor had (*ibid.*).

Stirling's *Knight of the Dragon*, on the other hand, was a spectacle of unprecedented scale and appeal. The production, based upon William Harrison Ainsworth's *Crichton*, provided an opportunity to display the "armour, banners, costumes, and paraphernalia" recently employed in a tournament at Eglinton Castle. Real horses were used, and the scenery was described as "more than usually effective and...perfectly surprising in its effects" (*Times*, 20 November 1839). The *Theatrical Observer* reported on 3 December, the managers insured the historical artifacts they used for "3,000 pounds, against fire, at the enormous premium of 3 guineas per cent." It is no wonder that an unidentified reviewer wrote in the fall of 1839 that "Yates has earned a deserved celebrity for producing what are called 'effects'; and often have we seen things done upon the little stage of the Adelphi that put to blush the effects of other managers" (quoted by Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 251).

The final outstanding production of the 1839-40 Adelphi season was the traditional Christmas pantomime, *Harlequin and Mother Red Cap*. The *Athenæum* praised "its diorama, painted by Telbin...as one of the best painted displays of scenery" (28 December 1839, 989-90). On January 8, after a two-week run on a bill with *Jack Sheppard*, the pantomime had brought in receipts that "exceeded in amount those of any week in former seasons" (*Theatrical Observer*). It is not surprising that the same publication declared on 22 January 1840: "Never were such prosperous times known as at present at this very popular house."

On 6 May 1840, Frederick Yates gave his customary farewell address to the assembled audience. He explained that the closing of the theatre three weeks earlier than their license allowed resulted from the need to rebuild the front wall of the theatre and the "unexampled beauty of the weather" (*Theatrical Journal*, 9 May, p. 139). In a modest understatement, he thanked his audience for the "very fair proportion of patronage" given during the season and promised to devote the summer to finding new attractions. In fact, he began a provincial tour with his wife, Mary, and Paul Bedford playing in the Adelphi version of *Jack Sheppard*. In Bath, the *Theatrical Journal* reported, they played to "about thirty people in the pit and a truly beggarly account of empty boxes" (23 May 1840).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1840-1841

Ed. Franklin & Mary Case

Under the proprietorship of Frederick H. Yates and Thomas Gladstone, the Adelphi Theatre opened its 1840-41 season on 5 October 1840 and closed on 4 September 1841. Considerable expense went towards improving ventilation and making other alterations to the theatre. For example, William Telbin painted two new act drops.

Historical dramas were popular, but *Robespierre; or, Two Days of the Revolution*, elicited a justification from the author, William Bernard, which was printed on the bills:

To place him (Robespierre) more forcibly before an audience and at the same time to realize some of the most striking features of his career, the Author has selected for the action of his story, two separate days of the Revolution—respectively illustrating its gaiety and its gloom—the First being the Jacobin Festival, on the 10th of August 1793, when Paris was involved in a delirium of enjoyment. With its fraternity and equality, its Boulevards and its Ball-rooms—and the Second that of Robespierre's fall—nearly a twelvemonth afterwards, when the Reign of Terror was at its height, and to use the words of [the French regicide, Jean-Lambert] Tallien, 'had become a game in which men played for their lives'.

The *Theatrical Journal* was impressed. "Mr. Yates, ever true to nature, acts the part of Robespierre to life...Dumond was represented by Mr. Lyon in a very effective manner, the best thing we can remember him to have done. Mrs. Yates is a prize to any manager, her voice is so pathetic...it would move the most hardened villain" (17 October 1840).

Much more controversial was the production of *Laffarge; or, Self-will in Woman* since the heroine had been accused of poisoning her husband. The following letter, addressed to the Lord Chamberlain, appeared in the *Morning Herald*: "If English audiences are to be thus brutalized under the 'express sanction' of the Chamberlain's office—if the popular mind is, in its recreations, to be familiarised with lust and murder—the sooner the House of Commons relieves your lordship of your present theatrical privilege the better."

Frederick Yates indignantly answered the "playgoer," printing his letter to the *Morning Herald* in the playbill. He said in part, "Can anyone discover in this announce [*sic*], an intention on the part of the manager... to 'familiarise the public with lust and murder'?"

The *Theatrical Journal* (31 October 1840) supported Yates' position and praised the production.

Some stupid person thought proper to apply to the Lord Chamberlain to suppress the performance of it. It is now before the public and affords a splendid night's amusement, without injuring the morals of the rising generation; on the contrary, it is a lesson to those who might err through jealousy. The dramatist...has thrown aside all the circumstances connected with the death of her husband and the sequent trial of Madame Laffarge on the accusation of administering poison...The tragic portion tells well, and Mrs. Yates does ample justice to that which is set down for her. The part played by Mr. Yates...is well portrayed; no other actor we know of could give it so complete an effect (p. 383).

The policy of putting on dramatizations of a Dickens' novel was continued with Yates playing Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. The *Theatrical Journal* said: "The scene where Quilp puts his bill of sale in force is admirable, likewise that of the races...All concerned in the piece deserve great credit" (14 November 1840, p. 392).

Yates also brightened up the dreary month of November by getting up a one-act version of *The Beggars' Opera Burlesqued* in which Paul Bedford played Polly Peachum and Mrs. Keeley Macheath. The piece was successful. The *Theatrical Journal* commented, "one unbroken laughter peals through the house, and when the curtain falls, you return home with aching sides" (28 November 1840, p. 408).

The Christmas pantomime was *Harlequin and the Enchanted Fish, or, The Geni of the Brazen Bottle*. The following description is taken from the bill.

Legend—The Sultan's lost son, Prince Floridore, attempting to elope with Amanda, the beautiful ward of an old Magician, he confined them both in his Black Castle; when Floridore's four Servants, [were] plotting their escape, the Magician changed them into Four Fishes, and had them thrown into an obscure pond. Meantime the Geni, Polyphlosboie Thalasses, who, by the arts of the Magician, has been shut up at the bottom of the sea in a copper case, being accidentally extricated by Mustapha, a Fisherman, the pond was pointed out—and the Fish caught, etc. etc.—Old Turkish Tale. Particularly significant about the casting of this piece was the appearance of the great harlequin, "Old Tom" Ellar, who had fallen on evil times. Arrested while acting at the Royal Victoria Saloon in January, he was brought before a magistrate who recognized him. Ellar explained age and distress had so bent him down he was glad to make a penny any way he could. Yates engaged him for the pantomime at four guineas a week and offered him an engagement for the following season. Ellar died in 1842 aged sixty-two.

A new melodrama, *Agnes St. Aubin*, by Julia Pardoe, tapped a familiar domestic vein. The heroine, played by Mrs. Yates, is placed in a series of harrowing situations by the return of her villainous husband, Doligny (played by O. Smith) who was thought to have died in the galleys. He blackmails Agnes, who is suspected of infidelity by her second husband. All turns out for the best when Doligny dies after a last-minute confession. The *Theatrical Journal* praised the piece. It was "beautifully acted." "We are glad to see O. Smith on these boards, he seemed to be at home and amongst old friends and played with the same earnestness of manner of former days" (23 January 1841).

The scene painters came in for particular praise from the *Theatrical Journal*. A reviewer wrote of *Satanas and the Spirit of Beauty*, "it abounds with everything that can please the senses—scenery of the most gorgeous description from terraced gardens to tessellated pavements with sparkling fountains and alabastic statues, two glimpses of the harem, caverns of gloom to fairy homes of dazzling brightness" (20 February 1841, p. 59). The first scene of the piece took twenty-five minutes to set.

After the regular season, Henry Anderson, "The Wizard of the North," took the theatre and was a great success. One of his attractions was his frankness; he assured the audience his tricks were all deceptions made possible by his great practice and experience. One of his most popular sleights of hand was the handkerchief trick. Borrowing seven handkerchiefs, he tied them together and then found them singly in various places. Finally five of them were discovered in a bottle. The other two

appeared genuinely to be lost, but the Wizard, taking the violin from the leader of the band, smashed it into pieces and discovered the missing handkerchiefs.

Anderson gained even more respect by being the first performer to hold a benefit for the company of Astley's Amphitheatre—the building having been destroyed by fire.

Not all went smoothly, however. On 26 June 1841, Anderson attempted the "gun trick" in which he caught a bullet with his teeth. The ball lodged in his mouth, and the gentleman chosen to fire the pistol was obliged to remove the errant bullet. Despite the blood, the Wizard was able to continue his performances.

FC/MC

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1841-1842

Ed. Franklin & Mary Case

No change in ownership or management occurred before the 1841-42 season. Frederick H. Yates and Thomas Gladstone continued as proprietors, and Yates remained as manager.

A new spectacular effect was made possible by the installation of a tank of water—8,000 or 10,000 cubic feet capacity, depending upon which bill one believes—making scenes involving rivers and lakes possible. The first piece to employ the new facility was *Die Hexen Am Rhein; or, Rudolph of Hapsburgh*, which contained a scene where the Udata-Mene-Leephtheian was exhibited. The bills quoted the press liberally:

the whole of the Stage is made to recede, and an apparently boundless expanse of Real Water is exhibited. The effect is admirable. The Real Water, for it is really 'Real' water surpasses the exhibitions in by-gone days at Sadler's Wells, and exceeds even the exhibitions of real water at Old Drury-lane in the days of the late Mr. Bannister. The effect is a triumph of Scenic Illusion, and is worthy of public patronage. The moonlight effect is admirable, and the Scene in which Wilhelm, in his escape from the Castle, plunges into the water, is, as far as scenic effect can go, perfect. The Audience were delighted beyond measure; the drop scene fell amidst the most vociferous applause.

Another play, *The Queen of Cyprus*, dealt with exotic lands and thwarted romance, but naturally included a final scene in which the "real water" played a significant role. The *Theatrical Observer*, while agreeing the piece was largely spectacle, felt the plot had some interesting features.

Catarina (Mrs. Yates) is on the eve of wedding Gerard de Courcy (Lyon) when an edict is issued by the mysterious Council of Ten (the scene being laid in Venice in the Fourteenth Century), prohibiting the nuptials and decreeing Catarina's marriage with the King of Cyprus—her refusal being instant death to her lover. She consents to wed the King but, previous to the celebration, the life of de Courcy is attempted by hired bravoos of the State from whom he is rescued by an unknown cavalier. On the return of the King with his bride from the nuptial ceremony, de Courcy is about to stab his rival when, recognising him as the saviour of his life, he withholds his vengeance and is borne away a prisoner. Four years now elapse, and the Queen of Cyprus is about to become a widow, the King being poisoned by Moncenigo (Maynard), one of the Council of Ten, for not proving a tool in their tyrannous decrees. De Courcy, who has been banished, returns a religious Knight of Malta in time to denounce Moncenigo to the King, whose dying breath consigns him to death and the town of Cyprus to destruction by the Venetian Fleet. The music came in for mixed praise from the same reviewer, who felt its chief characteristic was noise. However, Mrs. Graddon received unqualified praise. She "never appeared to greater advantage. Her rich mellow voice and *naive* yet subdued acting were charming proofs of that excellence which we predicted on her first appearance here" (*Theatrical Observer*, February 1, 1842).

The last scene of the piece involved the rescue of the young prince from drowning. A horse, borrowed from Batty's Circus, which was currently performing "The Eglinton Tournament," plunged into the water to rescue the prince. It was suggested O. Smith had relinquished the role of Moncenigo to Maynard "in consequence of his having evinced symptoms of hydrophobia, i.e. refusing to take the *watery* leap in the last scene of the spectacle." The reviewer assured his readers this was not the case. O. Smith

is a member of the Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the leaping animal in *The Queen of Cyprus* refusing to perform the required feat, very cleverly, a stick was applied to its back. This [act] roused the nervous feelings of the 'member' and a remonstrance with the gentleman who applied the stick ensued (*Theatrical Observer*, 12 February 1842).

A new Dickens novel, *Barnaby Rudge*, provided material for a spate of stage plays. Although the theatre had a history of such adaptations, it was slow off the mark. Dramatizations appeared at the English Opera House and the Strand some months before The Adelphi's version was played. Nicoll names Stirling as the author. The playbill contains a list of "realizations" with scene-by-scene references to pages in the book. The *Theatrical Observer* said, "We cannot resist again bestowing our meed of praise upon O. Smith's artistic assumption of Black Hugh of 'The Maypole', whose dogged brutality and savage bearing he cleverly mingles with his ignorance—which is the only palliative for his wrongdoing" (15 January 1842).

A popular piece, performed late in the season, was *The Breach of Promise of Marriage*, by Julia Pardoe. The *Theatrical Observer* was loud in its praise. "For cleverness of construction, neatness of dialogue, and a happy mixture of mystery and complexity with clearness and precision, [it] has never been equalled at this theatre. It has been adapted...yet the action has been altered—we think, improved" (22 February 1842).

Acis and Galatea was being played at Drury Lane, and Oxberry wrote a burlesque version for the Adelphi which, while it called upon the resources of the entire company, lasted only six performances.

The theatre closed at the end of its regular season, 19 March with a farewell address by Frederick Yates promising "fresh new novelties"—a promise he would not be able to keep.

C. H. Adams gave a series of post-seasonal lectures on astronomy using an orrery to illustrate his points. Attendees did not always greet these talks with awed respect. The *Theatrical Observer* complained, "We cannot avoid animadverting the foolish and disgraceful conduct of certain parties who attend them for the purpose of annoying the lecturer" (24 March 1842).

The post-season ended with a magician, Young, who resembled the famous Wizard of the North. Young, however, had additional entertainments in the form of dancing and a juvenile ballet by the pupils of Frampton.

During the recess, Frederick Yates died. While rehearsing Lord Skindeep in Jerrold's *Bubbles of the Day* in Dublin, he burst a blood vessel. After a long confinement in that city, he returned to England and died on 21 June 1842. He was buried on 26 June in the vaults of the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The *Theatrical Observer* summed his career up as follows:

In tragedy, comedy, farce, and melodrama, he was occasionally capital and always respectable. In burlesque, he was excellent, though perhaps a little too prone to exaggeration. He was a better buck than fop, and a better rake than either; indeed, his performances of the latter character only wanted refinement to render it unexceptional. His extraordinary talent as a manager has been universally acknowledged, and his loss will be severely felt by the playgoers of the metropolis. The command he possessed over the audience has been frequently exemplified—by one word addressed in his peculiar way, he quieted the most uproarious gallery.

Frederick Yates was only forty-five years old when he died.

FC/MC

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1842-1843

Ed. Franklin & Mary Case

The Adelphi Theatre season opened on 29 September 1842, with *The Owl Sisters; or, The Haunted Ruins!* and closed on 9 September 1843, with a performance of the much-attended entertainment, *The Great Wizard of the North*. The regular season ended on 7 April 1843 with a farewell address by Mr. Lyon.

A major change occurred in the operation of the theatre this season. Thomas Gladstane was listed as the sole proprietor, Harry Beverley as the stage manager, and O. Smith as the melodramatic director.

The season opener was a melodrama *The Owl Sisters; or, The Haunted Abbey Ruins!* billed as an "original melodramatic romance" in three acts with "spectacle" and a cast of thirty. From the character names (such as Hubert, Michael, Garland, Gypsy Dallan, The Spectre Earl, Lizzard, Bess of the Woods, and Sylvanella), the scenery descriptions (ranging from the "rustic dwelling of Bess of the Woods" and "the lovers' trysting tree" to "the witch's cottage at nightfall" and "the hostelrie of the Dragon"), and the songs ("A Young Maiden Came to a Bachelor's Well," "The Frightful, Spiteful, Old Bachelor," and "A Nice Little Husband to Love"), we get a good sense of the elements of the genre. The "spectacle" was the "dreadful doom of St. Mark—transformation of the Owl Sisters," which apparently was staged to include a "spectre dance." The music from this play was published separately by Cramer, Addison and Beale, Regent St. and therefore could be purchased and played for private entertainment in drawing rooms and parlors throughout the city.

An early piece, *The Miser's Daughter*, gained the approval of the reviewer for the *Theatrical Observer*.

The author in this drama has raised a beacon to warn the erring and guide the inexperienced, forcibly inculcating the great moral lesson that vice, however prosperous for a time, will sooner or later meet with punishment and disgrace while virtue, whatever its trials and temptations, will ultimately secure a lasting and just reward (25 October 1842).

The author, Edward Stirling, was forced to take the role of the Miser when Lyon became ill. He acquitted himself with credit and subsequently travelled to Liverpool to play the role and superintend a production of the piece there.

The Merchant and His Clerks contained the same stern moral tone, and the *Theatrical Observer* approvingly detailed the plot.

There are two clerks, Bramber (O. Smith) a cold-blooded villain, the other, Mapleton (Lyon) all amiability and honesty and enjoying the implicit confidence of the merchant (Maynard). Mapleton is entrusted with the care of ten thousand pounds by Harford for a few days while he is abroad on business, and the faithful clerk in his over-anxiety, in a state of somnambulism, takes the notes from a strong box and deposits them under the floor, and he forgets entirely the circumstance. Suspicion is immediately firmly fixed upon him, on which he becomes mad, but after a time, on being as an experiment, removed to the house of the merchant, while in his sleep, discloses the mystery. A farce, *Yankee Notes for English Circulation*, set in a boarding house in Saratoga Springs, New York, provided a vehicle for Thomas D. Rice. The cast contained the

usual humorous role descriptions implying a notable lack of sophistication in the New World: Major Dowbiggin of the United States Army; Silas Solomon Sprawl, Jr. "from the Banks of the Licking"; Julius Caesar Washington Hickory Dick, "a nigger help"; Miss Zip Coon, "a mulatto help"; and assorted "colonels, majors, niggers, and Down-Easters." The vocal music consisted entirely of "popular Negro melodies." Another piece also highlighted Rice, who had announced his intention to return to America and become a farmer. He had come to England to buy cattle, "but a tempting offer from the enterprising Adelphi manager induced [him] to reappear in sooty habiliments" (*Theatrical Observer*, 20 December 1842).

The pantomime, *The Children of the Wood; or, Harlequin Nobody*, possessed a "superabundant supply of all the requisite embellishments of beautiful scenery and artistic and mechanical display," according to the *Theatrical Observer*. Unfortunately, Harry Beverley did not please as Clown. "This gentleman is entirely unfit for this character; he has neither agility or humour, two great requisites for such parts" (28 December 1842). George took the role within a week's time.

The summer program commenced on 17 April 1843, with a performance of *The Great Wizard of the North* and continued nearly unabated with that singularly fascinating performance for the entire summer. There were three dark nights on 22 April, 4 and 5 May 1843, due to the death of Frederick Augustus, the Duke of Sussex from *erysipelas*. Otherwise, the Wizard performed his extraordinary feats of magic until 9 September 1843, just before the start of the new season.

FC/MC

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1843-1844

Ed. Franklin & Mary Case

No change occurred in the proprietorship of the theatre this season; Thomas Gladstane continued as the lessee. The stage manager was Edward Stirling, who, as in the previous season, also served as the in-house dramatist. His piece, *The Bohemians*, was by far the most played (seventy-one times).

The *New York Morning Herald* bade "farewell" to English drama in this year. "It is evident that the English drama on both sides of the Atlantic is on its last legs. And it is also very clear that this state of decrepitude has been the result as much, if not more, from the want of machinery to keep it up, as from the change in public taste" (quoted in the *Theatrical Observer*, 3 January 1844).

In England, adaptations of Charles Dickens' novels continued. *A Christmas Carol* was dramatized at four theatres, and Edward Stirling's version proved as popular as his *Barnaby Rudge* of the penultimate season.

A review from the *Times* is indicative of the high acclaim accorded *A Christmas Carol*.

In it, the whole comic strength of the house is engaged, and all play their parts well. The spectral appearance of the defunct partner of the old miser is admirably managed—a better ghost was never put upon the stage. He renders night not only hideous but also ludicrous, and many of the more unsophisticated part of the audience scarcely know whether to be frightened or to shake with laughter. Mr. O. Smith, Mr. Wright, Mr. Forman, Mr. Sanders, and Mrs. F. Matthews played their parts well. The house rewarded their exertions by long, loud, and rapturous applause.

Other papers were equally positive in their reviews. The *Morning Chronicle*, the *Examiner*, *Morning Post*, *Sunday Times*, *Bell's Life in London*, and *Weekly Dispatch* all gave excellent, favorable reviews:

A burlesque version of *Richard III* was performed in February. Shakespeare's version was being occasionally played at Drury Lane, somewhat incongruously yoked with *Harlequin and King Pepin*. Charles Kean was playing the evil Richard. The Adelphi piece was highly ludicrous, and "Wright greatly added to the humour of the burlesque by imitating Charles Kean, and in the last scene where he fights with Richmond, he convulsed the house with laughter" (*Theatrical Observer*, 14 February 1844).

In March, a new melodrama appeared titled *Ulrica; or, The Prisoner of State*, it commanded a large cast, new scenery, and splendid effects. The plot gives some idea of the piece.

Ernest de Frideburg (Lyon) is falsely charged with treason to his king, Frederick II, of Prussia (Braid). His daughter, Ulrica (Mrs. Yates), grows up in ignorance of her true parentage. She learns by chance of her father's imprisonment and goes to seek him, sinking exhausted at the mountain pass near her father's prison. Here she meets Herman, a dumb boy (Wieland) who is to be her father's jailer. He bears a letter of recommendation from de Frideburg's enemy, the Count D'Osborn (Maynard). The dumb boy attempts Ulrica's life for a gold cross she wears. A sudden storm fortuitously precipitates Herman to his ruin over the cliff edge. Ulrica has his letter and becomes her father's jailer in disguise. Count D'Osborn, who has forced Ulrica's true mother to marry him, apprehends the father and daughter attempting to escape. He determines to kill de Frideburg, but the honest Burl (O. Smith) saves him. The King learns what has

occurred and condemns the villainous D'Osborn to death. Phelim O'Tug (Hamilton) makes successful suit to Christine (Miss Chaplin) in a subplot.

This Gothic melodrama failed to please, despite the efforts of the company, and had to be withdrawn after a dozen performances.

29 March was the last night of the regular season and was Wright's benefit, supported by Paul J. Bedford and James P. Wilkinson.

On this night, Wright and Miss Woolgar performed the dance from *Antony and Cleopatra Married and Settled*; it was the "gitanacachucacracoviennebolerotantella." The night's performance culminated with fireworks. As the bill put it, "Mr. W. H. Darby, Artist to the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall, and the Theatres Royal, will, at the termination of the Performance, exhibit a Superb Display of Fire-Works! In representation of the Finale to a General Pyrotechnic Display, as exhibited in the Gardens of Versailles. This Beautiful Tableaux will encompass the entire stage."

The post seasonal entertainment saw the ever-popular Henry Anderson, the Great Wizard of the North, returning to the Adelphi. Malone Raymond—"the clever representative of Hibernian characters" assisted him. Raymond had successfully given his dramatic and musical monopolylogues in Liverpool and other provincial towns.

FC/MC

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1844-1845

Ed. Franklin & Mary Case

Benjamin N. Webster became the lessee for the 1844-1845 Adelphi Theatre season, which opened on 28 September 1844 with performances of *Mother and Son*, *The Belle of the Hotel; or, American Sketches*, *Norma*, and *How to Pay the Rent*. The director for this season was Mme. Céline Céleste; Edward Stirling continued as stage manager.

The opening address for The Season was written by Gilbert A. à Beckett and spoken by Mrs. Frederick H. Yates. The theatre had been entirely redecorated and repainted in the recess by T. Ireland, and the boxes so arranged as to give an unrestricted view of the stage. Careful attention was paid to ventilation, as the smell of gas was irritating and inescapable at all theatres of the day. In addition, "a splendid new chandelier in glass has been introduced at considerable expense, executed by Mr. Phillips, also a new curtain and new act drop designed and painted by Mr. C. Marshall" (*Theatrical Observer*, 24 September 1844).

Two minor pieces received passing note in the *Theatrical Observer*. *Mother and Son* was dismissed—"Little can be said in its favour as a dramatic piece; it, however, received some applause through the excellent acting of O. Smith, Lambert, Mrs. Yates, and Mme. Céleste" (30 September). *The Fox and the Goose* fared better. "It is an adaptation from the French and was exceedingly well played by Hudson, Paul Bedford, Cowell and Mrs. Fitzwilliam. It is interspersed with some pretty music composed by Ambrose Thomas, arranged by Mr. T. German Reed" (3 October 1844).

With great flourish, Benjamin Webster made his first appearance on the Adelphi boards in *Don Caesar de Bazan*. The golden age of Adelphi dramas was about to begin. Under the joint management of Webster and Mme. Céleste, the theatre increased its reputation. A long series of plays by John Baldwin Buckstone added materially to the success of the house. The *Theatrical Observer*, (15 October) recorded the historic moment:

There was a simultaneous burst of applause from all parts of the house which lasted some minutes...his acting throughout the drama was excellent, and his well-known talent found ample scope in the character of Don Caesar. The drama has been dramatised, we believe, by Mr. Bourcicault [*sic*], and he has displayed much judgment in its construction. Mme. Céleste was the Maritina; her performance of the Neapolitan girl was truly natural...she danced the Tarantella of Napoli with Miss Woolgar [whose] style of acting did not suit the part of Lazarillo. It is impossible for her to keep a serious face (15 October 1844).

Nicoll lists the author of *The Belle of the Hotel; or, American Sketches* as unknown, and says it was the same piece acted at Niblo's Garden, New York (August 1842) "written to display the versatility of Fanny Fitzwilliam who was there on a visit." The bill, however, clearly gives John B. Buckstone as the author.

Victorine; or, I'll Sleep on It was revived for this season with "new scenery, dresses, properties, and decorations." However, it played only 12 times.

One of the great successes of the season was *The Mysterious Stranger*, and from the reviews printed on the bill of 29 October 1844, it is clear that the play had a sensational effect on its audiences. The plot was as follows. Count Henry de Beausoleil (Hudson) supposes he has given a bond to Satan for

his wealth. The bond falls due, but His Grand Satanic Majesty grants a respite of twenty-four hours. All the Count's former friends desert him in his time of need, and he believes himself lost. He is ultimately discovered sleeping on a sofa by a young woman who has long loved him (Mme. Céleste). It was she who personated Satan to show the Count the folly of his ways.

The public press was much taken with the piece, and numerous extracts were printed on the bills. The *Times* reported that

A scene in a night-cellar, the resort of thieves, in which the banker takes refuge in order to obtain a forged passport to secure his escape, and where the young lady has previously gained admittance in the disguise of a gamin, was particularly effective. Mme. Céleste, who played 'the Mysterious Stranger,' was admirably 'made-up', in all her disguises, and acted the part with great pointedness, and at the same time with quiet discretion of manner...Selby, as a thoroughly heartless parasite, endowed with a wonderful flow of animal spirits, and Mrs. F. Matthews, who was very funny as a widow...no doubt the piece will prove a thorough 'hit.'

The *Morning Post* agreed. "That this strange but effective drama will prove the greatest hit of the season we do not entertain a doubt. It is the very thing for the Adelphi—full of mystery, strong excitement, and delicious improbability."

The Mysterious Stranger's author is listed on the bill as Charles Selby, but it is noted also that the work was "founded on a comédie vaudeville by MM Clairville et Damarin called *Satan; ou, Le Diable A Paris*."

English authors were adapted with equal vigor. *Mrs. Caudle at Home and Abroad* was "adapted from renowned papers in *Punch* by Douglas Jerrold." A new Dickens work led to yet another Adelphi dramatization of the great novelist. Dickens had made an agreement with Madame Céleste to permit Mark Lemon to adapt it. A new drop-scene painted for the occasion represented the title page of the work. If the novelist had hoped to forestall other dramatizations, he was unsuccessful—five versions were performed including one by the Adelphi favorite Edward Stirling, which played at the Lyceum.

The *Theatrical Observer* said, "We have seldom seen actors take so much pain with their parts...O. Smith's Toby Veck was capital, as were Hudson's Will Fern, Selby's Richard, and Miss Fortescue's Meggy Veck. This young lady's sweet acting gave general satisfaction" (19 December 1844).

The pantomime was *Cat's Castle; or, Harlequin and the King of the Rats*. According to the bill, it was "founded on a categorical and doggerel poem, written by a laureate who invoked the mews in the Middle Ages, called Cat's Castle and how it was besieged and taken by the rats."

The *Theatrical Observer*, 28 December, gave it a stamp of approval. "There are numerous good changes in the piece, and the Clown and Pantaloon's practical jokes create incessant laughter. Harlequin and Columbine dance with much ease and agility, and the scenery, dresses, etc. were appropriate and magnificent. The pantomime was loudly applauded throughout."

The editors selected an arbitrary date, 30 August, as the season's end because there was no summer break.

FC/MC

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1845-1846

Ed. Gayle Harris

The Adelphi bill of 25 September 1845, proclaimed "Glorious Success. Adelphi Success! Palmy Days of Triumph! Really overflowing houses! AND A COMPANY OF TALENT NOT TO BE BEATEN!!"

Such excess seems to have been justified. To celebrate the success of the house, an elegant supper was given for the management and cast. Representing the latter, Paul Bedford presented to manager Ben Webster a silver facsimile of the Warwick Vase as "a token to their regard for his unwearied exertions and perseverance, and to commemorate the unprecedented prolongation of the season" (*Times*, 28 September 1845, p. 6).

Adaptations of French plays were standard fare at other London theatres as well as the Adelphi. A correspondent to the *Theatrical Times* (24 October 1846), assessed this trend:

[Those] unacquainted with the proceedings behind the curtain, must be astonished at the number of translations from the French that are continually palmed upon the public; and must naturally conclude therefrom that there is a dearth of native dramatic talent, whereas the sole cause of this state of affairs is the fact of the indolence or want of enterprise in managers generally. They are unwilling to incur the risk of producing a play which may prove unsuccessful, and therefore they prefer translating one which has received the fiat of approval from an audience (although that audience be a foreign one, and the tastes of the French are in dramatic respects widely different from our own.) Yet, nevertheless, they think that with a little mutilation and a few alterations, it may be rendered palatable for a short time, and thus save them the outlay of much expenditure...Some thousands of plays of all kinds are every season submitted to the managers of our theatres, for their approval. They are taken in, doomed never to see the light again until called for by the authors, to whom they are returned unread (p. 165).

Although adaptations from the French abounded, the season did produce multiple variations on one work of English origin, and the Adelphi, on 31 December 1845, produced the second of what was to become a plague of crickets, based upon Dickens' *The Cricket On The Hearth*. In all, seventeen versions were presented at various London theatres during the holiday season.

Charles Dickens apparently wrote the story in ready form for pirates to plagiarize, dividing the story into three "chirps," or acts (although the Adelphi production was given in only two chirps), and providing dialogue that could be simply lifted in sequence—possibly to preserve the integrity of the original version.

The previous year, the Adelphi had produced Dickens' authorized version of *The Chimes*, but, for *Cricket*, Dickens instead gave sanction and advance proof sheets to the Keeleys for use at the Lyceum but was powerless to prohibit the multitude of productions at other houses. From the simultaneous publication of the story and first authorized dramatic production at the Lyceum on 20 December 1845, it took Edward Stirling only eleven days to produce a version, and subsequent adaptations rapidly appeared at the Victoria, City of London, Albert Saloon, Marylebone, Queen's, Pavilion, Garrick, Effingham Saloon, Standard, Haymarket, Bower Saloon, Olympic, Grecian, and Apollo Saloon. It may be fairly asserted that Dickens reaped no reward for his assistance to the adapters of these various productions.

The *Sunday Times* of 17 January 1847 (p. 3), under the heading "The Stage as It Is" presented a critical analysis of the theatre in general and the causes of its "decline": (1) exorbitant rents charged by proprietors to lessees, leading the latter to adopt dubious schemes approaching extortion to meet the rents (2) rehearsals which were too few and too careless, actors seldom if ever studying parts at home (3) scenery which is seldom built and in place before the first performance (4) the custom of admitting the "dame du pavé" frequently by free admission on the theory that they are an "attraction" (5) callous treatment of actors by, for example, having them line up for the "opening of the treasury," and posting substitutions openly in the Green-room—putting the actor who has been substituted into the mortifying position of having everyone know that he has taken a part refused by someone else.

There was, finally, an event in the personal life of the manageress, Madame Céline Céleste, which bears recording. The *New York Herald* of 7 June 1846 reported that the daughter of Mme. Céleste, by her marriage to a Mr. Elliott, had eloped. The girl, as a child, had been left in Baltimore under the care of a Mr. Johnson. In the meantime, the young son of the guardian had grown and reached maturity with the girl, and "without asking the consent of either 'ma or 'pa, they proceeded on a visit to the parson, and became indissolubly united for the remainder of their lives." As both enjoyed considerable financial security, their future seemed assured (*New York Herald*, 7 June 1846).

GH

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1846-1847

Ed. Gayle Harris

Old favorites, burlesques, and adaptations of properties from French originals continued to reap rewards for the Adelphi. As succinctly put by the *Illustrated London News* (24 Apr 47, p. 265), "The author is happy who writes for the Adelphi; explosions of laughter, from its merry audience, reward not only all the speeches intended to be jokes, but all that are not."

Of the adaptations from French sources, *The Phantom Dancers* was perhaps the most successful, with 102 performances to its credit. Taken from the ballet, *Giselle*, the musical directors borrowed directly from Adolphe C. Adam's score, but, eclectically, also included some Ethiopian airs as well as a parody of "Buffalo Gals, Can't-ye-come Out Tonight." The *Sunday Times* pronounced *The Phantom Dancers* "another great success...at this fortunate little theatre" (8 Nov 1846, p. 2).

The illnesses of Wright and Bedford in January of 1847 apparently caused the Adelphi management no little concern and no small effort to replace them. Bedford's illness was apparently the more serious, being reported by the *Theatrical Times* as "a ruptured blood vessel" (30 Jan 1847, p. 32). The *Theatrical Journal* commented on a rumor that Bedford had died, "We are glad to say since his decease he has resumed his theatrical avocation this week at the Adelphi" (13 Feb 1847, p. 56). His Royal Highness Count Montemolin [claimant to the Spanish throne] attended Bedford's first performance on 11 February, in *The Green Bushes*.

Falling victim to its own success, the Adelphi had outgrown its house. In December of 1846, it was reported that Manager Webster had purchased the western side of Bull-inn Court for six thousand pounds. The press announced the theatre was to be razed and a new house built on a much larger scale, using several adjoining properties. Moreover, demolition was to begin after Easter of 1847, and the Adelphi Company was to remove to the Olympic, should George Bolton not resume his lease there. (Bolton, in fact, filed for bankruptcy in July of 1847.)

By March of 1847, immediate renovations may still have seemed a likelihood, since the managers were relying on the aging standard, *Green Bushes*. The *Theatrical Journal* commented that even though *Green Bushes* was reaching its 200th night, "the management still persist in cramming it down the throats of the people." The same source then went on to offer a perhaps telling description of the theatre's fortunes: "Business has been very slack, nor can it be wondered when the entertainments are so poor and scanty, while all around are brilliant with attractions and novelties. Buckstone's new drama is sadly wanted; till then the management must be content to play to empty benches" (6 Mar 1847, p. 75).

Buckstone's *Flowers of the Forest*, which opened on March 11, did apparently reverse the public trend back to the Adelphi's benches and played 79 performances during the remainder of the season. *Title Deeds*, which opened in June, was attractive as well. By the end of July, it was still drawing well, causing the management to postpone the scheduled opening of *How To Settle Accounts with Your Landress*.

In July, arrangements transferring the Lyceum Theatre to Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris were being concluded, and a new company was being formed by them. In this new group were to be Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Miss Kathleen Fitzwilliam, and Mr. Charles Selby from the Adelphi. The *Sunday Times* reported it to be understood that the new Lyceum management would confine itself to petite comedy, vaudeville, light farces, and burlesques (11 July, p. 2).

GH

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1847-1848

Ed. Gayle Harris

The attractions of the Adelphi continued to please the public for yet another season. In January, the *Theatrical Times* reported that the Adelphi had accomplished the feat of having been open for one thousand consecutive nights, "a circumstance without parallel in the history of the West-end theatre" (22 Jan 1848, p. 32).

The season was notable for the apparent absence of new attractions based upon or taken directly from French sources. What the motives of the Adelphi management were in taking this reverse tack are unrecorded; events later in the season suggest that filling the bills with works by British authors was not happenstance.

Moreover, although new pieces were frequently offered, they were withdrawn quickly if they failed to please. Five well-established productions were presented frequently: *This House to be Sold*, a musical extravaganza by Joseph S. Coyne, with 87 performances, *Harvest Home*, by Thomas Parry with 83 performances, *How to Settle Accounts with Your Landress*, a farce by Coyne, with 75 productions, *Our National Defences*, another Coyne farce, and *Pearl of the Ocean*, a burlesque by Charles Selby.

Plans for enlarging or rebuilding the Adelphi were delayed, and it was not until the end of the summer season that the Adelphi Company moved to the Haymarket.

While the Adelphi carried through one more season with apparently wild success, its front-of-the-house personnel were not universally admired. Over only the pseudonym "A Voice from the Side-Wing," the *Theatrical Times* of 2 October 1847 (pp. 309-310) carried a scathing description of what Adelphi patrons endured. The box-keepers were noted for their "incivility and excessive disobliging propensities," and the "proceedings in the upper box lobby, the saloon, and the slips, were such as would have disgraced a three penny Casino." Noting that Adelphi box-keepers historically bore a reputation for discourtesy, the writer noted that of late they had developed a scheme of charging an undercover fee for late seating in the back boxes. "Now, obtaining a gratuity for every seat once during the night ought to be sufficient, one would imagine, to satisfy the most rapacious and cormorantly inclined box-keeper; but not so with the Adelphi sharks." At the end of the second piece of the evening, when many left the theatre, late comers would be admitted to the brief remainder of the program, but only upon payment of the full fee, plus gratuity for the box-keeper.

The writer then went on to list other "extortions." Patrons arriving too late to get an immediate seat were cajoled into paying a fee to obtain the first seat available. Once the fee was safely in the box-keeper's possession, the unlucky patron was forgotten. In addition, finally, Adelphi theatre-goers were expected to pay sixpence for the bill of the evening. While admitting that Manager Webster generally deserved the praise he enjoyed as a result of his management of the Haymarket, he was urged to attend to matters at the Adelphi: "The greater the education, respectability, and standing in society of the individual who holds the office of director, the greater the blame that attaches to him for countenancing the continuance of such abuses in the theatre."

The London theatre audience was used to seeing French adaptations, translations, but that did not sit well with some. An unsigned article entitled "Foreign Dramatic Invasion" appeared in the *Sunday Times* of June 4, 1848, and boldly attacked Queen Victoria and the aristocracy, which followed her example for patronizing visiting French companies as well as her representative, the Lord Chamberlain, for licensing French productions. Reaction was swift. On Monday, 12 June 1848, an

agitated crowd assembled at Drury Lane for the Théâtre Historique production of "The Count of Monte Cristo." As the *Sunday Times* reported:

The opponents were tolerably peaceable during the performance of "God Save the Queen" by the orchestra; but the raising of the curtain was the signal for unloosing the pent-up indignation of the anti-foreign party, who hooted, hissed, whistled, and groaned in the most discordant chorus, amidst which the cheers and plaudits of the French supporters were vigorously sustained (18 June 1848, p. 3).

Another, although somewhat milder, demonstration occurred on Wednesday evening, 14 June; and by announcement in the newspapers of Sunday, 18 June, the Théâtre Historique declared its final performances would take place on the following Monday and Wednesday. Upon this announcement, British partisans proclaimed total victory in routing the foreign invaders. It was rumored that Mathews and Manager Webster themselves paid the rioters, and posted bail for those who were arrested.

This season was the first to include a regularly scheduled series of matinee performances. Professor Hermann's magic show began on 14 February and continued until March 3, 1848.

GH

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1848-1849

Ed. Gayle Harris

The season opened in the newly renovated theatre. The improvements were practical as well as aesthetic. Dress-circle seats were presented with backs, slate stairs—replacing a hazardous ladder—connected the private boxes to the lobby, ventilation was improved, and two projecting walls were removed from the stage to facilitate management of scenery.

As usual, the *Theatrical Times* praised the decorations:

The decorations are very elegant and tasteful, and reflect great credit on Mr. Sang, who executed them from designs by Digby Wyatt...it is an imitation of the royal French theatres in use during the reigns of Louis XIV and his successor. There is also a very beautiful curtain, representing a promenade in the gardens of the royal residence. The general colour of the house is buff, with occasional blue and green tints; the lining and fittings of the boxes are of rich crimson. The dome represents the blue sky, intercepted by a light trellised frame, interwoven with flowers, and divided into compartments; the panels of the boxes are made to correspond with the dome, the whole forming a scene of great beauty and elegance...In a word, the entire proceedings deserve the greatest praise.

Manager Webster continued to provide the fare to which Adelphi audiences were accustomed. The season's long running pieces were a burlesque, *The Enchanted Isle*, with 93 performances, *Slasher and Crasher*, a farce with 82 performances, and another burlesque, *Devil's Violin*, which was presented 65 times.

Throughout most of The Season, when new productions were mounted, they were by English authors, or, at the very worst, plagiarized from Shakespeare. Memory of the anti-French revolt of the previous season, however, may have waned, for in May of 1849, the very successful *Devil's Violin*—a burlesque of a French ballet—was introduced, and was soon followed in July by *Webster's Royal Red Book*, a translation of a French piece, which had been presented the previous year at the St. James's Theatre.

On 3 February 1849, an article in *The Theatrical Times* provided evidence that all was yet not well with London theatres in general, and with Webster's theatres in particular. Nominating Webster as the most eminent manager in London, the anonymous author offered the challenge,

"Let us ask him, in the first place, when he has ever striven to cleanse the Augean impurities of the theatre; or whether he has not always tolerated them for the sake of filthy lucre. To encourage, or even to permit, the resort of prostitutes to a theatre, with a view to ply their polluted trade, what is it but to make the theatre a kind of brothel?"

Further, there was still the problem of extortionate practices in seating arrangements. A ticket at the box office was only the first step; one then was expected to bribe the "surly janitors" who held the keys to the boxes. Finally, Webster's preference for the spurious over the legitimate drama was seen as a clear effort to line his pockets: "[He] has done more to comply with the vicious taste of an unsound portion of the public, in defiance of the rational and moral claims of the better part of the community, than any manager living." The writer concluded with a plea that Webster pursue a "right course," and with a threat that "if otherwise, we shall lament the defection of one who might prove such an able assistant in the cause of the legitimate drama."

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1849-1850

Ed. Gayle Harris

During the recess, the Adelphi had been renovated, the entrance decorated with panels of pink and green with bouquets in the corners. The chandelier was enlarged by the addition of extra gas jets, and the private boxes were hung with damask. More important, two new exits, via stone staircases, led from the pit and box lobbies to Bull-inn-court at the Strand (next door to the Nell Gwynne tavern). By those exits, the public could leave the theatre in half the time they formerly did (see the *Times* 23 October 1849).

Mme. Céleste returned from Paris and the strength of the company from the Haymarket. Many of the stalwarts had served for years at the Adelphi, suggesting it was a congenial house and skillfully managed by Ben Webster and Mme. Céleste, as actors' egos are notoriously fragile. (The squabbling of Boucicault and Webster was still some years off.) Except for one season, Richard "O" Smith had been with the company since 1829; William Cullenford had played twelve seasons since 1836, and Mme. Céleste herself was in her eighth year.

Twenty-nine pieces were performed and, for once, there was no adaptation from Dickens. Farces and similar light pieces dominated, and there were the usual borrowings from the French, despite the disturbances in June 1848 at Drury Lane allegedly raised in opposition to French plays. About a quarter of the season's pieces were of French pedigree.

The opening night main piece was *Marie Ducange*, written in 1841 by William B. Bernard with little to commend it other than new and beautiful scenery. It lasted only 12 nights before it was replaced with *The Mysterious Stranger* cobbled from the French by Charles Selby in 1844. It too failed to please.

Of more significance in the long run was the commencement of a partnership between Ben Webster and Dion Boucicault and the melodrama that continued, on and off, until just before Webster's death in 1882. The two men had appeared on the same bill in 1839 at Bristol. A few years later Boucicault joined Webster at the Haymarket as playwright. *The Willow Copse* was the first of Boucicault's Adelphi melodramas to be a hit, playing for ninety-one of the 263 nights.

The *Theatre Journal*, after showing its erudition by cautioning its readers that the serious part of the play was adapted from Frederic Soulie's *La Closerie des Genets* (1846), praises the comedy part as "wholly original and the language much superior to the inflated commonplace dialogue that we too commonly find wedded to melodramatic subjects at the minor theatres" (6 December 1849).

The *Times*, after admitting that the plot of crime and retribution was complicated, bravely summarized it at length. The reviewer singled out Miss Woolgar for playing out of her usual line of business:

She introduces a country accent remarkable for its freshness and its differences from the stage traditions of dialect. The awkward deportment, the clumsy gait, the vacant manner of answering, are perfect in their way, and show not only a decided talent in apprehending character, but a laudable fearlessness in carrying out a true conception (27 November 1849).

Originality was not confined to actors. Joseph Sterling Coyne's farce, *Mrs. Bunbury's Spoons* was adapted from the famous ballet, *Pas de Patineurs*. The grand skating scene now took place at a fancy dress ball held on the frozen lake of the Surrey Zoological Gardens where the "dances,

executed with skates running on little wheels, are exceedingly well managed" (*Times*, 16 October 1849).

Apart from *Mrs. Bunbury's Spoons*, pieces from the French generally did not please, though a burlesque, *Esmeralda*, and a farce, *Playing First Fiddle*, each ran over a hundred nights.

More than half the plays produced were revivals and one, *The Wept of the Wish-ton-Wish*, was essentially a vehicle for Mme. Céleste, who spoke little English when she left France. "Her acting," noted the *Theatrical Journal*, "in this, the first and most popular of her pantomimic parts, is the perfection of mute eloquence" (27 June 1850).

The pantomime ran a respectable 54 nights. It was a burlesque of Mary Shelley's novel entitled *Frankenstein; or, The Model Man*. The *Times* summarized the plot so the reader could note the many liberties taken by Robert and William Brough, its authors. Both the *Times* and the *Theatrical Journal* give a favorable mention of Miss Harriet Coveney's debut. The latter comments "Agatha is played by a recent debutante here, Miss Coveney, who acted her part with considerable success" (3 January 1850).

Only one other piece attracted notice in the press, a comic drama *White Sergeants; or, The Buttermilk Volunteers*. Its thin plot was rendered less obvious by dazzling military uniforms, especially Mme. Céleste's. Four tradesmen, delighted to spend three bachelor weeks at a yeomanry meeting, are secretly followed by their wives. Hussars, coming to review the yeomanry, make advances to the wives who rebuff them and contrive it so the Hussars' wives are approached by the yeomen. The *Times* reviewer felt "The characters are not much developed as individuals, but are opposed to each other in masses, and an agreeable feeling of symmetry is produced by all the couples moving in a parallel direction" (May 7, 1850).

The reviewer also commented, "The representation of drunkenness by Mr. Munyard is remarkable for its strong nature and is one more proof of the original talent of this rising actor" (*ibid*).

It was a season affected by non-theatrical events. On November 15, the theatre was dark for a public day of thanksgiving for the abatement of the cholera epidemic. Adolphus Frederick, seventh son of George III, and Adelaide, Queen of William IV, both died during the 1849-1850 season, and the Adelphi was closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain.

The season ended on 3 August 1850, and the company adjourned to the Haymarket. The first season of the second half of the century would see the company deprived of the services of Cullenford, Henry Hughes, Mrs. Frank Matthews and Miss H. Coveney (who would return twenty-five years later). As for James Munyard, praised for his originality and called a rising actor by the *Times*, he would not return. He died in 1850 at the age of thirty-five.

GBC

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1850-1851

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

During the 1850-51 season, the London *Times* declared the Adelphi Theatre "the most popular theatre of the metropolis" with the "best company in London" for its purpose (July 17, 1851). The season boasted performances by Edward Wright, Paul J. Bedford, Sarah Woolgar, O. Smith, George Honey and H. Hughes. Samuel A. Emery, son of the actor John Emery, and grandson of the country actor Mackle Emery, also joined the company. Samuel Emery seldom stayed long at any one theatre, perhaps because he had a violent temper. He appeared in 1851 and again in the mid-1870s at the Adelphi. His line was, like his father's, old men and rustics. Managers Benjamin Webster and Céline Céleste led the company in nineteen comedies, nine dramas, two burlesques and one burletta.

The *Times* praised Webster and Céleste's management skills:

In badly managed theatres, when the company is weak it is common enough to see the same persons fill every conceivable part. However, the Adelphi is no theatre of this kind...[O]ne great talent in the managers consists in the power of discerning and applying the peculiar capabilities of each individual artist. It is the last theatre in the world where an actor would be made to shuffle through what another could do infinitely better, just for the sake of saving an engagement. Strong casting is the very principle of Adelphi management.

The wide-ranging talents of the Adelphi Company provided the theatre with a successful 301-performance season.

The season's most successful production, Mark Lemon's farce, *School for Tigers; or, The Shilling Hop*, opened on October 28, 1850, and was repeated seventy-nine times. The *Times* critic described the production as "an unequivocal success" and singled out Sarah Woolgar for particular praise (October 29, 1850). He described her Tom Crop as "absolutely refreshing," writing "her performance has none of the trickiness in which actresses sometimes indulge when attired in male habiliments." Sarah Woolgar's talents were celebrated frequently throughout the season as she appeared in both comic and melodramatic roles. After her benefit on July 16, the *Theatrical Journal* wrote that her "deserved popularity is exceeded by few artistes on the modern stage" (July 17, 1851), while the *Times* noted that her performances in *The Road to Ruin*, *The School for Tigers*, and *Good Night! Signor Pantalon* displayed the actress' versatility. This critic proclaimed, "she is one of the most popular actresses in the most popular theatre in the metropolis" (July 17, 1851).

Also popular during the 1850-51 season were Edward Wright and Paul Bedford, two longstanding members of the company. Bedford appeared in nineteen productions, receiving special notice from the *Theatrical Journal* in *Jessie Gray* where he "shewed he could please an audience, independent of acting with Wright" (November 21, 1850). Wright played in fifteen shows, including the popular *School for Tigers*, during which he gave "an admirable representation of vulgar pomp" (*Times*, October 29, 1850).

George Honey and H. Hughes attracted the special attention of critics and audiences. Of Honey's performance in *Jessie Gray*, the *Times* critic wrote that he "delivered his words with a quaintness that quite took the audience by surprise. Such a success as he achieved last night is enough to make an epoch in an actor's career" (November 21, 1850). Hughes was cited as a "melodramatist of great intelligence" in the same production (*Times*) and was said to have "acted with remarkable power and

judgment" in Thomas Parry's *The Disowned*, which was otherwise panned by the critics (*Theatrical Journal*, April 3, 1851).

Despite an illness which kept him from the stage for part of the season, Benjamin Webster contributed significantly to the season's success through his management, performances, and playwriting. His play, *Belphegor the Mountebank; or, The Pride of Birth*, an adaptation of the popular French drama, *Paillasse*, received praise for its excellent *mise en scene* and "singularly beautiful" costumes (*Theatrical Journal*, January 23, 1851) and ran for fifty-eight nights. Webster's performance as Belphegor was singled out by a critic quoted on the playbill who exclaimed, "Too much praise can scarcely be awarded to Mr. Webster for the intense pathos he throws into the situations" (NN bill, January 13, 1851). Webster scored a similar dramaturgical success at the end of the season with his adaptation of *The Man in the Iron Mask*, called *The Queen's Secret*. The *Times* critic pointed out that the script's defects (a result of having been adapted from an opera libretto) were "more than counterbalanced by the striking situation when Roland is captured after the interview with his mother and the very great ingenuity of the denouement" (September 9, 1851). Webster's acting was also cited by the *Theatrical Journal* as "highly successful" (September 10, 1851).

Webster's co-manager, Céline Céleste, continued to be a favorite with the press and the public. She appeared in twelve productions during the season, including revivals of Buckstone's *Green Bushes* and *Flowers of the Forest* and Boucicault's *Willow Copse*. Her performance of the title role in *Jessie Gray* and her interpretation of the breeches role, Roland, in *The Queen's Secret* attracted the special attention of critics. In the former (by Robert Brough and John Bridgeman) Céleste's performance was "remarkable for the purity of its style and pathos," according to the *Theatrical Journal* (November 21, 1850). Of the latter, the same publication noted that the role Webster had written for her was "admirably calculated to shew off her great versatility of talent" (September 10, 1851). Céleste also directed the Christmas production, *La Tarantula; or, The Spider King*, receiving praise from the press for the play's extravagant scenery and beautiful effects. Upon her departure for America at the end of The Season, the *Times* commented upon the effectiveness of her management, saying, "as a manager, she has displayed the rare merit of conducting an establishment for eight years without any recourse to the 'star system'" (September 9).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1851-1852

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

Although the Adelphi remained under the management of Benjamin Webster during the 1851-52 season, its repertory lacked the originality and appeal of preceding seasons. Revivals of old favorites dominated the bills and while the company retained the services of Sarah Woolgar, Edward Wright, and H. Hughes, the absence of Webster and his co-manager Céline Céleste from the boards affected the types of offerings the company could provide.

The most popular play of the 1851-52 season, entitled *Forest Rose and the Yankee Plough Boy*, featured the talents of American actor Josh Silsbee whose "Yankee" impersonation ran for ninety-three performances. The *Times* declared Silsbee "probably the best actor of his class ever seen by a London public," writing of his large humor, broad dialect, and his "overwhelming stock of... 'Jonathanisms'" (September 24, 1851). While praising the actor, the *Times* critic hinted at the lack of originality that would characterize the 1851-52 season: "A roar greeted his entrance, and a roar accompanied him throughout his performance. This is of itself an evidence of rare merit, for Yankee peculiarities have almost been done to death."

Critical dissatisfaction with the season became more obvious in the *Times* review of John Morton's farce, *Who Stole the Pocketbook; or, A Dinner for Six* in early April. The commentator wrote that the production "enlivened the somewhat sluggish course of the performances at this house, which for some time past has been subsisting upon a series of revivals" (April 3, 1852). The play, which like many seen in London that season was based upon a foreign source, featured the talents of Edward Wright, whom the *Times* described as "the life of the farce" and a "genius comedian."

Other new scripts produced during 1851-52 included John Oxenford's *A Leghorn Bonnet* (which ran for only 11 performances), Webster and Coape's *Queen of the Market* (which was adapted from a French play), and Mark Lemon's *Sea and Land* (which had thirty-five performances). The *Times* critic labeled the third "of that peculiar kind of drama which is known to Londoners as the 'Adelphi piece,'" explaining that in order to qualify for that distinction a play must employ all the actors well and have a large variety and quantity of incidents, which constantly preserve interest (May 18, 1852). This production featured one of the Adelphi's most highly acclaimed and respected actresses, Mary Ann Keeley, who returned to the house at mid-season. The *Theatrical Journal* wrote, "the acting of Mrs. Keeley alone will make it have a run" (May 19, 1852).

A collaboration between the talents of playwright Robert Brough and actress Sarah Woolgar produced the most popular new play of the season called *Mephistopheles; or, An Ambassador from Below!* Opening on April 14, 1852, and running for seventy-five nights, this extravaganza offered the versatile performer four different roles. The *Times* declared that the actress "depicts to a nicety all the variations of character which the piece requires" and "avoids exaggeration" (April 15, 1852). The critic continued his praise saying, "The set scene in which the action takes place is exceedingly pretty , , , [A]nd the impression left by the whole performance is that of completeness in every part."

Current events provided the material for another premiere of the season, *Bloomerism; or, The Follies of the Day*. Opening on October 2, 1851, this farce by Charles Millward and J. H. Nightingale satirized the then-current "Bloomer costume," which had drawn ridicule to its feminist exponents from the popular press. The plot involved "the retaliation of a party of spirited ladies on the eccentricities of their husbands. The gentlemen, having respectively become adherents of vegetarian, hydropathic, phonetic, pacific, and protectionist doctrines, the ladies become 'bloomerites' and frighten them with the new costume" (*Times*, October 3, 1851). Apparently, the play's satire fell short because Sarah

Woolgar, who played the leader of the Bloomerites, wore "the attire in such graceful fashion that she rather [tended] to inculcate than to satirize its use." The farce ran for seventy-one performances. It was rivaled in its popularity only by the Christmas extravaganza, *Little Red Riding Hood*, which ran for seventy-three nights.

Among the revivals produced at the Adelphi during the 1851-52 season were John Buckstone's *The Wreck Ashore* and *The Irish Lion*; the hit of the previous season, Charles Somerset's *Good Night! Signor Pantalon*; William Bernard's *Yankee Pedlar*, and Mark Lemon's *School for Tigers*, another popular script that had premiered the season before. Of the revivals, only John Poole's *Paul Pry* received extensive comment from the press, primarily because it featured the return to the company of Edward Wright and Sarah Woolgar after bouts with illness. On the morning after the December 1 opening, the *Times* wrote, "The return of Mr. Wright after his long absence from the boards of this theatre...is a veritable triumph. His indisposition had created a formidable gap in the company." Then on February 24, 1852, part way through the run, the *Times* commented on the return of Sarah Woolgar in a similar manner: "Miss Woolgar, whose absence from this house has caused a serious gap in the company for some weeks past, reappeared last night as Phoebe...and received a hearty welcome." The *Theatrical Journal* focused upon the accomplishments of these two favorite performers in its notices writing, "Mr. Wright never acted with greater humour or looked better" on Dec. 3, 1851, and commenting that Sarah Woolgar "played with her usual correct perception of character and vivacity" (March 3, 1852).

The season ended on August 7, 1852, after 269 performances of twenty-six plays. On Monday, August 9, the company moved to the Haymarket, where it was to open with a revival of Buckstone's *Jack Sheppard* after Mary Ann Keeley recovered from an ankle injury (*Theatrical Journal*, August 4, 1852).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1852-1853

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

October 4, 1852, marked the beginning of the season as Céline Céleste returned to the Adelphi from a year-long tour of America. Under her supervision, the season featured prominently the works of playwright Mark Lemon. The London *Times* hailed Mme. Céleste's return to theatre's management, writing,

For eight years, she has directed to Adelphi Company with scarcely fluctuating success, and...with a regular permanent company. It is now about thirty years that the Adelphi has been the so-called "pet" establishment of London, but this endearing title was often maintained in the old days by such theatrical casualties as Arabs, giants, dwarfs, elephants, and so forth. On the other hand, during the existence of what the Chinese might call the "Celestial Empire," the attractive powers of the Adelphi have been kept alive by the efficiency of a real body of actors in pieces well suited to their talents (October 5, 1852).

At the end of the season, Céleste's company had produced three hundred fifteen performances of thirty-two plays.

Mark Lemon's contributions to the season's success were substantial. His farce, *The Camp at Chobham*, received little comment from the critics but ran for an impressive eighty-seven performances. The only reference to the play in the press appeared near the end of a longer review of *Sardanapalus* (another Lemon effort) in which the critic noted, "we suspect the audience were not sorry to pass from the Assyrian pleasantries to Mr. Mark Lemon's excellent little farce of *The Camp at Chobham*, in which the author displays real humour and the actors have an opportunity for real acting" (*Times*, July 21, 1853). The "Assyrian pleasantries" was, in fact, another of Lemon's hits that season. This play burlesqued the poem by Lord Byron, which had been dramatized and was running concurrently at the Princess Theatre. Visual effects seem to have provided its primary appeal, as the Adelphi staff attempted to imitate the Princess' scenic effects. The critic for the *Athenæum* described the production as "one of the most gorgeous spectacles of this spectacular age" (July 23, 1853) and while the *Times* critic agreed that "considered as a gorgeous theatrical spectacle, the whole work is entitled to high praise," he insisted that "considered as burlesque, the piece is a decided mistake" (July 21, 1853). This critic argued, "the good actors who are employed in the principal characters have little of importance to do" and that "scarcely any humour is displayed in the imitations." He concluded by saying, "One circumstance, indeed, renders the burlesque like the original. The original depends for its success mainly on its decorations; the burlesque depends on its decorations alone." Nevertheless, the Adelphi audiences flocked to see the play and kept it running for seventy performances.

Another major triumph for Lemon during the Adelphi's 1852-53 season was his collaboration with Tom Taylor on a dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Called *Slave Life; or, Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the play was declared by the *Theatrical Journal's* critic to be "the most clever version of the novel we have yet seen" (December 8, 1852). According to the *Times*, Lemon and Taylor took considerable liberties with Stowe's novel, arranging its incidents and combining characters to render the story more stage-worthy. The *Times* reported

Lemon and Taylor...have so far departed from general usage, that they have deemed it expedient to compose a drama, with something like completeness in itself, and not to raise a mere heap of scenic crudities.... They have evidently gone about their task with

a firm conviction that a remodeling was necessary, and they have shown great ingenuity in diminishing the number of distracting objects, by rolling a couple into one whenever occasion served (November 30, 1852).

The *Theatrical Journal* concurred that "Lemon and Taylor...have endeavoured...to construct a complete drama out of materials by no means the best that could be desired for dramatic purposes" and credited the theatre's manager with the production's success, writing "great credit is due to Mme. Céleste, who, during her recent tour through the United States, visited the localities in which the action of the drama is supposed to take place" (December 8, 1852). The production featured Richard John ("O.") Smith as Uncle Tom, Samuel Emery as Simon Legree, Sarah Woolgar as Eliza, Mary Ann Keeley as Topsey, and Alfred Wigan as George Harris and ran for eighty-three nights.

Webster at Home, another Lemon script that appeared briefly on the Adelphi boards, featured Mme. Céleste's co-manager, Benjamin Webster and several actors whom he had recruited for their company. The farce was described by the *Theatrical Journal* as "a most appropriate sketch...[which] admirably answers the purpose for which it was intended—to introduce his company to the audience" (March 30, 1853). In the play, art imitates life as Webster, Céleste, and all the members of the company play themselves, gathered in the Adelphi Green Room. According to the *Athenæum*, "Mme. Céleste proposes to abdicate the managerial throne in favour of Mr. Webster—who, however, insists on her retaining the sceptre" (April 2, 1853).

In addition to Lemon's contributions, the Adelphi season featured a ballet entitled *The Dancing Scotchman*, revivals of John Buckstone's *Green Bushes* and *Jack Sheppard*, and a popular Christmas pantomime called *Nell Gwynne; or, Harlequin Merrie Monarch* by Nelson Lee. The young Dion Boucicault premiered his *Genevieve; or The Reign of Terror* on June 20, 1853. Although the script had flaws which were outlined by the *Times* critic, it featured "a great deal of good acting" (*Times*, June 21, 1853). The *Times* labeled *Genevieve* "not exactly of the true Adelphi kind...[but] much more like that kind than anything that has been brought out at the theatre for a long time."

Finally, the 1852-53 season featured a unique experiment by the Adelphi managers and their company. For the first time in the theatre's history, the company presented a Shakespearean play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Although the production did not receive overwhelming popular support (it ran for only thirteen nights), critical reaction was favorable. The *Times* described it as "one of the most creditable productions of the day" and declared, "the bold experiment has proved successful" (May 19, 1853).

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1853-1854

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

Adaptations of French drama dominated the Adelphi boards during the 1853-54 season under the management of Benjamin Webster. At least five of the season's twenty-five productions derived from plays recently presented on the Paris stage. And while critics occasionally denounced this reliance on foreign sources, the reviewer for the *Athenæum* proclaimed, "This theatre, by the production of such carefully written pieces, is gaining a higher position than belonged to it no long time ago, and is already entitled to rank as a legitimate dramatic house" (March 25, 1854).

Benjamin Webster's *The Thirst for Gold; or, The Lost Ship and The Wild Flower of Mexico* topped the list of successful adaptations. Based upon *La Prière des Naufrages* by Adolphe d'Ennery and Ferdinand Dugué, the play was, according to the *Times*, "perfect [in its] fitness to the London Adelphi company" (December 16, 1853). The complicated plot involved the passage to the New World of several Europeans seeking their fortunes in gold, providing numerous melodramatic incidents and characters for the Adelphi Company to enact. The *Times* reported that "the division into five *tableaux*, the incidents drawn to the minutest detail, the circumstances of the play, the very arrangements of the scenes, are accurately imitated from the Ambigu-Comique, so that the north side of the Strand completely becomes, for the nonce, the Boulevard du Temple." The *Athenæum*'s reviewer, writing on December 12, found the production less than satisfying, however, noting that the "dialogue shows...marks of managerial hurry" and that the "translation...[is] bald in the extreme." However, he commented wearily, "the Adelphi audience is proverbially indifferent" to such weaknesses and predicted that the show would be a success. Indeed, Adelphi audiences agreed with the *Theatrical Journal*'s reporter who wrote that *The Thirst for Gold* "surpasses every other attraction that has gone before it" (December 14, 1853) and supported its presentation for ninety-two nights.

Another Webster adaptation from the French that received considerable praise and approbation from audiences and critics was *The Discarded Son*, based upon *Un Fils de Famille* by Mayrad and Bienville. However, the *Times* saw the play as "a sort of commonplace compound of *Black-Eyed Susan* and *She Stoops to Conquer*" which had "scarcely the character of a regular Adelphi piece," though he admitted it displayed "excellent situations, and happy management of the characters" (October 11, 1853). The *Theatrical Journal* singled out actors Leigh Murray, Mary Ann Keeley, and Fanny Maskell for particular praise, calling the production "one of the most interesting [dramas] which has appeared for a long time" (October 26, 1853). It ran for sixty nights.

John Morton and an anonymous author penned two less successful versions of French plays. Morton's *Whitebait at Greenwich* received praise for the performance by comedian Robert Keeley but apparently lacked variety in plotting. The *Athenæum* wrote that "Mr. Keeley...was triumphant" (November 19, 1854) and the *Times* declared, "the engagement of Mr. Keeley has given a high[er] tone to Adelphi farce than ever was known before" (November 15, 1854). Nevertheless, the show ran for only twenty-seven performances. *Hopes and Fears*, the anonymous adaptation of *La Joie Fait Peur* by Mme. Girardin, did not fare much better. During its twenty-two-performance run, critics praised Webster's performance as the old servant Noel saying, "This is a finished and forcible piece of acting, happily conceived and elaborately executed" yet noted that Céline Céleste's performance was less than satisfactory: "The Mother...is played by Mme. Céleste in a manner that might be expected from a clever melodramatic actress, who has rather to do with strong outward exhibitions of emotion than with minute psychological details" (*Times*, July 6, 1854).

Charles Selby's English version of *Les Filles de Marbre* entitled *The Marble Heart; or, The Sculptor's Dream* received elaborate praise and commentary from the highbrow critic of the *Athenæum* after it

opened in May 1854. Calling the play "a piece perilously elaborate in its development of sentiment and character, and ambitious in its aim as an Art-drama of the imaginative class," this commentator proclaimed it "a daring experiment" in which "the argument and treatment are both intellectual" (May 27, 1854). He also noted "the elevation of the character of [the Adelphi's] performances" under Benjamin Webster's management. The *Times* critic found some faults in Selby's adaptation from the French, but noted the strength of Leigh Murray's performance as the young sculptor who lost all in pursuit of the hard-hearted woman, played admirably by Céline Céleste (May 24, 1854). Despite the fine performances and his perception of the play's moral and intellectual elevation, the skeptical *Athenæum* critic wondered whether "a piece in which dialogue so much preponderates will be ultimately popular with an Adelphi audience." Indeed, his skepticism was well founded; *The Marble Heart* played only twenty times during The Season.

Despite the large percentage of adaptations from French successes, the Adelphi also scored moderate hits with some home-grown products. Charles Selby's *Hotel Charges* exploited the contemporary issue of tavern extortion, which had received extensive coverage in the *Times*. The *Athenæum* called the topic "worn-out" (October 22, 1853), but the *Times* critic declared the piece "one dramatic oration to our honour" (October 14, 1854). Another original piece, a genuine "Adelphi drama" according to the *Times*, resulted from the collaboration of Tom Taylor and Charles Reade. *Two Loves and a Life* opened on March 20 and ran for fifty nights. The *Times* noted wryly that it had "the strange peculiarity that it is not taken from the French" and that its plot was "built on an interesting story, with many and various incidents, and with important personages enough to employ a large number of good actors" (March 21, 1854). The *Athenæum* critic concurred in his appraisal of the play, saying, "the dialogue and interest aim at an intellectual elevation, and appeal rather to the understanding than to the feelings" (March 23, 1854). This mid-decade production of *Two Loves and a Life*, starring favorite actors Benjamin Webster, Robert Keeley, Sarah Woolgar, and Céline Céleste, elicited the *Athenæum*'s declaration that the Adelphi had arrived at the ranks of London's legitimate dramatic houses.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1854-1855

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

Short runs and frequent changes of bills characterized the 1854-55 season during which Adelphi manager Benjamin Webster sought to present plays that would win the approval of his audience and the critics. Disagreements arose among the critics about the worthiness of certain pieces, and audiences were divided amongst themselves in their opinions. In fact, reviewers criticized not only the Adelphi productions but also the tastes of its spectators during the 321-performance season.

Dion Boucicault's *Janet Pride* received almost unanimous approval from audiences and critics alike when it opened on February 4, 1855. This play showcased the talents of the Adelphi's co-managers. Webster's portrayal of Richard Pride received praise from all quarters. Henry Barton Baker summarized critical opinion when he wrote,

Richard Pride is only a very ordinary melodramatic part, but as played by Webster it was an elaborate psychological study; Richard Pride is drunk almost throughout the play, but there was no monotony in Webster's performance, for in each scene he gave a different phase of the vice (p. 430).

The *Theatrical Journal* found Céleste's performance equally compelling writing, "Mme. Céleste...shows herself an accomplished melodramatic actress throughout the piece, but in the scene where she parts with her child, she rises far above this level, and her wild despair belongs to the highest order of pashionate [sic] expression" (February 14, 1855). The *Athenæum*'s critic found Boucicault's script particularly praiseworthy: "*Janet Pride* is a kind of dramatic novel, dealing with old materials and incidents, but trusting for their effect to a new and startling combination" (February 10, 1855). Audiences agreed with the critics regarding the company's success with Boucicault's script; they supported a sixty-four-night run.

Equally successful at the box office was *Bona Fide Travellers; or, The Romance of the New Beer Bill*, which failed to receive wide critical acclaim. Grounded in the contemporary issue of temperance and the passage of a Beer Bill by Parliament, William Brough's farce consisted of "a mere tissue of absurdities loosely strung together," according to the *Times* (October 31, 1855). The *Theatrical Journal*'s writer attributed the play's success and "éclat" to the performances of Robert and Mary Ann Keeley (November 8, 1855). In this, he concurred with the *Athenæum* critic who noted that "the power to support broad farce, without 'overstepping the modesty of nature,' is the special gift of the Keeleys" (November 4, 1854) and the *Times* writer, who felt that piece was "solely rendered attractive by the acting of Mrs. Keeley."

The *Athenæum* reviewer used this production as an occasion to comment upon the tastes of the Adelphi's audience as well as the talents of its actors. He cynically forecast the play's popularity, writing, "In pieces of this sort the public are easily satisfied. If the intention be obvious, they dispense with plot and probability, and are content with strong situations." This prediction proved accurate; the show ran for sixty-three nights.

The next most popular play of the season, *Railway Belle* by Mark Lemon, received little notice in the press. During the months of November, December, and January, the farce was played fifty-six times. Its cast included Charles Selby, James Rogers, Mrs. Stocker, and Miss Wyndham. By contrast, *The Summer Storm* by Tom Parry failed to please both critics and audiences. The *Times* critic had anticipated a "real Adelphi piece" after having endured a series of adaptations from the French stage, but the play did not fulfil his expectations. He wrote, "On the fall of the curtain the

success of the piece was, for a time, rather equivocal, for though the applauders were a large majority the dissentients were perservering" (October 20, 1855). The *Athenæum* writer complained the piece was "scarcely worthy to take rank with [Parry's] *The Harvest Home*," commenting "nothing takes place in the manner proposed, and, accordingly, the audience suffer one disappointment after another, until, at the end, they are thoroughly dissatisfied" (October 28, 1855). *The Summer Storm* vanished from the boards after only nine performances.

One month later, Céleste and Webster met further audience and critical opposition when they premiered *Slow Man* by the celebrated farceur, Mark Lemon. The *Athenæum* scorned the production in its November 25, 1854, review saying "the actors pushed the absurdity with which they were entrusted to the utmost limits." The *Times* was even less charitable, calling the play "an attempt to amuse the public by maintenance of a perpetual 'row' upon the stage" (November 17, 1854). He conceded that it "occasionally becomes amusing," but argued "Mr. Keeley's part is faintly sketched, and mere noise, without some notion at the bottom of it, is scarcely sufficient even for farce." He reported that the audience's reaction was supportive but noted dissent among them: "Mr. Keeley succeeded in announcing the piece for repetition amid much applause...but the opposition party was vigorous, and would not be conquered without a sharp struggle." No-one should be surprised to learn the show played for only nineteen performances.

Finally, Dion Boucicault garnered praise from the *Athenæum* and the *Times* with *Pierre The Foundling*, a drama based upon George Sand's novel, *Francois-le-Champi*. The *Times* conceded that while the play was "no Adelphi drama," it presented "pictures of human life, as contemplated under somewhat exceptional aspects" (December 14, 1855). The acting received special notice from the *Athenæum*, which singled out Sarah Woolgar's portrayal of Marie as "extraordinary for the minuteness of its detail and the expressiveness of its general action" and described Benjamin Webster's performance of Pierre as "remarkably lifelike" (December 16, 1854). Despite these positive assessments, the *Times* questioned the Adelphi audience's ability to appreciate such a subtle piece and wrote, "Whether the attempt to inure an Adelphi audience to pieces of such a simple outline, and so thoroughly intellectual in their character, will prove successful in the long run we cannot say, but certainly the attempt is highly creditable on the part of Mr. Webster." Indeed, the play, like so many others offered during the 1854-55 season, did not satisfy its Adelphi spectators; it closed after only seventeen performances.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1855-1856

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

After a season of unsuccessful attempts to find a new play that would please the Adelphi audience, Benjamin Webster chose to "play it safe" during the 1855-56 season. The offerings included a large number of revivals of plays, which had run successfully at other theatres in London and Paris. Despite this distinct lack of originality in the repertory, royal patronage came to the Adelphi for the first time during Queen Victoria's reign. Also, press reports revealed Webster sought to rebuild and expand the theatre, no doubt in response to the favorable attention paid by the press and the public to the Strand house.

The season opened on October 8, 1855, with Webster and director Céline Céleste touring the provinces. The bills featured the Irish delineations of Hudson in Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More* and *The White Horse of the Peppers*. Robert and Mary Ann Keeley also appeared early in the season in revivals of two of their earlier successes, Richard Peake's *The One Hundred Pound Note* and *Valentine and Orson* by Tom Taylor and Charles Kenney. The *Athenæum* remarked upon the Adelphi's current policy of revivals, writing that it had been

productive among the journalists of much discriminative criticism between the model masterpieces of this class some quarter of a century ago and the French importations of the present day...Nevertheless, though the theme and characters be somewhat obsolete, there is a rough and racy nationality in the present production, which, we confess, we can yet enjoy. (November 10, 1855)

On November 12, Céline Céleste returned to the theatre in William Bernard's *Marie Ducange* and on December 3, Benjamin Webster appeared for the first time during the season in Boucicault's *Janet Pride*. The *Theatrical Journal* proclaimed on December 5 "the acting of Webster and Céleste is beyond all praise."

Among the most popular plays of the season were Mark Lemon's extravaganza, *Domestic Economy*, which ran for seventy-six nights, and Joseph S. Coyne's *Urgent Private Affairs*, which ran for eighty-four nights. Neither play received much notice from the press, despite the fact that the latter was a premiere. Two adaptations from French plays did receive attention from the critics. The first was *Like and Unlike* by John A. Langford and W. J. Sorrell, which ran for fifty nights. The *Times* reported "Mme. Céleste, alternating between the devoted innocent Lisette and the reckless Countess...produces the most striking and effective contrasts" and "the scenes...were excellent illustrations of a luxurious kind of life" (April 10, 1856). The reviewer concluded by saying, "It is some time since we have had a new drama of serious interest at this favourite theatre, and we may congratulate the manager on resuming his old kind of business with such happy results." The second piece was Molière's *Tartuffe*, a rare venture into the classics for the company. The *Times* praised Webster's *Tartuffe*, Céleste's *Elmire*, Mary Ann Keeley's *Dorine* and Charles Selby's *Orgon*, and reported that the play had been revived "with great éclat" (December 19, 1855).

The season's most popular production was its Christmas pantomime, *Jack and the Bean Stalk; or, Harlequin and Mother Goose at Home Again*. Its ninety-five-performance run attracted little attention from the press but did catch the fancy of Queen Victoria. On Feb. 23, 1856, Her Majesty and the royal party attended a private performance of the pantomime in a specially redecorated theatre (see *Times*, February 25, 1856). The Queen expressed her gratitude to Benjamin Webster after the performance, and by April 1st, she had let a Royal Box at the theatre (*Times*, April 4, 1856). Following this change, she attended the Adelphi three times. On April 11, a royal party

attended to see *Like and Unlike* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. On April 17, Her Majesty's party arrived in time to see *Urgent Private Affairs*. Again on May 5, the party attended the theatre for *Like and Unlike*, *Urgent Private Affairs* and *How's Your Uncle?* Royal patronage most certainly added to the theatre's prestige among the critics, other professionals, and the public.

The Adelphi's success seems to have encouraged Webster to expand his operation. The *Times* of January 3, 1856, announced the planned rebuilding and enlarging of the Adelphi. In an advertisement, Webster proclaimed he had secured the entire freehold of the theatre and adjoining property. He offered a limited number of debentures at five percent per annum and free admission to every performance to each debenture holder. In late April, the *Sunday Times* announced that the current season would close in June, and the theatre would be demolished and a new building completed in December. On June 22, 1856, the *Sunday Times* stated the plans for the new theatre were shortly to be submitted to the Commissioners of the Board of Works for approval. That approval, for a building to be constructed entirely of iron and fireproof timber, was expected to be obtained without difficulty. A month later, on July 25, Webster issued another extended sale of debentures, at the price of five hundred pounds each, again with interest of five percent and free lifetime admission to the theatre. The original schedule was delayed, and Webster issued a statement that the rebuilding would proceed later than had been originally planned.

Instead of closing for The Season, Webster then engaged Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams. Having established themselves in the United States as delineators of the Irish and "Yankee Girl" types respectively, the Williamses undertook a successful engagement at the Adelphi. Their productions included *Customs of the Country*, *Irish Lion*, *Born To Good Luck*, *Our Gal*, and *Irish Assurance and Yankee Modesty*. The *Times* wrote of Barney Williams he had "a great deal of comic force" (July 2, 1856), and of Mrs. Williams, she "contents herself with a moderate degree of eccentricity, perfectly consistent with a natural expectation" (July 5, 1856). The *Athenæum* critic recognized the Williamses' obvious popularity with the public but expressed doubts over the merit of their material: "The American pieces with which they are connected meet with a certain sort of approbation—one more related to their novelty and adaptability of these unique artistes than their dramatic merits" (August 16, 1856). Despite these critical reservations, the Williams couple closed out the 304-performance season on September 27, 1856.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1856-1857

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The 1856-57 season began where the previous one concluded, by featuring the American actors, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams. These actors, who specialized in Irish and "Yankee" characters, virtually carried the Adelphi season with their presentations. Manager Benjamin Webster and director Céline Céleste appeared occasionally throughout the season, but provincial tours and illness kept them from playing regularly at the Adelphi. Their absence hindered the introduction of successful new pieces during the season.

By the start of the 1856-57 season, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams had established themselves as favorites among the London public. The *Times* wrote in February 1857 that "whatever may be thought of the musical and poetical merits of such compositions as 'Bobbing Around,' 'Polly, Won't You Try Me-Oh?' and 'My Own Mary Anne,' they are important 'facts' with the London populace of the present day, and he who is not *au courant* with the words and the airs...can scarcely be deemed on a level with his age" (February 3, 1857). Among their most popular offerings were *Ireland As It Is*, *Barney the Baron*, and *Our Gal*. These productions frequently elicited contradictory responses from London critics. While the reviewers never failed to praise the performances of Mr. and Mrs. Williams, they often deplored the quality of their material. Their season opener, for example, an extravaganza by an unknown playwright called *Lucifer Matches; or, The Yankee ----*, was scorned by the London *Times'* critic. "If it be possible to conceive a drama in which nothing could be discovered but the positive incompetency of the playwright to realize the task which he had proposed—then may this play...be quoted as a 'cardinal and prerogative' example" (October 4, 1856). While he admitted that Barney Williams performed with his "usual humor" and that Mrs. Williams appeared "mighty handsome," he found the plot "stupid" and its treatment "imbecilic," warning the performers not to take advantage of the good will they had gained from the public by presenting substandard material. He concluded, "It is time that these clever artistes should learn that their peculiar pieces are not accepted on their merits, but purely as vehicles; if they regard them as more than ephemeral novelties, they will certainly incur a serious mistake."

A similar contradiction may be observed in the *Theatrical Journal's* response to the Williamses after their return from a provincial tour in February 1857. On the 11th, it wrote "the quaint comicalities of the Down-East Girl, and the racy Hibernian humour of the Irish Boy, have lost nothing of their freshness and spirit by the absence of their admirable delineators" in response to their productions of *Born to Good Luck* and *Customs of the Country*. Yet *Barney the Baron* spawned outrage from the *Theatrical Journal* on Feb. 25. Its normally complimentary critic described the farce as "wretched, insufferable twaddle," decrying the audience's obvious enjoyment of the play. "We regret to add that there are roars of laughter when this Hibernian-American comedian throws potatoes about the stage," he scoffed and concluded, "It is likewise our painful duty to admit that a song about a shillelagh—and with about as fine a point...is favourably received by an enlightened British public." The *Times*, on the other hand, found G. D. Johnson's *In and Out of Place* a rewarding experience, writing on the morning after its opening "the versatility which Mrs. Barney Williams has hitherto displayed by acting in a variety of American pieces was last night shown in more concentrated form." He concluded by saying, "We have now, at last, something really attractive in American acting" (February 24, 1857).

Céline Céleste returned to the stage with a production of Buckstone's *Green Bushes* on November 3, 1856. Two weeks later she premiered Charles Selby's burlesque, *The Elves*, which received enthusiastic notices from the critics. The *Athenæum* proclaimed, "The poetic idea which serves for the basis of this piece, lends an air of fantastic elegance to the superstructure; and, though burlesque in its general action, the taste pertaining to the theme has banished from the text the intrusion of pun

and parody" (November 22, 1856). The beauty of the play's spectacle also attracted critical attention. The *Times* wrote that the play had been "very effectively put upon the stage" (November 18, 1856) and the *Athenæum* said, "What particularly strikes the spectator is the beauty of the costumes, scenery, and ballet-action."

Among the few premieres of The Season were the Christmas pantomime, *Mother Shipton, Her Wager; or, Harlequin Knight of Love and the Magic Whistle*, *A Night at Notting-Hill*, and *Fearful Tragedy in the Seven Dials*. Of these, *A Night at Notting-Hill*, written by N. H. Harrington and Edmund Yates (son of former Adelphi manager Frederick Yates), was by far the most popular with eighty-nine performances. A week after its opening on January 6, 1857, the *Theatrical Journal* declared, "The Adelphi, the Surrey, the Strand, and other theatres of minor importance have not lessened their status, so far as we have seen one iota. The first named has produced a succession of good sterling dramas" (January 14, 1857).

Céline Céleste's benefit attracted special attention from the critics with its premiere of Dion Boucicault's drama, *George Darville*. Noting that "it is some time since a piece has been produced so fully corresponding to the idea of an 'Adelphi drama'," the *Times* called the play "a skillfully contrived and effective work" (June 4, 1857). The *Theatrical Journal* agreed, writing, "in construction and dialogue it is very nearly perfect, while in the delineation of character it is not surpassed by many modern productions" (June 10, 1857). Benjamin Webster developed the title role "with the close observance of nature in the most minute details" (*Theatrical Journal*) and all the other performances were "acted with singular ability," according to the *Times*. The play did not achieve the overwhelming success predicted by the critics, however, and ran for only twenty-five nights.

The season concluded with a commemoration of the popular playwright Douglas Jerrold. His *Rent Day*, featuring T. P. Cooke and Céline Céleste, played for ten nights. Productions of *Black-Eyed Susan* followed, and *The Pilot* closed the season on October 3, 1857.

AK

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1857-1858

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

The 1857-58 season was the shortest of the decade because the theatre was closed for remodeling after the June 2, 1858, benefit for Benjamin Webster. Nevertheless, the favorite actors of the company presented thirty-three plays in 201 performances. In addition to co-managers Céline Céleste and Benjamin Webster, Paul J. Bedford, Robert Keeley, Edward Wright, the Williamses, Mary Ann Keeley, Sarah Woolgar (newly married to Alfred Mellon), Mary Keeley, and Marie Wilton appeared. The season opened with T. P. Cooke, appearing in a revival of J. T. Haines' *My Poll and My Partner Joe*. The London *Times* credited Cooke with renewing audiences' interest in the nautical melodrama with his performances as Harry Hallyard in Haines' play and as William in Douglas Jerrold's classic *Black-Eyed Susan*. Its critic wrote that the revival was "perfectly successful" (October 6, 1857).

Céline Céleste reappeared at the Adelphi on November 2, 1857, in a revival of her traditional favorite, *The Green Bushes*. The *Times* reported the following morning "the speedy reappearance of Mr. Benjamin Webster is promised," and noted, "the announcement of a romantic drama and a drama of 'powerful interest' shows that the old Adelphi energies are alive in their wonted direction." Two weeks later, on November 16, Webster opened The Season's first new play, his own adaptation of *La Légende de l'Homme sans Tête* called *The Legend of the Headless Man*. This highly anticipated production disappointed audiences with its "strange, wild story" (*Times*, November 17, 1857). The *Times* critic described the scene at the fall of the curtain when Webster spoke to the audience: "Webster...solicited the kindly feeling of the audience in consideration of the difficulties that attended the production of such a piece in so small a theatre, and expressed a hope that in future it would be so performed as to merit general approbation."

Three days later, the *Times* noted that Webster had gone to great lengths to improve his production of *The Legend of the Headless Man*. "Procrustes in lopping off the limbs of a tall traveller to suit the shortness of his couch, never displayed greater zeal than has been exhibited by the manager of the Adelphi in trimming down the drama...to accommodate the taste of the public," it wrote (*Times*, November 20, 1857). The article explained the play's "defects...[were] remedied by one grand operation...The marvel is that such extremely bold surgery did not demolish the piece altogether, but...the work has gained in vitality by the vigorous amputation." Despite all the energies invested in the production by Webster, the show closed after only eighteen performances.

A more successful new play by Watts Phillips premiered after the first of the year. *Poor Strollers*, a drama featuring Webster and Mme. Céleste in leading roles, represented the Adelphi's second attempt to produce a Phillips' script. The first effort, *Joseph de Chavigny*, had failed to achieve popularity, but this one succeeded. The *Times* explained this change in audience receptivity by saying, "The author has evidently discovered that reflection, nowadays, will not compensate for a lack of action...[The] interest of the tale, the variety of incidents, and the abandonment of a certain cynical view of the world and its principles of action, evince a knowledge of the wants of the public of which the earlier drama gave no sign" (January 13, 1858). The Adelphi's stars were also well served by the play. The *Times* noted Webster made "one of his most characteristic pictures" and that "finer melodramatic acting need not be desired than that of Mme. Céleste." The production ran for forty-six nights.

The month of February occasioned the return of the American actors, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, to the Adelphi. Their appearance in *Yankee Courtship* provided an opportunity for the *Times* to comment again upon the artistic merits of the peculiar genre of their material. "[T]here is a sort of fixed routine of carelessness in the true Yankee farces that makes them look like constant repetitions of the same work....Without Mrs. Barney Williams, the piece would be mere purposeless trash. With [her] it becomes a vehicle of one of the most genial and animated pictures of national character that can be conceived" (February 16, 1858). Likewise Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More*, which showcased Barney Williams' talents, was described by the *Times* critic as "one of the most disjointed works ever put on theatrical boards" when it opened on March 1 (March 2, 1858). Nevertheless, the critic admitted the play contained "one of the best low Irish parts to be found in the modern repertory" and that Williams had successfully interpreted the role. The *Athenæum* commentator concurred, writing that he had never seen the piece better acted (March 6, 1858).

The Williamses' third contribution to the season, *Hour in Seville* by Charles Selby, was described by the *Times* as "a complete success" after it opened (March 11, 1858). As a "personation piece," it offered Mrs. Williams eight different characters to play, including her signature character, the "Yankee gal." The *Times* declared, "In constructing the piece Mr. Selby has evinced far more dramatic skill than is usually bestowed where the sole object is the assemblage of a number of heterogeneous characters." Along with *Happy Man*, *Irish Tutor*, and *Ireland As It Is*, *Hour in Seville* closed out the Williamses' engagement.'

With the closing of the theatre for reconstruction on June 2, the Company moved to the Surrey Theatre for the summer. After his benefit performance, Webster

addressed the audience in a speech recalling old memories of the theatre, and afterwards received a testimonial from the company in the form of a valuable gold watch, bearing this inscription: "This remembrance of the old Adelphi and its fortunes for fourteen years was presented to Benjamin Webster after the last performance, on Wednesday night, 2nd of June, 1858. The funds for its purchase were raised by a general subscription in every department of the theatre, one and all rejoicing in the opportunity 'of recording their respect for the man, admiration of the actor, and confidence in the manager'" (Blanchard, *Era Almanack*, 1877, 8).

On June 16, the *Times* announced that Webster had laid the stone for the new theatre's foundation on the previous day.

AK

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1858-1859

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

As the autumn theatrical season began in 1858, the London *Times* reported on the progress of the Adelphi's rebuilding. Noting, "the roof...will be put on within the next six weeks," the *Times* cited significant changes in the building's structure: "The new building will cover a somewhat larger area than was comprised within the old house...The ground also will be excavated to a depth of ten or eleven feet below the original level, to get space required beneath the pit and stage" (September 8, 1858). Architect T. H. Wyatt designed the building, and J. Wilson supervised construction. According to the *Era Almanack 1877*, the total length of the new theatre was 114 feet, 6 inches. Its height from pit to ceiling was 57 feet. The stage measured 56 feet deep and 63 feet, 6 inches wide, with a proscenium opening of 35 feet in height and 38 feet in width. The house measured 48 feet from the back of the boxes to the proscenium. With these changes, the Adelphi became "almost the largest minor theatre in London" (*Times*, December 22, 1858).

The approaching Christmas season brought the long-anticipated opening of the New Adelphi. The December 22, 1859, edition of the London *Times* carried an extensive description of the theatre's new interior design. Calling the Adelphi "the newest, and now the prettiest theatre in the metropolis," the reporter said it was "constructed with a view to the comfort of its audience, the richness of its decorations, and general splendour of its effect." Noting the theatre's expanded size, he continued, "this space is so carefully and judiciously broken that the idea of space is entirely removed, and the audience see only a series of most graceful curves marking the line of the boxes, and the fronts of which are so decorated as to make them the richest and most effective portions of its internal architecture." The interior designer used wrought iron and white and gold decoration in achieving this effect. On the front of the first balcony was "a light and exquisitely wrought iron railing decorated with white and gold." "Beautiful spiral cast-iron columns, with elaborate capitals in white and gold" supported the upper tier whose front had "white and gold decorations, with panels in bas-relief representing the figures of the Muses." Above this, the gallery stalls also boasted sumptuous decoration "adorned in panels with medallion portraits of the chief dramatic authors." The ceiling was decorated in "Genoese style," with "excellent paintings of the four seasons" adding to the illusion of a high dome. Finally, "the proscenium, and the ceiling immediately over it, [were] covered with bold yet delicate traceries in white and gold." The decorations were illuminated by "one of Stroud's patent sunlights" hidden "by an exquisitely formed chandelier...furnished by Defries and Sons."

The new theatre provided seating for members of all social and economic classes. The Queen's box was situated on the west side of the proscenium, the Prince of Wales' box on the east. There were two rows of seats in the first balcony, flanked by a row of boxes. The gallery tier had gallery stalls and "the usual side galleries." The theatre's "pit" level included a "part nearest the orchestra...railed off for three rows of orchestra stalls...Behind these are four rows of pit stalls." The theatre seated fifteen hundred.

With the opening of the new building, manager Benjamin Webster instituted some new management practices, which evoked praise from the *Times*. First, he lowered ticket prices. Previously, they had ranged from 5/- for seats in the stalls to 1/- for gallery seats. Now, while private boxes and family stalls cost two guineas and one pound respectively, seats in the orchestra stalls cost 5/-, balcony and dress circle 4/-, first circle stalls 3/-, pit stalls 2/-, pit 1/6d, amphitheatre stalls 1/-, and gallery, 6d. Also, the *Times* reported, "when a visitor books his seat at the box office he becomes its proprietor...and up to the very close of the performance it is retained for him without any further charge."

At the Adelphi's reopening, the *Times* predicted, "the fresh course on which it is entering will be as prosperous to its manager and popular with the public as during its best days of old." The season commenced with the traditional Christmas pantomime, a farce called *Mr. Webster's Company is Requested at a Photographic Soiree*, and a revival of John Buckstone's *Good for Nothing*. Other revivals included James R. Planché's *The Invisible Prince*, Taylor and Reade's *Masks and Faces*, and Buckstone's *Flowers of the Forest*. Among the season's new offerings, Thomas Williams' *Ici On Parle Français* scored the greatest success with sixty-two performances. It featured the Adelphi's newest comedian, John Toole, who had joined the company with the opening of the remodeled theatre. Tom Taylor's *The House? or The Home?* also proved to be a popular new script. The *Times*, evidently weary of Webster's heavy reliance on revivals, wrote, "A new piece, that is likely to achieve a permanent success, and to gain something like a solid reputation, has at last been produced at the magnificent theatre" (May 17, 1859). It ran for fifty nights.

The season closed with benefits for William Smith, Paul J. Bedford, and Carter, relying on revivals of *Victorine*, *The Wreck Ashore*, and *The Lottery Ticket* to attract audiences. The *Athenæum* noted that the Adelphi did not yet have a new artistic philosophy to match its new decorations: "The performances at this house continue experimental; and we are yet left in doubt as to the course intended to be taken by Mr. Webster" (August, 27, 1859).

AK

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1859-1860

Ed. Alicia Kae Koger

In the last season of the decade, Adelphi manager Benjamin Webster finally found the box office hits he had sought since the early 1850's. Watts Phillips' *The Dead Heart*, William Brough's *Dinorah Under Difficulties*, and Charles Gayler's *Our Female American Cousin* all succeeded in drawing large audiences to the New Adelphi. Although the company's well-loved director, Céline Céleste, did not appear during the season, other popular stars filled the bills, including John L. Toole, Paul Bedford, Alfred Wigan, Mrs. Wigan, Sarah Woolgar Mellon, Julia Daly, and Webster himself.

After opening the season on September 26, 1859, with several weeks of revivals, Webster premiered Brough's burlesque of a popular Meyerbeer opera, *Le Pardon de Ploërmel* currently playing at Covent Garden. *Dinorah Under Difficulties* featured a prize role for John L. Toole, who received credit for the production's success. The London *Times* wrote, "The whole substance of the piece rests with Mr. Toole's impersonation of Dinorah" (November 8, 1859). The extravaganza ran for seventy nights to the hearty approval of the Adelphi's audiences.

November 10 saw the premiere of one of the most successful plays of the decade, Watts Phillip's *The Dead Heart*. This "distinguished success" (as the *Times* labeled it on November 11) showcased the acting of Benjamin Webster. In a follow-up article on November 28, the *Times* wrote "Webster, whose return to his own boards has given a new tone to his establishment, rarely finds a part more suitable to his powers" than the character of Robert Landry. The *Athenæum* reviewer concurred writing, "As an artistic delineation [Webster's] Robert Landry stands, in the present day, alone. There is no London actor who can compete with it, in its rough strength and its intense feeling" (November 19, 1859). Phillip's script, too, received high praise from the *Times*, which wrote that it abounded "in strong incidents, and [was] wrought up with a rare degree of elaboration" (November 11, 1859) and contained "dialogue far above the usual level" (November 28, 1859). Webster's management of the piece was cited in the press as well: "Highly is the manager to be commended for the way in which he has disciplined his masses to accomplish effects on a grand scale" (*Times*, November 28, 1859). *The Dead Heart's* eighty-performance run broke the pattern of revivals and short-term successes which had prevailed in the latter half of the decade. In noting this accomplishment, the *Times* reviewer wrote,

While the last few weeks have been marked by a series of ephemeral productions, the perpetual variation of play-bills being caused less by a spirit of enterprise than by the want of some striking work that could prove a permanent attraction, it is no small credit to Mr. Watts Phillips that he is the author of a drama which has remained firm on the boards, and has brought the old Adelphi popularity to the new Adelphi edifice (November 28, 1859).

The Christmas season brought a dramatization of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* by Edward Stirling and an extravaganza by Henry J. Bryon called *The Nymph of the Lurleyberg; or, The Knight and the Naiads*. Neither received much notice in the press. The season's next major premiere was *Our Female American Cousin!* by Charles Gayler, which featured the talents of the American actress, Julia Daly, who specialized in the "Yankee gal" roles made famous by her predecessor at the Adelphi, Mrs. Barney Williams. Her performance compared favorably to Mrs. Williams', however, and the *Times* wrote of her, "All those details of behaviour that so much amuse the modern audiences who study Yankee peculiarities on the English stage she executes in an arch, sly, unexaggerated fashion" (May 1, 1860). Julia Daly also appeared in *The Fool of the Family*, another American import, in July. As it had frequently done during the Williams' tenure, the *Times* complained of the lack of

originality in the Yankee farce but conceded "the dialect and metaphors peculiar to our Transatlantic kinsmen, though they have lost their novelty, are always amusing and sayings already familiar acquire freshness from the peculiar archness and quiet humour of Miss Julia Daly" (July 14, 1860).

Another moderately successful piece, *It's an Ill Wind that Blows Nobody Good* by John Oxenford, starred Alfred Wigan, who with his wife had joined the Adelphi Company during the previous season. This drama was "mainly intended to exhibit the talent of Mr. Wigan" but also received notice for the "great pains...taken in the pictorial department" (*Times*, May 15, 1860). The production ran for a modest thirty performances.

The remainder of the season was occupied with revivals from the recent and distant past. Dion Boucicault's *The Willow Copse* played for thirty-six nights and garnered critical acclaim for several members of the acting company. In addition to Webster's portrayal of Luke Fielding, Sarah Woolgar Mellon's Meg, and John L. Toole's Augustus de Rosherville were cited by the *Times*, which described the play as "one of the best-acted pieces in London" (September 30, 1859). Other revivals included Williams' *Ici On Parle Français*, Buckstone's *Flowers of the Forest*, and Boucicault's *Janet Pride*, featuring Webster as Richard Pride, his most celebrated role of the decade.

The season concluded on September 8, 1860, after benefits for Benjamin Webster, William Smith, and the rapidly rising comedian, John L. Toole. It had included 292 performances of thirty-seven plays.

AK

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1860-1861

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season was Dion Boucicault's success story at the Adelphi Theatre. He had returned from America, and the house opened with considerable éclat with his latest play, *The Colleen Bawn*, already a success in New York. He and his wife Agnes Robertson performed major roles. The play is noteworthy for several reasons. First, nearly all of the fifteen characters spoke in an Irish accent—no small demand on the performers—and on the audience. Opinions on this were mixed. The *Times* (11 September) seemed to think that this went too far. "In future representations it might be as well to limit the necessity of speaking with an Irish brogue to those personages who stand as types of Irish character." The *Athenæum* (15 September) was, however, untroubled by this:

It is not possible that all the speakers could have been accentually correct, but the ensemble was well maintained, and though the effect was certainly felt to be odd for the first few scenes, the sensation gradually wore off, and the mind willingly surrendered itself to the normal condition of the dialogue.

This is no doubt fair comment as the play was well supported from the first night throughout its record long run—231 performances. There was a strong cast, including C.H. Stephenson, new from Dublin, Edmund Falconer, Miss Woolgar, and Mr. and Mrs. Billington, all of whom received praise from the *Theatrical Journal* (19 September). The same critic, who wrote on 19 December, attests the popularity of the play:

Of the Adelphi we would fain say more, but really the difficulty of finding a place beneath the roof of this most popular theatre has been, and is so great, that we must dismiss our review of it by saying that greater success never attended any theatre since the production of *The Colleen Bawn* or, what is still better, we hear that it well merits the patronage which has been bestowed upon it.

Thus, the success of The Season both for the management and for Boucicault's play was assured. His talent as an actor was already well known.

The production was also of considerable significance for dramatists in general. Dion Boucicault pioneered a royalty system by making a "novel proposal" to Webster, the manager, for *The Colleen Bawn*. "Instead of asking for a lump sum, he suggested sharing terms—and found himself eventually richer by 10,000 pounds...The practice did not become universal until the 1880s" (*History of English Drama*, 5: 69).

The scenery was spectacular. The *Observer* (16 September) described "the well-painted set and the lake on the stage in which the body of a young girl was seen." Some of the action was no less spectacular. The second act was "brought to a triumphant close when Dion Boucicault took a header into the water" to rescue her. As Boucicault was an actor of exceptional vigor, he, no doubt, included this in the piece to show off his prowess. The *Times* referred to his "famous header."

On the same bill was a short farce, *She Would be an Actress*, probably by Boucicault and evidently written for Agnes Robertson, as she played several roles. At least two critics considered it worthy of comment, acknowledging her talents, though the performance, following *The Colleen Bawn*, was evidently very demanding. The *Times* made the point that the Irish jig concluding the piece "would have been encored, had she been less fatigued."

The post-Christmas play was *Bluebeard from a New Point of Hue*, which did not interrupt the run of *The Colleen Bawn*; both appeared on the bills until Holy Week. *Bluebeard* proved to be popular. "The principal characters are well-sustained," wrote the *Morning Post* (26 December) and the *Times* (27 December) made a special mention of J. L. Toole who, as Abomelique, alias Bluebeard, "was the life and soul of the representation." The *Theatrical Journal* lavished praise on the scenery; "peculiarly brilliant and appropriate;" on the music; and on "the processions, dances and groupings arranged by Mr. W. Smith." Some of the humor was topical. A punning rhyme beginning, "This is the very coinage of the brain," alluded to the new penny pieces of 1860.

Even more topical was a new farce, *The Census*, described as an "apropos sketch," given as an afterpiece from 15 April 1861 and running for sixty-five performances. The 1861 census was the first in Great Britain to list people by name. The *Observer* (21 April), describing the farce as "a diverting squib," wrote that although "based on the slightest possible material" it was "so ingenuously contrived, and so ludicrously demonstrative of the perplexities which, by an extravagant supposition, might arise out of the late Government measure for 'numbering the people' as to keep the audience in a perfect roar of laughter throughout the whole of the short twenty minutes it takes to enact."

The Colleen Bawn was withdrawn after Easter while Boucicault was on tour in Ireland. Its place was taken by *Magloire, the Prestigiator*, an adaptation of a French play. Webster gave a talented performance in the title role; the play, however, was inordinately long, with a preface which, "however excellent as a dramatic sketch in itself, is wholly unnecessary" (*Observer*, 7 April).

The run of *The Colleen Bawn* recommenced at the end of April and continued until the end of the second week in July, when Boucicault left for Paris. It was replaced by a revival of *The Dead Heart*, described by the *Morning Post* (2 July) as "the impressive play...with Mr. B. Webster in his great character of Robert Landry."

Two new short pieces, *Mr. Gorilla* and *The Pretty Horsebreaker*, were added to the repertoire.

Various plays were given for the three benefit nights, for William Smith, acting manager; J. L. Toole, the popular comedian; and John W. Anson, the treasurer. Toole's benefit was reviewed in the *Morning Post* (29 August). Despite the warm weather, "the house was full to overflowing." Webster may well have been an added attraction for the evening, appearing in the main character in his own "petite drama," *One Touch of Nature*. "The entertainment passed off with *elan*, and Mr. Toole experienced a very hearty reception." Anson took the last benefit of 4 September, which brought the season to a close—a very successful one for the manager, the Boucicaults, J. L. Toole and other performers.

AL

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1861-1862

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season, opening on 23 September, seemed to promise as much brilliant success for Boucicault and the theatre as the previous one. During what was described as "the brief recess," less than three weeks, the theatre had undergone some "renovation," presumably redecoration, and some of the scenery had been re-painted. The opening play (no surprise) was *The Colleen Bawn*, which had lost nothing in popularity by its absence of more than two months. "The scene last night was a repetition of the old enthusiasm. Every part of the house was crammed." As before, the performance of Boucicault was a significant factor in the success of the piece. His "famous 'header' was honoured with all the appearance of admiring wonder" (*Times* 24 September). It is, perhaps, worth comment that the idea was not Boucicault's own. The dive and the gauze waters were suggested to him by the stage carpenter at Laura Keane's Theatre in New York when *The Colleen Bawn* was first produced. "Why not try a dive for something new? A dive would go better than an ordinary jump, sir" (*The Career of Dion Boucicault*, 81).

The Colleen Bawn had an uninterrupted run until 16 November 1862 and was revived at intervals for the next eight months. During its very long run, beginning in September 1860, Queen Victoria visited the Adelphi three times, the third being her last visit to any theatre (*Career*, 79).

The run was expected to end on 8 November, for the theatre to be closed one night for a rehearsal of *The Octoroon*, which was to begin the following Monday, but its opening night was delayed a week. Meanwhile, the *Athenæum* (9 November) pointed out defects in the production of *The Colleen Bawn*. "The drollest feature...was the variety of brogues and dialects, or attempts at them, employed by the actors, and indeed, actresses, some of whom, at the least, seemed heartily weary of their parts, of which we may say there is not a good one in the piece, save that acted by Mr. Boucicault himself." Its popularity, and that of other "poor pieces," was mainly the result of audiences being composed of visitors to London glad to see anything.

Audiences certainly showed their preferences when *The Octoroon*, also by Boucicault and already played in New York with considerable success, was shown. "*The Octoroon* narrowly escaped entire failure from a singular cause—namely, the death, instead of the triumph, of the heroine. This shows sympathy in the audience, at which Mr. Boucicault, in a published letter, affects surprise. But the English do not like to see their heroines sacrificed" (*Athenæum*, 23 November). The *Times* (19 November) commented on the audience's sympathy for the death of the heroine: "To this feeling alone can we ascribe the few sounds of disapprobation which followed the descent of the curtain last night, and contrasted so strangely with the enthusiastic applause that had accompanied the first four acts." Nothing comparable to "the header" was apparently forthcoming—hardly suitable to save a girl from the effects of poison, but a dramatic effect missed by the audience. The sensational factor, this time, was a steamer on fire. The *Observer* (24 November), while praising the production and the acting, gave adverse criticism less for the unhappy ending than the "manner and the means by which it is brought about. The play, until the final scene...never assumes anything of the tragic form, but is conducted throughout upon the basis of ordinary melodrama...Under these circumstances, the shock of Zoe's death is more than the audience is disposed to bear." In less than a month, Boucicault changed the ending. Even so, *The Octoroon* never attained sufficient popularity to be the main attraction.

It had begun with a promising cast, with the Boucicaults in the major roles and George Jamieson as Old Pete, a character in which "he was never surpassed" in New York (*Career*, p. 69). However, after the first week, Delman Grace replaced Boucicault in the role of Salem Scudder for a fortnight, during

which the author wrote "a new last act of the drama composed by the public and edited by the author" (playbill, 9 December). There were no further complaints, but, to secure a good audience, *The Colleen Bawn* was put on with *The Octoroon*. Except during the week following the death of the Prince Consort, this arrangement continued until 8 February. This was clearly a great strain on the Boucicaults. Mrs. Boucicault, having succumbed to illness, was replaced from 24 December until 29 January when she returned, but only to *The Colleen Bawn*. Dion Boucicault, who continued to perform in *The Colleen Bawn*, was again replaced by Delman Grace in *The Octoroon* from 24 December to 8 February.

A prolific writer, Boucicault was never at a loss to produce fresh pieces. In February, he brought out *The Dublin Boy*, an adaptation in two acts of *Le Gamin de Paris*, with the scene transferred to Dublin. The *Times* and the *Athenæum* accredit Mrs. Boucicault with a praiseworthy performance as the "gamin," Andy. The play replaced *The Colleen Bawn*, but it was not adequate to support *The Octoroon*. It lasted less than three weeks and was played only once more—for St. Patrick's Day. *The Octoroon* was taken off at the same time though a fresh attempt was made to show it, reduced to four acts on 26 May.

Boucicault's new piece, *A Life of an Actress*, in which he and Mrs. Boucicault appeared, was more successful. His portrayal of the main character placed Boucicault "in the front rank as an artist of versatile abilities and a comprehensive mind" (*Athenæum* 8 March). However, if his performance was faultless, it seemed the play was not. "The new play was exceedingly successful up to the end of the third act," and in the *Times* (3 March), "All that followed might be considered an anti-climax." The *Athenæum* continued, "We are not quite sure that the drama itself (which is partly compilation and partly adaptation) will add much to his reputation as a dramatist; but his reputation as an actor must be augmented by the skill and tact with which he has embodied and supported the part of its hero." The critics praised other performers, and the play lasted for six weeks, being supported for five nights by *The Colleen Bawn*.

For the first time, some other form of entertainment did not replace dramatic pieces during Holy Week, but as was customary, the house was dark on Good Friday. Boucicault put on a production of *Dot*, new to English audiences. The *Athenæum* (19 April) paid tribute to his dramatic perception in the writing. "On Monday, Mr. Boucicault introduced to the public his version of Mr. Charles Dickens's charming story of *The Cricket on the Hearth* and achieved a deserved success. His version differs from preceding adaptations by the adapter's dealing freely and dramatically with the story, and thus avoiding that obscurity and mystery, which, in its original state, were calculated to puzzle rather than please an audience...The efforts of the management were fully appreciated by the audience; and the little *Dot* is, we think, likely to prove a great success."

For Easter, the indefatigable Boucicault brought out another piece in two acts, *The Phantom*, to run with *Dot*. This play was not entirely new but was "substantially the same drama produced at the Princess's under Mr. Kean's management...The drama has certainly been improved by compression, omission and alteration and the denouement is altogether different" (*Athenæum*, 26 April). Boucicault's acting, and that of other performers, John Toole in particular, were praised. However, it was not a successful play, possibly owing to the distasteful subject matter. It was performed with *Dot* for less than five weeks, twenty-four performances in all. *Dot* fared rather better, running for forty-seven performances. *The Octoroon*, reduced to four acts, was re-introduced during the last fortnight of this run. It had no more success than before, and there are no means of knowing whether it was its failure that finally brought about the disagreement which terminated the

partnership of Webster and Boucicault. *The Octoroon* was performed at the Adelphi for the last time on 21 June. The partnership between Webster and Boucicault was at an end. On the bill for the following week, Webster's explanation strongly shows his resentment:

Mr. Dion Boucicault, while claiming to be a partner of Mr. Webster, having transferred his services to a rival establishment in the immediate neighborhood, and having up to this morning (23 June) nothing to propose for the week's entertainment but *The Octoroon* or *Dot*, Mr. Webster...compelled to assume the sole management...is obliged, in self-defence, rather than close the theatre, to bring out the only piece likely to prove attractive to his numerous patrons, namely, *The Colleen Bawn*.

Webster's resentment seems justified because there was no satisfactory substitute for Boucicault or *The Octoroon*, especially as *Dot* had "occasioned losses when played previously." Boucicault had his own plans already laid. He opened immediately at Drury Lane, for a summer season, with his production of *The Colleen Bawn* and presumably took his "famous header" with him. It is hardly necessary to say that his production was a success, but in the comments of the critics, one detects a certain sympathy for Webster. The *Observer* (30 June) said that he had been driven "into a corner by Mr. Boucicault's sudden secession from the stage management." This newspaper and the *Athenæum* (28 June) gave favorable criticism of the production, apart from admitting the inadequacy of the performance of Agnes Burdett, who took the part of Eily O'Connor (Mrs. Boucicault's role). The *Athenæum* saw no reason both houses should not continue with the play. "It appears to us that each theatre addresses its peculiar class, and interferes but little with the other." *The Colleen Bawn* was, however, performed for only a fortnight, during which time Webster arranged for some fresh productions using none of Boucicault's plays. A revival of *The Dead Heart* followed, with Webster appearing as Robert Landry, the role "which was one of the most remarkable in his repertory" (*Times*, 12 July).

Two new pieces were brought out, probably to introduce Avonia Jones from Drury Lane. Neither had favorable reviews. The first was *Medea*, and neither the play nor the actress had much appeal. After a fortnight, *Adrienne Lecouvreur* replaced it, but like *Medea*, this piece did not prove to be a success. Another revival, *Flowers of the Forest*, followed. Then, after a week, Webster himself gave a much-needed fillip to the end of The Season by appearing as Mr. Penholder in *One Touch of Nature*. The *Athenæum* (20 September) commented: "It is a drama which has now established itself on these boards, as the vehicle for the actor's speciality in the exact representation of character, combining humour and pathos with the commonplaces of everyday life."

For his benefit, Webster revived *The Green Bushes*, a piece by Buckstone that had been very popular in the 1840s. This play seemed to be more suited to the talents of Avonia Jones than the other productions in which she had appeared. For that night only, Webster revived *The Woman-Hater*, in which he gave an outstanding performance.

During the season, two new short pieces were produced and both proved popular. Like *The Census*, *A Shilling Day at the Great Exhibition* was topical, the scene being the interior of the International Exhibition. A farce by the same authors, it merited favorable reviews in the *Times* and the *Athenæum*. It came out on 9 June and had a run of ninety-nine performances as an afterpiece. The other new piece was *A Private Inquiry* by an unknown author. It was played as a curtain-raiser thirty-eight times from 24 March. This, too, had favorable reviews, the *Athenæum* (29 March) concluding, "as the first work of a young author, it contains much dramatic promise." Unfortunately, the author remains unknown.

The scenery took the eye of the critics in more than one play and the painters, T. Grieve and W. Telbin, were complimented.

As a whole, the season was very uneven and could not be described as highly successful except during the opening weeks. However, after the trauma of the sudden departure of Boucicault, Webster, by his benefit night, had the measure of what would appeal to his audiences. The evening was a great success and "when the curtain fell, Mr. Webster, in obedience to a hearty and irresistible call, came forward and by a few grateful and graceful words addressed to his audience, completed the sense of admiration which the performance of the evening produced" (*Observer*, 28 September). With *The Green Bushes* and *A Shilling Day* continuing to be popular, the Adelphi seemed set on course for a new successful season.

AL

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1862-1863

Ed. Alfrida Lee

There was no break between the seasons in 1862. The program continued steadily on with the assured popularity of *Green Bushes* supported by *A Shilling Day*. Without the Boucicaults, the season was not marked by the spectacular success of 1860-1861 nor by a setback such as was caused by their dramatic departure in the following year. This season had success and no letdowns.

There was considerable strength in the company, and Webster himself performed more frequently. The chief comedian was John Toole, "who combined humour with pathos" (*Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, 3rd ed.). The American actress, Avonia Jones, engaged earlier in 1862, was judged to have considerable talent, though not without certain faults that irritated the critics. Others given critical acclaim were Mrs. Alfred Mellon (late Miss Woolgar), Paul J. Bedford, and Mr. and Mrs. John Billington.

Unlike the previous season, when no new piece had been offered for the Christmas holidays, on 26 December, a new pantomime-cum-burlesque, *George de Barnwell; or, Harlequin Folly in the Realms of Fancy*, began its run of sixty-nine performances. The endeavor to encourage family audiences is shown in the innovation of matinees at 2 p.m. on four Saturdays in January, solely for the pantomime. From 31 January until the end of February, Saturday nights were juvenile nights. The pieces given were as other evenings, but the pantomime came first.

A special performance was given on 10 March 1863, to commemorate the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. This production was given gratuitously, admission by tickets only which would be issued on the day between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The program included *A Grey Mare*, *A Touch of Nature*, and an epithalamium recited by Avonia Jones. The band was to play a Danish hymn and other appropriate music.

In addition to theatrical benefits, an unusual one was given in December 1862 to aid the band fund of the London and Westminster Rifles (46th Middlesex).

In all, eleven new pieces appeared, one of them, presumably a trifle, *The Rosebud of Stinging-nettle Farm*, being given only once. However, others were more noteworthy. There can be no doubt of the success of the first of these, *Ticket of Leave*, a farce, which played for sixty-one nights. The enthusiasm of the critics was a little tempered by their judgment of the suitability of the subject matter. The *Athenæum* (26 December) wrote, "The notion of making a farce on the subject of the present state of criminality in this country one might have thought was somewhat hazardous, particularly in face of the general fear inspired by the garrotters. The attempt, however, has been successfully made at this theatre." An account of the plot was given, followed by praise, "this is a grave basis for one of the funniest farces ever acted." The *Times* (23 December) is explicit about the reasons for its success. "It is the acting of Mr. Toole that converts a source of terror into a source of mirth. Throwing himself completely into the situation of the timid householder, this excellent comedian gives one of the most striking caricatures of overpowering fear that can be imagined."

The new pantomime in the same month was spectacular. The "magical transformation scene" by James was praised in the *Observer* (28 December). It was the work of Henry J. Byron, a prolific writer of burlesque. In the *Era Almanack*, 1868, it states, "To give a list of Mr. Byron's burlesques would be impossible within reasonable limits but nearly every theatre has profited by their production." The Adelphi evidently did, for, in addition to the pantomime, H. J. Byron was responsible for *The Ill-treated Trovatore*, which began on 1 June and ran for eighty-nine performances.

A major production of The Season was *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain*, also produced in June. The success of a dramatic version of Dickens's novella, titled *The Haunted Man*, was rather in the skill of producing apparitional illusions than in the drama itself. In 1862, Henry Dircks developed his version of the long-established phantasmagoria, but its use in theatres required too much expense for it to be practical. John Pepper, a chemist, modified the effect, and it was used in *The Haunted Man*. In a sense, the theatre was returning to its roots as John Scott had held similar shows at the Sans Pareil.

The *Athenæum* (27 June) was reserved in its opinion but granted it was a well-acted production. "The story is not very well made out in the accompanying drama; but Mr. Toole and Miss Woolgar (i.e. Mrs. Mellon), as Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby, have an opportunity for domestic acting of which they avail themselves in a remarkable manner."

The build-up to its performance came in announcements of "The Ghost! The Ghost! The Ghost!" The *Times* (22 June) gave a full description of the apparition which appears to have been contrived by having the actor, appropriately costumed and made up, standing in a well so that a reflection was seen by the audience. Of the piece

As a vehicle for the mere purpose of exhibiting the ghost, the piece is too long; as a work with pretensions to dramatic interest, it is too slight and obscure...To the defects of the drama must be attributed the few sounds of disapprobation that were mingled with the applause at the fall of the curtain. They could not apply to the ghost, for the ghost had no fault save that of being extremely awful, and awfulness is a failing that decidedly leans to virtue's side in the case of the spectre.

The production included five tableaux in which four apparitions appeared. A similar comment was made by the *Observer* (22 June), which, though full of praise for the "vividness of the illusions" and "The suddenness of their coming and going," felt that it was "regrettable that it was not done for a better dramatic purpose," and added "The piece was well received and will doubtless constitute one of the sights which all London will go to see." "All London" was not necessarily hyperbole, as the spectral effect quickly crossed the Atlantic. The American Civil War had produced a serious interest in ghosts. In London, the piece was an undoubted success, running for eighty-five nights.

Two more plays by Brough and Halliday, authors of *A Shilling Day*, were given. The first new piece was *A Valentine*, produced, it need hardly be mentioned, in February. In a review of this in the *Times* (14 February), an interesting comment is made on the poor quality of many short pieces, "broad farces without fancy, boisterous without humour, [which] excite a species of mirth strongly resembling that occasioned by an ordinary row in the streets," but obviously Brough and Halliday did not sink to this level. The writer continued,

But we seldom find a farce so genial, so firmly based upon English life, and so racy in its humour...It would seem to be the mission of these two authors, when combining their talents, to select some object immediately belonging to the actual world of the day, and to exhibit it in a grotesque shape, which allows them to show the most exuberant fancy while preserving a general tone of truthfulness.

The second play was *The Wooden Spoon Maker*, a less successful piece by these two authors, billed as a "petite drama." The *Times* (15 May) thought it lacked the authors' usual ingenuity in the construction of the plot. The revelation to be made at the end was obvious in the first two minutes. The *Athenæum* (23 May) dismissed the plot as "too simple for detail." It is evident that

farce was the authors' true métier and a venture into drama found them at a loss. The success of the piece, and it was not without success, was due to the performance of Webster, who was able to make full use of his talents. The *Athenæum* (30 May) added that it was "likely to become a favourite, and the hero one of the best impersonations of Webster." Its run was only twenty-two nights.

In this year, Benjamin Webster, Jr. wrote his first plays for the Adelphi, all of them adaptations. A *Grey Mare*, a short piece, and *The Hen and Chickens*, in two acts, were both adapted from, or perhaps more correctly, based on, French originals. They were not translations but freely used source material. The critics had little to say about either of these, except to comment on the performers. In the first piece, produced in February, there was humor, established by Toole's delineation of "a peppery conceited landholder" (*Times*, 12 February). The *Athenæum* had more to say about *The Hen and Chickens* (29 August). "The adaptation has been skillfully accomplished...There is a certain humanity about the theme and the action which recommends it to the sympathies of the audience."

The third play, *Aurora Floyd*, was an adaptation of a novel, in a prologue and three acts. Again, Webster made alterations. His play was considered an improvement on the version already being played at the Princess's Theatre. The *Athenæum* described what he had done. "According to stage exigency, he has both followed and altered the story, and modified or combined the characters...The result is a powerful drama covering an indefinite extent of time, and occupying nearly four hours in the performance" (28 March 1863). The *Times* (7 April) commented, "The sensation drama, *Aurora Floyd*, which has been for some time the stock piece at this theatre, furnished thrilling incidents for the holiday folk," but later, when it was withdrawn, "to make way for the good Adelphi melodrama, *Janet Pride*," it was described as "somewhat cumbrous." Four hours (and that not the whole bill) did seem to require a great deal of stamina in the audience. It ran for thirty-three performances. *Janet Pride*, first given at the Adelphi in 1855, was according to the bill, put on "by desire." The *Observer* (3 May) reported,

The revival of *Janet Pride* re-introduces Mr. Webster in one of those characters which he delights to portray, and in his artist-like and forcible delineation of which, he may be said to have no living equal upon the stage...The re-production of the drama was greeted with every mark of the highest approval, and at no period of its successful career was it ever played with greater talent or livelier spirit.

The acting of Avonia Jones as both Janets (mother and daughter) was commended. The trial scene especially was impressive. Toole was described as "capital" as Janet's lover. Paul Bedford appeared in his role as Black Jack and his convict's song produced "roars of laughter."

Another revival in which Webster appeared was *The Willow Copse*. This was an adaptation of a French piece and is described in The *Times* (11 June) as "one of the favorite dramas of the old Adelphi Theatre, and its revival at the new was so far more important than its original production that Mr. Benjamin Webster played the character of Luke Fielding and made it one of his finest parts. An added attraction was the return of Mrs. Alfred Mellon to the stage after an absence of three months."

Neither *Janet Pride* nor *The Willow Copse*, despite being loved by Adelphi audiences, was played for long. Both were taken off for new major productions.

It is evident from the above that there was no lack of enterprise on the part of Webster in his management. "Safe" pieces began the season, and some well-tried plays were revived for short periods. Of the eleven new pieces, the choice of *The Haunted Man*, in its sheer novelty, showed an

adventurous spirit in the manager. Some new pieces, not outstanding in themselves, gave opportunities for the performers to show their talents.

Not least were Webster's performances in roles he had established as his own and the considerable contribution he made to the success of new plays in which he appeared. His benefit on 26 September closed a season of varied and interesting programs.

AL

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1863-1864

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The opening play, *Leah*, was the outstanding success of the season. Both the play and the actress, Miss Kate Bateman, in the title role had already been successful in America. The play was an adaptation of a German piece, *Deborah*, by Joseph Mosenthal, of which an Italian version had been brought out at Her Majesty's Theatre with Madame Ristori as the principal character. The American adaptation added some "melodramatic incident" by including a murder. Kate Bateman was the elder of two sisters who had appeared as children "some ten or twelve years earlier" (*Athenæum*, 10 October). The *Times* was enthusiastic. "Miss Bateman made a most triumphant debut last night...[There was] an unusually large audience. For some time to come, she will probably remain the centre of theatrical interest in the capital" (2 October). The reviewer described the piece as a "drama with a purpose" which seemed to intend "to vindicate the Hebrew race." Nevertheless, the part was not an easy one since the character was not attractive; unfortunate, yes, therefore, exciting pity, but vindictive and "the sport of violent passions," cursing the man she had once loved. Later in the play, the actress had to portray a change of heart, not merely by being forgiving, but by trying to compensate for her earlier conduct.

The *Athenæum* noted that commonly, early precocity on the stage did not continue into adult life. In this respect, of course, Miss Bateman was an exception: "She has suffered, however, from too early practice. Her voice, strained in infancy beyond its natural pitch, has acquired and settled into a stage-monotone, which, although it may sufficiently mark the sense of the dialogue, deprives it of music, flexibility and feeling." Some similar thought was present in the *Times* review (22 October), which after again complimenting her performance, made some comment about her "American tonics," but added: "It should be the privilege of genius to demand that inharmonious minutiae shall be practically ignored when a great comprehensive design is grandly executed." The *Observer* (4 October) gives some idea of the visual impression of her performance. "Miss Bateman is neither tall of stature nor particularly good-looking, but her countenance is capable of great expression, while her attitudes are singularly free, elegant and artistic."

The scenic effects in *Leah* were considerable. Eleven separate scenes are mentioned on the bill though two (a room in a house) may have been identical. The play was performed nightly until 11 June with one break during Holy Week. The *Observer* (3 April) stated, "the opportunity has been seized during the break to re-paint and in some respects to re-arrange the scenery so that the drama is now seen under some advantages in the appliances of stage effect...It is, we believe, an almost unprecedented fact in theatrical history that one part be played in a piece the success of which depends entirely upon a single female character to crowded houses for 150 nights." In all it was played for 211 nights. Her last night was a triumph for Miss Bateman. The *Athenæum* (18 June) reported, "during and after the performance of *Leah*, she was greeted with plaudits and more bouquets than she could bear, by a numerous audience. She was assisted in carrying them from the stage by Mr. Webster, who addressed the house in favour of the lady." Her return was announced for the following January. The King of the Greeks and the Prince and Princess of Wales had seen the play when they visited the theatre on 7 September.

For the Christmas season a light-hearted afterpiece, *The Lady Belle Belle; or, Fortunio and His Seven Magic Men*, by Henry J. Byron, was introduced. It was founded on a popular story by the Countess d'Aulnoy (playbill 26 December). The *Times* thought Byron had "treated the subject with considerable dramatic skill, the story being condensed into a single act without detriment to its clearness of plot" (28 December). The *Athenæum* (2 January) reviewed the piece favorably; "Here the author is at home." Both critics praised the scenery, and both made the inevitable comment on Byron's abundant

use of puns. The *Times* quoted one. One character, a count, has no son: "His life has been one long winter without a sun." If the critics sometimes felt the puns were too much of a good thing, one can only suppose that the audiences must have loved to squirm. Byron's pieces were popular.

In March 1864, the second long-distance runner was introduced. This was an afterpiece, *The Area Belle*, by William Brough and Andrew Halliday, performed for 128 nights. The plot was full of the crises that are the very stuff of farce. The sensation of the piece was a scene in which a man, one of two rival lovers, seemed about to be boiled alive in a copper only to be rescued just in time. After giving an account of the plot, the *Athenæum* (12 March) concluded, "The latter part of the farce created great excitement, and brought the curtain down with tumultuous applause." Success was assured.

A special production commemorating Shakespeare's tercentenary was given on 23 April. Performances were promised by six theatres including the Adelphi in aid of the National Shakespeare Fund. Whereas others offered one of Shakespeare's plays, the Adelphi gave a sketch called *Shakespeare's House* by Joseph Coyne. It included "a diorama showing characters and scenes from Shakespeare's plays," and showed the interior and exterior of his house in Stratford. It was not the main production of the evening, as it was on the same program as *Leah* and an afterpiece, and after 11 June, it was performed with other pieces. The Adelphi may well have made a better choice of production than some of the other theatres, which did little honor to Shakespeare by offering Garrick's version of *Romeo and Juliet*, and other plays with important scenes omitted. Apparently, these versions were submitted to the National Shakespeare Committee which "did nothing more than nod its head when these several programs were submitted to it" (Richard Foulkes, *The Shakespeare Tercentenary*, and the *Morning Star*, 2 May 1864). The Adelphi piece seems to have been popular, as it was performed for 123 nights.

There was a special performance for the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan on 9 July. Two pieces put on for this evening only were *A Scrap of Paper*, in which they appeared together, and *First Night*, written by Wigan himself, in which he performed. *Shakespeare's House* and *The Area Belle* completed the program. This was the only occasion on which the Wigans appeared during the season, and no particular reason given for their having a benefit. It was the occasion of a royal visit. The *Times*, 11 July, made no comment on the piece, but stated, "Mr. and Mrs. Wigan's benefit, which took place on Saturday night under the patronage of a numerous and brilliant audience, was honoured by the presence of the Prince and Princess of Wales."

Webster continued to bring out new pieces during the summer. Two of these were slight farces, not much in themselves, but providing opportunities for the performers to shine. One was *My Wife's Maid* by T. J. Williams, appearing on 8 August. "Some smart dialogue and good acting carry through the little piece, and provoke the laughter of the audience; but it makes no pretensions to any special merits. It was, however, sufficiently successful to serve the purpose of its production—that of eking out the bill at a dull season of the year" (*Athenæum*, 13 August).

Brough and Halliday were the authors of another new farce, *The Actors' Retreat*, brought out on 11 August. According to the *Athenæum* (20 August), it was in honor of the Dramatic College. It was "a slight occasional affair;" its effect depending "on the acting of Mr. J. L. Toole" who, "we need not add...made the most of his material." There were 29 performances, three more than for *My Wife's Maid*.

Another new piece was a comedietta, *A Woman of Business*, by Benjamin Webster, Jr., put on at the end of August and performed until the end of the season. This, too, had no great claims to

originality. "The drama is probably of French origin, and has few claims to novelty; it serves...the purpose of exhibiting to the best advantage the talents of Mrs. Stirling and Mr. J. L. Toole" (*Athenæum*, 3 September). The final comment was, "The curtain fell to much applause; the new piece, indeed, was decidedly successful." The *Times* (31 August) found "a refreshing change" in the plot, as the villain of the piece, played by Toole, was a country bumpkin. The criticism is an interesting comment on popular ideas of heroes and villains.

The stage is in the habit of teaching us that vice is the prerogative of large towns, and that unmitigated virtue is to be found in the provinces. For the last eighty years, at least, our theatrical boards have been inundated by countrymen who have hearts of the finest quality under exceedingly ugly waistcoats, but Mr. Toole presents us with a swain who, with the ugliest costume, has, morally speaking, no heart at all.

The acting of Mr. and Mrs. Billington was complimented.

In the last fortnight of The Season, John Toole appears to have given a marathon performance for his benefit. He appeared in a new play, *Stephen Digges*, by John Oxenford, in the title role. "The part was written expressly for this actor, who is evidently ambitious of taking the place left vacant by the late Mr. Robson" (*Athenæum*, 1 October). The *Times* said it was "a considerable undertaking," and "the success of the piece can be attributed in great measure to the acting of Toole." He also appeared in two other pieces, one of them, *The Babes in the Wood*, put on for the first time in this season.

As in 1863, the season closed with Webster's benefit. It had doubtless been a very satisfying one. The production of *Leah* had ensured success for more than half the season. Interest was maintained until the close on 24 September by programs which included a variety of plays giving opportunities for performers to display their talents.

AL

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1864-1865

Ed. Alfrida Lee

After a break of one week, the season opened on 3 October with a full change of program from the previous season and with John Collins, who had returned to London after eighteen years, new to the company. There is no doubt that his particular talents and his reputation, enhanced by his recent experience in America, accounted for the choice of plays. He was the star performer in Irish pieces until the end of his engagement on 19 November. The *Observer* (9 October) recalls him as "a meritorious singer and actor" with a good brogue, who sang Irish melodies "with taste and feeling." He appeared in *The Irish Ambassador*, which was given for the "first time" at the Adelphi (playbill) and *Teddy the Tiler*, both giving opportunities for his impersonations of Irish character and his singing of Irish songs.

Rory O'Moore, the main piece, billed as "a serio-comic Adelphi drama," was introduced on 10 October. The *Athenæum* (15 October), commenting on the three plays, stated that Collins had "created a considerable interest for his impersonation of the Irish character to which he gives especial vitality...He sings with such humour and force as to secure several encores." These Irish pieces, played throughout October, made a good start to the season. The last of the Irish pieces was a revival of *The Colleen Bawn*, performed for a fortnight in November. John Collins undertook the role of Miles-na-Coppaleen, first played by Dion Boucicault. Songs were introduced into the part; all of them encored. The final comment of the *Athenæum* (19 November) was, "altogether, it was well played; but many of the mechanical effects were absent." Clearly, there was no attempt at reproducing Boucicault's "famous header," and disappointment may well have been felt by the audience.

Of the other plays of the first two months of the season, a new one, Brough and Halliday's *Doing Banting*, was as topical as ever. The plot is about an impostor, passing himself off as a lecturer on Banting's system (a cure for obesity by dieting). He imposes upon an overweight Alderman, who "wishes with his household to be reduced to genteel proportions." The impostor is suspected because of his "indiscriminate eating" and is finally recognized by a young surgeon present at the dinner. The credulity of society is mocked in a song by the professor, "which commanded applause." In a few words spoken before the fall of the curtain, the authors disclaimed any intention of "casting a slur upon Mr. Banting, himself. Acted with humour and abounding with practical pleasantries, *Doing Banting* is perfectly successful" (*Times*, 27 October). It ran for fifty-four performances.

In November, *Masks and Faces* was revived, but the outstanding new piece was *Workmen of Paris; or, The Dramas of the Wine Shop*. It was an adaptation of *Les Drames de Cabaret* by D'Ennery and Dumanoir. The plot is developed from a murder the main character, Van Gratz, committed while drunk. "Nearly every personage in the piece becomes intoxicated, and does some mischief while under the baneful influence of alcohol." It seemed to justify the comment that it was "as teetotal in its tendency as any leader of a band of hope could desire" (*Times*, 2 December). The scenery by Gates and his associates evoked commendation from the *Athenæum* (3 December). "Two of the scenes transcend any previous example...Others are exceedingly picturesque." The *Times* added that the scene painter received "well merited applause." The play did not "abound in great parts, the one exception being Van Gratz, played by Webster, which may well rank among his finest impersonations." It was of inordinate length, lasting nearly five hours on the opening night, and needed curtailment. "But...so...superbly put upon the stage, [it] cannot fail to be attractive for a considerable length of time." Nevertheless, twenty-eight performances seem a short run for a play given so much preparation.

The new year brought the return of Kate Bateman to the Adelphi. On 2 January, *Leah* was revived. At the end of the month, she appeared as Julia in *The Hunchback*, a role new to her. The *Times* (31 January) saw it as a kind of "test piece," in which she "had to prove she is not a one-part actress...The ordeal was successfully passed." For the company as a whole, the judgment was favorable, making the point that the play made demands on a company "ordinarily employed in dramas of the most modern date and school. The way in which it was played was most creditable."

The play had only just been launched when Miss Bateman fell ill, and the program had to be changed. John Toole's appearance in *Stephen Digges* and *The Flowers of the Forest!* saved the day. More than a fortnight later, on 17 February, a copy of a doctor's certificate was published in the *Times*, stating that Miss Bateman had bronchitis and was, therefore, unable to appear. On 6 March, an announcement was made in the *Times* to the effect that she would appear in *The Hunchback* on Tuesday (7 March), Thursday, and Saturday. The Prince and Princess of Wales attended her performance on 9 March. After only eighteen performances, its run ended on 8 April. Other plays were introduced. Of *The Steeplechase* by John M Morton the *Times* (25 March) reported: Mr. J. M. Morton never let loose his innate spirit of "fun" with more determined recklessness or to better practical purpose than in a new farce called *The Steeplechase*, which keeps the Adelphi audience in an incessant roar, and thus consoles them for the pain they have endured in sympathizing with Miss Bateman's Julia.

Kate Bateman continued to be a great attraction of the season. Her next role was Bianca in the tragedy of *Fazio; or, the Italian Wife*. The *Times* (10 May) considered this to be "the most artistic of her performances." The *Observer* (14 May) thought that "her art consists chiefly in making certain points with great effort, not in filling up by numerous details of expression, the author's draft of character, or on any thoughtful elaboration of the conception."

There were only twelve performances in three weeks. The last piece in which she appeared was *Geraldine*, a play written for her by her mother. The *Times* (15 June) again made favorable comment on her performance but considered the play too long. "Interest does not even begin until the third act is half over." The play was obviously a success—"Miss Bateman was called for at the end of all but the second act. But there is nothing in this to obviate the necessity of abridgement." The *Observer* (18 June) made even harsher criticisms of the play: "The piece is deficient in power, as well as in dramatic construction, and the story, as treated in the play, appears even more commonplace than it actually is. The characters are utterly conventional...with no actuality, no distinct personality."

The review also gave detailed consideration of Kate Bateman's performance, including some defects.

By this time, it must not be a question whether Miss Bateman is an artist of the highest class, but whether certain excellences overbalance undoubted defects; whether the practice of making points effectively atones for the absence of that higher dramatic faculty that enables an artist to assume and develop the true personation of a character.

The audience, however, expressed "the most demonstrative approval" of the performance. It was played nightly until her farewell benefit two weeks later.

It is not possible to know what were the original intentions for her appearances in this season. It seems that her ill health may have accounted for the short runs and intermittent showing of plays that had required so much preparation. It is evident that she was popular with Adelphi audiences, but no play in which she appeared in 1866 compared with the tremendous success of *Leah* in the previous season.

There was no shortage of other new plays during the season. *Pan; or, The Loves of Echo and Narcissus* by H. J. Byron appeared in April. It was, said the *Times* (12 April), "one of Byron's least felicitous achievements." The play attempted to combine the fables of Echo and Narcissus, but omitted the salient factor of the love of Narcissus for his own reflected image, "and so completely hazing over the transformation of Syrinx into a reed that we are left in doubt whether it took place or not." The piece seemed adequate, if no more, supported as it was by the ever-popular *Masks and Faces* and *The Steeplechase*.

For Toole's benefit on 29 June, a new play, *Through Fire and Water*, was introduced. The *Observer* (2 July) was enthusiastic, combining favorable comment for this piece with adverse criticism of those in which Kate Bateman had appeared.

After the unsatisfactory attempts that have been made to naturalize the legitimate drama at this house, to be accounted for on the ground that it was desirable to give a young actress who had attracted public attention opportunities of appearing in leading parts, it is pleasant to have to record the production of a novelty which reminds one of the pieces that used to be...the specialty and attraction of the theatre.

The construction of the piece had its faults, noted by the *Times* (3 July) and the *Athenæum* (8 July), but, apart from that, the play was considered highly successful. It was a great piece for Toole and something of a new line for him. "All the parts are good and well-acted." It ran for forty-four performances, being played every night until the close of the summer season on 19 August, except for Webster's benefit on 1 July.

For this benefit, the *Observer* noted that the house was "filled in every part with an audience who testified their esteem for the manager...by attending in great numbers, as well as by receiving Mr. Webster when he appeared before the curtain...with every demonstrative expression that could be granted."

Kate Bateman appeared for him in *The Lady of Lyons*. Gracious as always, he thanked her for "generously offering her great services."

This was the last night of the winter season and a short summer season followed immediately, the theatre reopening on 3 July with a new play, *Solon Shingle*, and an American actor, John E. Owens, new to the Adelphi. The merits of the production rested with the portrayal of Solon Shingle by Owens, whose object was "to give a representation of Yankee character, free from those exaggerations which are accepted on this side of the water as its usual exponents; and that his portrait...has been recognised in America as a veritable likeness."

With other compliments to his performance, the *Athenæum* (8 July) made the final comment, "if Mr. Owens has many such portraits, we shall be happy to meet with him in other characters." The *Observer* (9 July) gave him high praise: "No one has shown greater power of delineation of the American character than Mr. Owens," and the *Times* (5 July) confirmed that credit was due more to Owens than to the original play. The plot was "a stupid story." It was performed every evening until the end of the short summer season.

On 19 August, an announcement appeared in the *Times* that the close was necessary for repairs and repainting.

During the winter and summer seasons, thirty-three different pieces (including *The Lady of Lyons* played for two benefit nights) were produced. Of these, seven were entirely new and others new to this theatre. It was an outstanding year for the Adelphi and full of interest and variety in productions.

AL

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1865-1866

Ed. Alfrida Lee

In the two weeks before The Season opened on 4 September, the theatre had been "entirely re-painted and re-embellished and the seats throughout re-stuffed and re-covered with costly material, in order to increase the comfort and accommodation of the numerous patrons of this establishment" (*Times*).

A new program and the first appearance in London of the popular American actor Joseph Jefferson marked the opening night. The play, which became the brilliant success of The Season, was *Rip Van Winkle* by Boucicault. The evolution of this version from Washington Irving's original story is interesting. Boucicault's account is that Jefferson was anxious to appear in London, but the managers would not accept him "unless he could offer them a new play. He had played [in America] a piece called *Rip Van Winkle* but when submitted to their perusal, they rejected it. Still he was so desirous of playing Rip that I took down Washington Irving's story and read it over. It was hopelessly undramatic." Boucicault suggested giving more interest by making Rip a "young scamp" instead of "an old beast." "Jefferson threw up his hands in despair. It was totally opposed to his artistic preconception. But I insisted, and he reluctantly conceded. Well, I wrote the play as he plays it now." Boucicault's biographer commented, "This anecdote...is not intended to prove the play a great and glorious masterpiece. On the contrary, it is the veriest potboiler, and without Joseph Jefferson would not have long endured. But without Boucicault's clever turn of the wrist, the subtlest of actors could never have made the role of Rip attractive" (*The Career of Dion Boucicault*, 109-110).

The play was well reviewed overall. The *Athenæum* (9 September) made a reference to American stars appearing at the Adelphi and considered the version of the drama had "the advantage of Mr. Boucicault's experience," adding that Jefferson had been "more prudent than his predecessor" in making "his debut in a play capable of standing the wear and tear of criticism." The *Times*, on September 6, made the point more emphatically. "Mr. Jefferson has this advantage over another distinguished American, Mr. J. E. Owens, that he appears in an interesting drama, and not amid surroundings of utter trash."

The *Observer* (10 September) gave slightly more qualified praise of the play, considering the version of the story successful, "retaining all the leading characteristics of the legend, with so much super-added as makes it an interesting, if not an altogether well-constructed drama." The carpenters' scenes would have been better omitted, and in making a good part for Jefferson, Boucicault had taken "great pains with those scenes in which the hero appeared and [had] taken little trouble with the others." There was some adverse criticism of the production itself. The *Times* thought that the "varied accents used by the performers had a false ring; common-sense tells us that all would talk alike." Jefferson's accent was described as more German than Dutch; The *Observer* described it as broken German. "The aging of Rip in twenty years seemed too great and that of the other characters too little."

The talent of Jefferson was unquestioned. The psychological quality of his performance was noted by the *Times* and the *Observer*, which added, "He is no mere surface actor; every look, tone and gesture perfectly in accord with the situation is an outward expression of character, and in this, with the utter absence of anything like exaggeration, combined with telling and picturesque action lie some of the rarer qualities of Mr. Jefferson as an artist." The production proved to be extremely popular, with an unbroken run of 172 performances.

During this time, two royal visits were made, one by Princess Louise on 3 December and the other by Princess Mary of Cambridge on 3 March 1866.

In December, John L. Toole returned to the Adelphi after a provincial tour to perform in *Behind Time*, a new farce in one act by Benjamin Webster, Jr. "It was not of a pretentious character either in plot or dialogue," but was "very amusing." Toole was "loudly and repeatedly applauded...he announced that *Behind Time* would be repeated every evening until further notice." There were ninety-eight performances. He and "his old ally," Paul J. Bedford, appeared in *The Steeplechase* (*Times*, 27 December).

Another new farce was given in January, *Pipkin's Rustic Retreat* by T. J. Williams. The plot, with the basic idea of a Cockney in the country, had "been treated with some originality." Toole, as the Cockney, had to "represent intensive terror and rapid alterations of feeling...He keeps the audience constantly amused by his rapid transitions and grotesque farce" (*Observer*, 21 January). It continued in performance until 24 March, which was also the last night of *Rip Van Winkle*.

In October, a play, *Betty Martin*, was taken off after only three nights. It seems that the illness of Mrs. Alfred Mellon (late Miss Woolgar), who had the title role, accounted for its very brief run. She returned to the theatre on 26 March to appear in *Through Fire and Water* and *The Wreck Ashore*, while *Behind Time* continued in performance. The program was billed as "entire change of performance—extraordinary attraction for Passion Week." Toole appeared in all three plays. The *Times* (3 April) thought this program "made up no indifferent entertainment for the holydays."

The new production, in which Mrs. Mellon had the title roles, was *Crying Jenny and Laughing Johnny*, from Offenbach's opera, *Jeanne qui pleure et Jean qui rit*, adapted by Ben Webster, Jr., "who had performed the difficult task of fitting English words to French music." Johnny was Jenny in disguise, so that Mrs. Mellon was, in effect, playing two roles. "She acted with capital spirit and made a humorous crying song and a drinking song in praise of cider equally effective." Hers was not the only disguise. Toole sang a comic song wearing female apparel. The music included a song not belonging to the piece, "The Fairy and the Toad." "The music...found a ready welcome from the audience" (*Observer*, 22 April). The *Times* reviewed the production favorably but later in the year had sharp criticism to make of adaptations of Offenbach in theatres without singers of the right caliber. However, this one was successful, being played fifty-four times.

Another adaptation from Offenbach appeared in June, a version by F.C. Burnard of *Helen; or, Taken from the Greek*. Of English productions generally, the *Times* (13 July) made the point that

we have no regular organized company of comic acting vocalists, with appropriate band and chorus...theatrical managers intrust them [comic operas] to their burlesque companies and get a burlesque writer to furnish them with dialogue. They answer their purpose to a certain extent...*Helen* may be ranked among the successful novelties of the summer season. But they do not acquire for their composer any of the musical reputation he must covet.

The *Athenæum* (7 July) showed similar disapproval. "The rendering was free and easy, far too much so, we think, and certainly erred in vulgarising the pleasant wit of the original by broadly exaggerating it into burlesque. The music, of course, was beyond the general capabilities of the company, yet was better delivered than might have been expected." There was commendation for the chief performers. The *Times*, too, mentioned them individually. The production was considered a success.

Between these two productions, in May, one more new adaptation from the French was presented, *The Fast Family* by Benjamin Webster, Jr., from *La Famille Benoiton* by Victorien Sardou. The first act of the original, being introductory, was cut and the other four acts used. The *Athenæum* (12 May) thought the whole "too long for an English audience." Following an account of the plot, the review continued, "The whole affair, it will be seen, is intensely Parisian; but the comedy shows so much talent, and is so well acted, that, as an illustration of modern French manners, it may prove welcome, as well as instructive." It ran for ninety-seven performances. The Prince and Princess of Wales attended the performance on 8 May.

On 11 June, a ballet, *Le Flor de Sevilla*, was given "for the first time ever." The *Observer* (17 June) noted that it had been brought out "for the purpose of introducing some Spanish dancers...Without any extraordinary elegance or pantomimic power, they infuse so much life into their movements, and exhibit such plastic agility of limb and a determined desire to please that their efforts cannot fail to be received with applause." If nothing else, it added to the variety of the pieces given.

For his benefit on 29 August, John Toole performed the character of Paul Pry, a part made famous by Liston "at the zenith of his popularity" forty years previously. There had been attempted revivals, but only Edward Wright's was "yet answerable to the conception formed of it by the regular playgoer." What, then, did Toole bring to the role?

He takes a moral view of the character and then provides it with a fitting embodiment. The result is a wholly artistic portrait, a clever impersonation in which reflection is made to resemble spontaneity...It is wonderfully ingenious in its outline and plentifully filled up with striking details (*Athenæum*, 8 September).

This was quite an impressive tribute for a performance got up for a benefit and performed only four nights.

A week later Mr. and Mrs. Billington took their benefit and after a break of one week the last benefit, that of J. W. Anson, the treasurer, brought the season to an end.

The striking success of Joseph Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle* made it the most outstanding of The Season, and some credit was due to Webster in bringing before London audiences this most talented actor in a role in which he "burst into world-wide fame and his name became a household word among English-speaking people" (*Career of Dion Boucicault*, p. 110). For the rest of the time, other new plays and adaptations of lesser note, together with revivals of old favorites, pleased the audience, whose only regret would have been Webster's absence from the stage owing to indisposition throughout the season.

AL

Theatre Royal, New Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1866-1867

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The season was somewhat shorter than the previous one, having only 287 performances compared with 316. No new play was offered for the opening night. There was, however, a very talented actress engaged for the season, Kate Terry. Perhaps in these days better known as the sister of Ellen Terry and the grandmother of Sir John Gielgud, she herself had already established a high reputation in London and Bristol when she went to the Adelphi. Unfortunately for the stage, she retired in 1867 when she married Arthur Lewis, but "at the height of her career she had been considered a better actress than her more famous sister, Ellen" (*Oxford Companion to the Theatre*).

On the opening night, she made her first appearance in *A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*, in "an old and not very important part." The piece did not call for comment, but the heroine was "one of Miss Terry's best personalities and in spite of the unimportance of the piece she has always produced a most favourable impression by her acting in it, which is marked by extreme grace and tenderness" (*Observer*, 7 October).

Her sister, Florence, only eleven at the time, appeared as the daughter of the heroine. The main piece of the evening was *Helen; or, Taken from the Greek*. The next piece in which Kate Terry appeared was *Ethel; or, Only a Life*, an adaptation by Benjamin Webster, Jr., of *Une Pauvre Fille*. The play had little merit. It was sufficiently applauded

to warrant the rise of the curtain after the performance of the last act and the appearance of the author before the footlights, but as these results could not be obtained save by the defeat of a body of dissentients, who not only hissed but shouted out such unsavoury substantives as 'trash' and 'rubbish,' the triumph was not worth much.

The play was "not agreeable." The *Times* (5 October) added, "a more technical objection lies in the extreme length of the work." There was no fault in Kate Terry's performance. The role was scarcely worthy of her, but "what would be utterly ineffective and wearisome in the keeping of an ordinary actress, she renders effective and interesting by the natural interpretation of the character." No blame could be attached to the other performers; the play itself was at fault. "With all due praise to her gifted comrades, it must be confessed Ethel saved the piece from failing. With a part more worthy of the intellect she can expend on it, there will come a greater and abiding triumph" (*Athenæum*, 20 October). There were only twenty-five performances.

At the end of November, a new piece, *A Sister's Penance* by Tom Taylor and Augustus Dubourg was presented, no doubt because of a strong role for Kate Terry. The reviewers treated the play itself with scorn. One example sums up defects: "There is little skill in working up the incidents, the dialogue is poor, and the piece, except at intervals, drags a slow length along" (*Observer*, 2 December). Again there was no doubt of Kate Terry's talent, on which the success of the play depended, though the part was deemed unworthy of her, and both the *Observer* and the *Times* commented on her misfortune in having to waste herself on such pieces. However, the play was greatly applauded and "on the fall of the curtain," she and three other performers "were summoned to receive the congratulations of a well-filled house" (*Athenæum*, 1 December). An all too familiar comment on its length was made by the *Observer*. "The new drama...might be greatly improved by compression, and with judicious alterations will probably keep its place upon the boards for some time." With eighty-three performances, it had more success than *Ethel*.

On Boxing Day, with the return of John Toole from a provincial tour, a new burlesque *The Mountain Dhu* by Andrew Halliday was presented. The theme, taken from *The Lady of the Lake*, was used as a basis for uproarious fun. The *Observer* gives an example of the absurd (30 December): "Roderick Dhu...though slain by the Knight of Snowden is resuscitated in the last scene in good time to take part in the finale, when everybody within the limits of poetic justice is made more comfortable."

The scenery, described as picturesque by the *Athenæum*, would have contributed to the appeal of the production, which ran for eighty-seven performances. During January and February, it was the sole supporting piece of *A Sister's Penance* and no doubt provided light relief from the gloomy and melodramatic nature of that play. The Prince of Wales visited the theatre on 5 March.

A new piece, *Lost in London* by Watt Phillips, was brought out on 16 March. The bill stated that Miss Neilson had been "engaged expressly for this play." The disappointment was that Webster was prevented by illness from taking the role intended for him. Henry Neville, new to the Adelphi, took his place. As the working miner, he was "conspicuous for his northern dialect and rude pathos, which went to the heart of the audience." Miss Neilson was not, however, thought to give such a finished performance. She was "as yet crude in her art; but showed signs of improvement in the executive portion of it by the display of natural feeling without running into extravagance" (*Athenæum*, 23 March). Success for the production was expected. It ran for forty-eight nights.

During this time a new one-act musical drama, *Garibaldi in Sicily*, was produced. The *Times* (27 April) neatly summed up the elements of its success—ninety-nine performances:

The action and plot are to a great extent subordinate to the main business—namely, the introduction of effective scenery and grouping blended with a considerable amount of very fair singing. There was good scene painting by Mr. J. Gates....The music by Mr. Hatton and Mr. Calcott also deserves favourable mention.

Dora, by Charles Reade, produced in June, was a "poetic drama" based on Tennyson's poem. In three acts, it was—no surprise—judged by the *Athenæum* (8 June) to be far too long "for a simple tale...The first act was enchanting, the second commonplace and the third interrupted with laughter." The *Observer* (2 June) was more generous: "Charles Reade has constructed a clever drama." The play was applauded, and the only adverse criticism was that "In one scene physical suffering was made too prominent." At the end of the season (7 September), the *Athenæum* described it as "a stage-portrait of distinctive elegance." Kate Terry took the principal role and performed it thirty-six times.

A short farce, *A Slice of Luck* by John Morton, "rather slight both in subject and structure" (*Athenæum*, 29 June), was a successful afterpiece, appearing on the program until the end of the season.

Some benefit performances were notable, one for the talent brought together for the occasion. In May, a Saturday matinee performance was given on behalf of the widow and children of C. H. Bennett. It was sufficiently interesting to be reviewed. It was billed as "amateur," but seems to have been very professional for the most part. The program began with a version of *Cox and Box* by F. C. Burnand, set to music by Arthur Sullivan, now renowned as the composer of light operas, but who had not then started in this field. The *Times* (13 May) commented:

Mr. Burnand has executed his task so well and Mr. Arthur Sullivan, our most rising composer has written music for it so full of sparkling tunes and real comic humour that

we cannot but believe that this musical version of a popular farce would have a genuine success if produced on the recognised stage by professional singers...Mr. Sullivan should compose an overture and so complete his admirable operetta.

This was done in July when it was again performed for charity and set Sullivan on his way as a composer of opera (*Grove's Dictionary of Music*).

This piece was followed by *A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*, on this occasion with three Terry sisters performing, Ellen taking the role of the servant. The matinee concluded with *Les Deux Aveugles*, billed as a musical entertainment, with only two performers. One was George du Maurier, better known now as the author of *Trilby*, but who, earlier in his career, was an artist and also a fine singer. He also sang in *Cox and Box*.

For Henry Neville's benefit on 24 July, Kate Terry performed in *The Lady of Lyons*. His father, John Neville, and brother, George, appeared with him in *His First Champagne* (playbill).

For her benefit on 3 July, Kate Terry performed as Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*, a role much more worthy of her talents than her previous ones at the Adelphi. The *Times* (26 July) gave unqualified praise. "We can remember no such Beatrice, and we find it difficult to conceive a better." The Adelphi Company was not considered to be really fitted for the acting of Shakespeare's comedies, but Henry Neville did well as Benedick for a first-time performance. Ellen Terry appeared for her in *Little Treasure*. *Much Ado About Nothing* was then performed twenty times.

The last production was *Romeo and Juliet* for three nights with Kate Terry as Juliet—her farewell to the stage. The critics agreed on the fine quality of her performance. After prolonged applause on the last night (31 August), she received "one of the greatest compliments ever paid to an actress. The whole audience rose to leave the house, and scarcely anyone remained to see the farce" (*Observer* 1 September).

On 4 September, for the treasurer J. W. Anson's benefit, *As You Like It* was presented, most of the performers appearing for that night only.

After that, the season ended, but Webster, as manager, was not given the peace he would have wished. The *Times* (13 September), after giving lavish praise to Kate Terry on 2 September, attacked the last production, *Romeo and Juliet*, in very contemptuous terms, comparing it unfavorably with the current production at the Haymarket. At the Haymarket, "appropriateness, good taste and intelligence" were shown in the "dresses, scenery and stage-management," while at the Adelphi "beggardliness and brainlessness...seemed to reign unchecked." He could not, of course, disparage Kate Terry but thought a comparison between the two Juliets would have been "unfair, and would serve no useful purpose." He avoided this by taking the superiority of Kate Terry for granted. "It would be unfair to pit an actress (Mrs. Scott-Siddons of the Haymarket) of so little experience against one of so much, or to measure a star just showing on the horizon with one...at the zenith."

It is not surprising that the expression "brainlessness and beggarliness" stung Webster into making a reply in which he said he would do full justice to the Haymarket production, "but would not shrink from any comparison that could be *fairly* made between the two" (17 September).

The critic did not let the matter rest, but the following day made references to "mutilation and transposition of scenes," and the disregard of "indications in the text" in the ball scene. He added

scathing references to the "shabbiness" of the "mise en scène, and the shortcomings of the stage-management."

A letter was printed below supporting these opinions and so much in the same vein as to appear to have been prompted by the reviewer, if not written by him. No name was given, only the initials G. A. D.

On 23 September Webster replied. The critic had been aware that toward the close of Miss Kate Terry's engagement it "was resolved by [her] that she should appear...for three nights in *Romeo and Juliet*." Would it not have been "brainless" to provide new scenery and dresses for three nights? In conclusion, Webster pointed out that as the Adelphi had the longest theatrical season in London, the criticism that the "benches had become soiled" was answered by the early closing of the theatre for renovation.

The critic persisted. It was not he who had identified the manager with the defects, yet a manager must be held responsible for what he permitted in his theatre. He acknowledged that Webster was renovating the "front of his theatre," adding that when he had done as much for the stage, not only would the public be pleased but—egregious remark—Webster would "be fain to acknowledge his great and real obligation to—your Dramatic Critic."

No further comment was made.

Undoubtedly, the production of *Romeo and Juliet* left something to be desired, but much of this vituperation was unjustified. For the season as a whole, the scenery could scarcely have been so contemptible when the *Athenæum* had described that of the *Mountain Dhu* as picturesque, and the *Times* (perhaps not the same critic) commended the good scene painting of J. Gates for *Garibaldi in Sicily*. As in the previous season, Webster's absence from the stage due to illness was regretted, and some plays of little merit were offered. However, it had its successes, and the talents of some of its performers, especially Kate Terry, were undisputed.

AL

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1867-1868

Ed. Alfrida Lee

In 1867, the Adelphi closed for a longer period than usual, from 5 September until 4 October, for re-decoration. More than one newspaper commented on the improvement. "The house has been newly painted and gaily decorated, so that it now presents a very bright and attractive appearance" (*Morning Post* 7 October). The *Athenæum* (12 October) added, "thus a reproach of many months' standing has been removed," evidently in agreement with "Your Dramatic Critic" of the *Times* on the need for renovation, but without his asperity. Presumably the seats had been cleaned, but as they had been "re-stuffed and re-covered" only two years before, as stated in a *Times* announcement of the 12 September 1865, they could not have needed anything more.

The program for the opening night showed caution, consisting of well-tried pieces. Webster himself, returning to the stage after two years' absence, seemed to be the star of the evening in the part of poor Triplet in which he "again secured the admiration of the best judges of acting" (*Athenæum* 12 October). *The Irish Tutor* (billed as a popular farce) and *The School for Tigers* (a revived farce) supported *Masks and Faces*. The playbill mentioned that it was Mrs. Alfred Mellon's first appearance since her bereavement. Her husband had died on 27 March after twelve years of marriage. She had appeared once since for a benefit performance on 29 July (playbill). In addition to appearing on the stage, she had now been appointed directress. The scene-painters were George Danson, who continued from the previous season and T. Grieve and Sons, who replaced J. Gates.

New pieces had to wait until 14 October when *Man is not Perfect, Nor Woman Neither* by Benjamin Webster, Jr. replaced *The Irish Tutor*. The former was taken from *L'Homme N'est Pas Parfait* and the *Athenæum* (19 October) dismissed Webster's play in the comment, "We have seen another version of it, which we liked much better." The *Evening Standard* (15 October) in contrast was quite enthusiastic. "The drama is, generally speaking, full of motion and bustle, and is written with sufficient smartness. Here and there, indeed, it hangs fire from the lack of incident and the diffuseness of the dialogue, but it is very amusing, and a better-acted piece has seldom been witnessed in any theatre." Mrs. Mellon, George Belmore, Stephenson, Taylor, and Emily Pitt were praised, "fitting their parts well." Evidently popular, it continued in performance until Christmas. The well-known piece *One Touch of Nature* replaced *Masks and Faces*. As expected, with Webster as Mr. Penholder, this was well received. Miss Simms also appeared in her original character, in which "if we mistake not, Miss Henrietta Simms first proved herself an accomplished actress in the serious line."

The new major production of the autumn was *Maud's Peril* by Watts Phillips, the author of *The Dead Heart*. The plot apparently left something to be desired. The *Observer* (27 October) commented,

Here it will be seen is an interesting story, but the subject is an unpleasant one, and the piece has the author's old fault—it drags in the dialogue. Mr. Phillips appears to lack power to convey his meaning by a few sharp speeches, selected from the mass of words that might naturally enough be spoken in the various situations, but which the skilled dramatist, who knows how to get well over his ground, never gives in detail. As a whole, however, *Maud's Peril* is perhaps the best of Mr. Phillips's dramas and is not one of the longest. The characters are well drawn, but can scarcely be said to be subjected to any process of development from the first scene to the last.

The *Morning Post* (24 October) mentioned "sentimental dialogue" and "sensational incident which is the climax of every scene..."

We are sorry to add that it is from the pen of Mr. Watts Phillips who should have known better. Instead of contenting himself with life as it really is, he goes in for the dismal and appalling...It haunts the memory like a nightmare." The production, however, could not be faulted. Webster "under whose direction the piece has been produced with much beauty and brilliancy of scenic illustration, has done all that was possible to make it externally attractive.

The *Observer* found the scenery beautiful and a great credit to Thomas Grieve. The *Evening Standard* (25 October) described it as "striking and appropriate" and, quite eulogistic, claimed, "one or two scenes may fairly be pronounced masterpieces of stage painting." In this review the audience is described as "fashionable as well as numerous." A royal visitor, the Prince of Wales, was present. The *Athenæum* (2 November) referred to improvements in the theatre. "Whatever reproach may have attached itself to this theatre or its management can now no longer be said to apply, whether touching the general appearance of the house, or the scenic adornments of the stage...As to stage accessories and pictorial embellishment, Mr. Watts Phillips can have nothing to complain of in regard to the mounting of his new play." The performers were praised, especially Belmore in the major role. The play was performed fifty-four times until it was replaced on Boxing Day.

A "screaming new farce," *Up for the Cattle Show*, by Harry Lemon, is worth mentioning, if only for its long run, 101 performances. It replaced *The School for Tigers*. The *Observer* reviewed it: "It is a mere trifle, with certainly no more ingenuity and novelty of construction than will waft it for a brief period on the tide of public favour...It will serve as an agreeable pendant to the graver attraction of *Maud's Peril*" (8 December). The length of its run was a considerable success for a first play.

The Christmas fare at the Adelphi was "not the burlesque or any of the lighter entertainments to which managers resort at this season but the new Christmas story issued in connection with *All the Year Round* from the pen of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins entitled *No Thoroughfare*" (*Evening Standard*, 27 December). The production was well received.

Considering the play as a whole, both the *Times* and the *Observer* found its length excessive—"it was nearly 1:00 a.m. before the curtain fell" (*Times*, 27 December), but it "kept the audience intensely interested until the very last, notwithstanding that the climax of the plot had been reached at the end of the fourth act," and "the play is indeed encumbered at several points by long and needless explanations." The *Observer* (29 December) found the plot faulty. "The interest as the story progresses diverges from its original line, and it requires the aid of preliminary incidents to render it comprehensible to the spectator." It seems two scenes were omitted on the second night. Overall, however, the production received high praise. The scenery, by Thomas Grieve and Sons, especially of the mountain, "quite realized the author's descriptions...There was a most agreeable completeness of general effect...that is a powerful aid to stage illusion, helping both the story and the acting to the perception of the audience."

The *Athenæum* (4 January 1868) thought that the play presented "opportunities for what are called Adelphi effects," these including a snowstorm in which the two chief characters were seen crossing the Alps. A fall over the cliff by Neville was "likely to become as great a feature as the sensation[al] header in *The Colleen Bawn*" (*Evening Standard*, 27 December). Several reviews mention the strong cast. Charles Fechter, in the chief role, had an international reputation, and Carlotta Leclercq made her first appearance at the Adelphi. From the regular company, those especially commended included Mr. and Mrs. Billington, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, and Benjamin Webster. It is evident that no expense was spared. The bill carried the note that the arrangements with Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Fechter would "not admit of any complimentary admissions, the public press excepted." From 18

May, Fechter's role was taken by R. Phillips, who was also the stage manager. The play was performed until 20 June with a run of 151 nights.

There were three royal visits: by the Prince of Wales on 7 January—the Prince and Princess of Teck on 22 January and Prince Arthur on 29 February (*Times*).

The supporting piece was *Up for the Cattle Show* until 4 April. It was replaced by *Go to Putney*, also by Harry Lemon. The *Observer* (12 April) sums it up:

The Oxford and Cambridge Boat-Race has been seized upon for a farce. A *pièce de circonstance* scarcely demands a criticism, and if an hour, or even half an hour's amusement is afforded to an audience upon a subject that at that moment occupies general attention, the purpose is answered, as is just the case with Mr. Lemon's little piece.

Belmore performed well as "an old and touchy sea-captain." It was performed seventy-seven times.

The only other new piece was *Tom Thrasher* by Augustus G. Harris, who had introduced Fechter to London in 1860. According to the *Athenæum*, it was "fabricated with some skill out of well-worn and commonplace materials." It is possible that Harris wrote the play to give good parts to his daughters, Maria and Nelly, whose benefit took place on 8 July. The *Athenæum* (11 July) mentions that a concert was given. The singers included several who had already made a name in opera or on the concert platform but were to become more famous later: Mlle. Patti, Charles Santly, and Mme. Sainton-Dolby.

Some plays were evidently revived especially for Charles J. Mathews, whose engagement began on 22 June when he appeared as Count d'Arenal in *A Day of Reckoning* and as Young Wilding in his play, *The Liar*. The *Observer* (28 June) considered it was only for Mathew's performance that the play was memorable and therefore revived. Carlotta Leclercq's acting showed "grateful pathos." On 8 July, Mathews appeared in "his original part of Jasper, in the almost forgotten comedy of *A Bachelor of Arts*" (*Athenæum*, 11 July). The *Evening Standard* (9 July) was enthusiastic in praise of Mathews. "He is the only comedian over whom time seems to possess no power" and "his range is not limited to comedy, and his capability of intense and powerful acting have been abundantly evidenced in his impersonation of the cool, resolute, polished villain." The wisdom of Webster in engaging him was "proved by the plaudits of the frequenters of the house." His last performance was on 25 July.

There was only one performance of a Shakespeare play. For his benefit, Henry Neville appeared as Hamlet, with his father as Polonius—the choice of play no doubt indicating Henry Neville's aspirations.

The hit at the end of The Season was *The Flying Scud* by Dion Boucicault. The *Observer* (2 August) commended George Belmore and Charlotte Saunders in the two principal parts. The *Evening Standard* (29 July) made a full comment on the visual effect of the production.

New, picturesque and well-painted scenery has been provided, and...diverting and sensational effects prominent amongst which are "The Jockey Hornpipe," always encored, and "The Derby Day," a wonderful realization that everyone should see and which nightly excites enthusiastic marks of approval.

It was performed until the end of the season on 19 September.

No reviewer could now make derogatory comments on the scenery or quality of productions. Webster had set a high standard in *Maud's Peril* that seemed to be maintained throughout the season. The plays appeared to be well matched to the performers with more harmonious effects than in the two previous years. With The Season ending on a triumphant note, Webster might look forward to an improved future for the theatre and himself as manager.

AL

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1868-1869

Ed. Alfrida Lee

A review of the season might well rest upon a consideration of the opening night of 19 October 1868. The evening began with *Tom Thrasher*, a successful farce from the previous season. *Monte Cristo* followed this, a major production clearly intended for a long run. However, its first nights bordered on disaster and, without some alteration, the future was not promising. It had the disadvantage, so often mentioned of new pieces at the Adelphi, of inordinate length—nearly five hours, and it was almost 1:00 a. m. before the curtain fell.

The critics acknowledged the difficulty of adapting a "long and unwieldy story" to the stage. There had been other adaptations in both France and England; none had met with much success. The *Athenæum* (24 October), mentioning the failure of a French version at Drury Lane, added that the production, "scarcely less disastrous, of the Adelphi play was the consequence of deplorable heedlessness and mismanagement"—a damning comment. Some of the plot had been changed to

furnish Mr. Webster with increased opportunities. Thanks to this alteration, Noirtier [Webster's role] is constantly upon the stage. His presence serves no purpose whatever. All that can be said concerning it is that Mr. Webster looks very well in the disguises he assumes, and does nothing in the most picturesque and effective manner possible.

A doubtful compliment indeed! However, the acting was good. Fechter played Edmund Dantes "with elegance and grace to which Melingue, the original exponent of the part, could never attain. Mr. Webster was admirably made up to represent four different characters and acted quietly and well in each.

Belmore and Mrs. Mellon were praised. The critics complimented the scenery and mentioned that the painter of the cliff scene was "summoned before the audience" though the *Observer* and the *Athenæum* thought it would have been in better taste if he had not then appeared, breaking the interest in the play. The final comment of the *Athenæum* was dismissive: "The reception of the piece was very unfavorable. The version, indeed, presents scarcely a redeeming feature. All the sparkle of the dialogue has been lost. Whatever was best in the original was slurred over or omitted; whatever was weakest and worst was brought to the front."

The *Times* (19 October) implied that it was irredeemable. The review ended, "nothing, however, can compensate for the unwieldiness of the play, and its rambling, unsatisfactory plot, puzzling alike to those who have read the romance and those who have not." The *Morning Post* (19 October), while not questioning the defects, had hopes for the play. "It would be a pity if a play so cleverly mounted should fail, but if anything is to be made of it, the dialogue must be cut down to one half its dimensions." It is clear that no effort and expense had been spared, and Webster had high expectations. With such reviews what would he do?

Within a fortnight, he had evidently taken prompt action and transformed the near failure to a success. The *Times* (2 November) reported:

Monte Cristo showed by its varied fortune on the first night...that it was not without material that might, perhaps, be turned to profitable account; while the very fact that its parts hung somewhat loosely together, though this peculiarity was a fault, favoured the opinion that abbreviations could be effected with a rough and ready hand...Extreme

length was, after all, one of the great demerits of *Monte Cristo* and as this has been reduced to the extent of about a third, the piece moves on as smoothly as could be wished.

At the end of November, *Tom Thrasher* was replaced by *Did You Ever Send Your Wife to Camberwell?* by Joseph S. Coyne, and this, too, proved to be very popular, with a run of 155 performances. The Crown Prince of Prussia, the son-in-law of Queen Victoria, (who was to rule for 99 days as Frederick III) visited the theatre on 13 November (*Times*, 14 November).

After ninety-six performances, *Monte Cristo* was replaced by *The Dead Heart* on 8 February until another change at Easter. This was not a revival of desperation but a new production put on with all suitable splendor of scenery, costume and decoration. "Mr. Hawes Craven has painted several admirable views of Paris as it appeared during the awful era of the Revolution...Well acted, and mounted with equal elegance and accuracy, the play passes off with spirit and elicits hearty applause" (*Morning Post*, 10 February).

The *Observer* (13 February) was not behind in its praise. "The rank of the piece itself has been so long established, that no criticism is necessary to assign to it a proper place among recent productions." There had been some cast changes, but

the most striking feature in the whole performance still remains unchanged—the assumption of the character of Robert Landry by Mr. Webster. This is undoubtedly one of the most effective and...one of the most elaborate and finished bits of acting that our modern London stage presents, and it may be said of it with justice that time and repetition have not weakened, but, on the contrary, have strengthened and matured it.

On 25 February, the Duchess of Cambridge and the Princess of Teck attended the performance.

An exchange of correspondence between Charles Dickens and Mrs. Mellon preserved in the London Theatre Museum reveals that Dickens had intended to give three morning readings. Unfortunately, they were cancelled because of the novelist's ill health.

At the end of March, *The Dead Heart* was replaced by *Black and White*, a new play by Wilkie Collins and Fechter. The production did not show the faithful representation of the period that had been observed in *The Dead Heart*. The *Observer* (5 April) noted that with

utter disregard of truth in costume, the characters are dressed in the fashion of the present day. The discrepancy may be pardoned, however, for the reason, which, no doubt, prompted its being risked—namely—that it would be impossible to associate any sentimental interest with the dresses that were worn in 1830. At all events, after the first five minutes, none are [*sic*] likely to trouble themselves about the subject; they have something else to think of in a good dramatic story and a well-constructed plot.

The *Times* (2 April) described it as "one of the neatest dramas of interest that has been seen for some time." The scenery was again complimented—"all new and well-painted" (*Morning Post*, 30 March), and from the *Observer*, "The scenery by Mr. H. Craven is clever...the general excellence of the stage arrangements contributed not a little to the effect of this...drama." The acting of Fechter was especially praised; the performance of Carlotta Leclercq was outstanding; and others mentioned were Atkins, Belmore, Stirling, Stuart, and Phillips. The run finished on 8 May, which was presumably the end of Fechter's engagement, after forty-eight performances.

The next major production, *Eve*, an English version by B. Webster, Jr. of *Gabrielle*, a comedy in verse by M. Emile Angier, came at the end of May. *Eve*, in three acts, was very different from the original, in five, but the substance and situations remained. The reviews were rather mixed, tending overall towards finding weaknesses in the adaptation. The *Times* considered that it lacked "the force and beauty of M. Angier's verse" (6 June). The *Athenæum* (5 June), however, was quite scathing. The aims of the play were

the exaltation of prosaic and commonplace virtues. However, the execution is inferior to the intention...What was wanting to make *Gabrielle* a thoroughly poor and weak drama has been added by the adapter, who...has cut out what might be distasteful to an English audience, and has left the remainder more unpleasant without being one whit more proper for the excisions.

The acting was commendable, especially that of Webster, except in the first act when he "acted timidly and feebly." The play was received during the other two acts "with great favour." New scenery was provided with an interesting effect made "by dividing the stage into two rooms" (*Observer*, 6 June). It was performed 35 times, to be replaced by *The Willow Copse*, in which Webster appeared in his original character of Luke Fielding. His performance was "very fine" but the "general cast was far from satisfactory" (*Athenæum*, 17 July). The *Morning Post* (13 July) described the piece as "one of those rare plays upon which, as well as a friend in the days of adversity, a manager, when the attractions of other pieces begin to wane, may always rely with confidence to draw a good house." There was new and picturesque scenery.

Nevertheless, it is difficult not to think that, in putting on *The Willow Copse*, Webster was near the end of his resources for the season. His attention may well have been engaged for the performance at the Crystal Palace on behalf of the Dramatic College of which he was the master. On 24 July, the day of the performance, the program at the Adelphi was altered so that he could appear. Webster's standing in the world of the theatre is exemplified in the comment of the *Morning Post* (26 July). "Mr. Webster was singled out for especial applause, a tribute due equally to his great merits as an actor and his devoted and unwearying exertions in the cause of the Royal Dramatic College, of which he fills so worthily the office of master."

The Prince and Princess of Wales were to receive purses for the college. Earlier, on 16 June, they had attended the benefit performance of the Misses Harris.

The season officially ended on 28 July with Webster's benefit. The following day the bill announced, "Open for the summer season." From 6 August Webster and Mrs. Mellon were "starring" at the National Standard Theatre (*Times*, 6 August). The Adelphi, according to the *Athenæum* (7 August) had "passed temporarily into the hands of an association of actors, composed principally of established members of Mr. Webster's company, but including individuals who have not hitherto appeared upon the Adelphi boards." R. Phillips, stage manager and actor, remained.

The chief piece from 1 August onwards was *The Serpent on the Hearth* by John P. Simpson. It was reviewed but without great enthusiasm, and the *Athenæum* (7 August) reported. "Much hissing...mixed with the applause liberally bestowed upon piece and performance." The theatre closed on 28 August. During this short summer season, a downturn in the standard of productions was inevitable with outstanding performers elsewhere. It was just as well it was short season.

The reviews of *Monte Cristo* contained observations that were typical of the season as a whole. It had its high spots. The merits of the scenery and stage-effects were unquestioned. In the winter

season, talented performers were not lacking. Fechter and Webster himself contributed greatly to the success of the pieces in which they appeared, and there was no small support from Mrs. Mellon, Miss Furtado and Miss Leclercq. None of these remained for the summer season, and their lack was felt. However, some of the plays had little merit in them, and more than one was of inordinate length. The high quality of the scenery and the talented acting may well have compensated for the choice of some indifferent plays and the tedium of over-long performances.

AL

Theatre Royal, Adelphi Seasonal Digest 1869-1870

Ed. Alfrida Lee

The winter season was in some respects the least interesting and the least successful of the decade. It was short, beginning on 2 October 1869 and ending on 23 April 1870. There were new plays, but none of outstanding merit, nor any with unusually long runs; a well-trying afterpiece, *Domestic Economy*, having the longest, with eighty-eight performances. Nor was the season distinguished by the introduction of highly-talented actors from elsewhere. However, though lacking brilliance in productions, the Adelphi still maintained its hold on regular supporters. The summer season, of fourteen weeks, held more interest.

As in the previous year, a new play was put on for the opening night. This was *Lost at Sea, a London Story*, accompanied by two popular farces, *Too Much of a Good Thing* and *Domestic Economy*. The play attracted more comment for its faults than for its merits. The *Athenæum*, (9 October) considered that "from the association of two writers of talent and experience like Messrs. Dion Boucicault and H. J. Byron, a higher result than has been obtained was to be expected." The *Observer* (5 October) commented that though the popularity of the Adelphi was not in doubt and that *Lost at Sea* "would probably be performed...for many nights to come, yet it has every fault that can be crowded into one piece, or into 3 hours' representation." The faults were enumerated:

The idea on which the story is founded is badly carried out, the writing is poor, there is little originality of character, and the various scenes are loosely constructed whilst under the pretence set up for dramas of its class of strictly following actual life, it contains violations of probability that can hardly be conceived to have entered into the minds of writers with eyes open to what is going on around them.

The scenery gave poor representations of well-known parts of London; that of the Thames at night was "remarkable for its unsimilitude." The scenes, though evidently liked by the audience, were introduced "less for the aid they afford in the development of the plot than as means of introducing those views of modern London of which the playgoer never wearies" (*Athenæum*, 9 October). The *Times* (5 October) summed up the absence of dramatic interest: "the good are good, the bad are bad; the spade is a spade and in accordance with the nature of spades is not remarkably brilliant." Nevertheless, the scenery elicited applause, once with the rather odd result that it "gave an opportunity for the scene-shifter to intrude himself upon the stage and bow to the audience to the utter destruction of all dramatic illusion" (*Observer*). The *Times* noted that when the authors were called for at the end, the considerable applause was "mingled with hisses." As it ran for seventy-eight performances, it seemed to have more success than the critics anticipated. The Prince and Princess of Wales attended the first performance.

Lost at Sea was taken off for a week at the end of November for the introduction of a revival of *The Long Strike*, by Boucicault, originally brought out at the Lyceum three years earlier. Webster appeared in this in "one of those strongly marked characters in the delineation of which he is almost without a rival" (*Times*, 2 December). For once, there was no need for a reminder for some curtailment of the play. The same review gives: "The play has been reduced from four acts to three and gains by the compression." However, this necessitated alterations, not all of them beneficial. According to the *Athenæum* (4 December), "Haste and a little slovenliness are shown in most of the alterations, and the play as it stands, though not without interest, seems weaker in all respects than upon its first presentation." The *Observer* (5 December) was more generous, finding that the alterations had not destroyed the "characteristic features of the plot," but added, "the

denouement is changed without any improvement in effect." After one week, *Lost at Sea* and *The Long Strike* together made up the program for five weeks.

Webster's interest seems to have been somewhat divided. On 1 November, he began as lessee of the Princess's Theatre.

The next major production was *The Nightingale* by Tom Robertson, on 15 January 1870. The play was dismissed contemptuously by the *Observer* (16 January):

The commonplace story is not treated dramatically, while the dialogue is utterly unworthy of the author of *School*. No acting could have lent such a piece as *The Nightingale* interest with the audience. Performers did their best—the new drama cannot be pronounced a success—the hissing was so loud at the end that the audience was evidently astonished when the author presented himself before the curtain.

The *Times* (17 January) commented, "Obscurity, without complication, was also a defect of the piece, and the audience, in many places, not exactly comprehending what was set before them, laughed when they ought to have cried and hissed at every opportunity." The characters gave the performers little opportunity "in spite of the finished acting of Webster seemed to slip over the susceptibilities of the audience without moving them greatly." The acting of Miss Furtado received some commendation, but "the only character thoroughly appreciated was Keziah—a plain-spoken servant, who hated everything foreign, acted with spirit by Miss Eliza Johnstone." Only thirty-nine performances were given.

The engagement in February of Henry J. Byron as an actor led to the production of four of his plays, in three of which he performed. Two were new to the Adelphi but had already been performed elsewhere. *Not Such a Fool as He Looks*, a comedy in 3 acts, was given on 17 February while *The Nightingale* was still being performed. The second, *Blow for Blow*, made up the program with *Not Such a Fool as He Looks* from 3 March after *The Nightingale* had been withdrawn. On 7 March, the *Times* commented:

The engagement of Mr. H. J. Byron as a comedian at this house has led to the revival of *Blow for Blow*, one of the best of his dramas. Although known to the capital as a dramatist only till within the last few months, H. J. Byron is now firmly established among us as an humourous histrionic artist, whose entrance is hailed with a laugh significant of expected mirth, and who exercises irresistible control over the pleased attention of his audience...He has a style of his own.

The play had been given previously at the Globe, but the Adelphi production had its originality. The *Times* praised the performers who were not "mere copies" of those in the parts at the Globe, but each "was the result of a distinct conception." All were good.

The Duchess of Cambridge with the Prince and Princess of Teck attended the performance on 14 March.

The third and last production in which Byron appeared was *The Prompter's Box*, which, performed with *Whitebait at Greenwich*, revived from the previous year, was the last new production of the winter season. It had a mixed reception from the critics. The *Observer* (27 March) declared that it was "completely successful, and to a great extent, deservedly so. It is original, it has a clearly told story, and it is amusing; moreover, in style and treatment, it hits the taste of the present day." Byron

and Webster were praised for their performances. The critic admitted that the play "might be shortened to the increase of its effectiveness, and its style was not high in its own class of drama."

The *Times* (25 March) had some favorable comments, but added, "Still we have not enough to fill out four long acts." The *Athenæum* (2 April) had scarcely a good word to give. "[It] is a thoroughly characteristic specimen of the author's workmanship. It is slovenly, disorderly and disconnected, and has, artistically considered, every fault a piece can have." There was a concession—"It is interesting and amusing nevertheless, and may hope, when shorn of half its proportions to obtain a fair hold upon the public." The final comment was, "The performance, though tedious from its length, was well received. With many excisions, *The Prompter's Box* may be a successful piece; a good play it cannot be made."

Webster's benefit on 23 April closed the season.

The summer season followed without a break or any change of program. On 4 May, a new production by Byron billed as an extravaganza was produced. The *Athenæum* (7 May) described it as "little more than a vehicle for scenery and ballet, both of which are introduced with a prodigality and splendour seldom witnessed at this theatre." The *Observer* (8 May) considered it to be "one of the best, the most effective, and the most lively of its class."

Byron performed in *Green Bushes* on 27 May for Miss Furtado's benefit, the only time he took part in a play other than his own during the season. It was announced as "the last night of the present company performing."

With a new company, George Coleman became the acting manager. Several of the established performers, including R. Phillips, the stage-manager, remained. Some of the new company, including Henry Neville, his father, and Paulo, were already known at the Adelphi. The most outstanding of the new members was George Vining, late lessee of the Princess's Theatre.

There were new productions, two of them worthy of note. The first of them was *Put Yourself in His Place; or, Free Labor* adapted from his novel by Charles Reade. It did not, in the main, attract favorable criticism. It was, like so many others, too long—not finishing till nearly midnight. The performance was "dragging and tedious" (*Times*, 31 May). The *Athenæum* (23 June) was more severe. Though conceding "Mr. Reade's method and purpose are so thoroughly his own, and...so good in their way, and Mr. Reade himself is so much in earnest, that the task of censure is unpleasant and in some respects useless," added, "It is not easy to find anything but fault with his new drama." One of the more tedious scenes consisted of nearly half an hour spent with Neville "at work beating, on a real anvil, a piece of iron drawn out of a real forge." The performers were not at fault. The production was warmly received, but by "an unusually thin house."

The other major production, *The Robust Invalid*, an adaptation by Charles Reade of Molière's *La Malade Imaginaire*, received more generous comments. The *Times* (20 June) considered the play to be a good adaptation and the performers, especially Vining, to be more than satisfactory. The *Athenæum* also praised the performers, giving special mention to Florence Terry. "The occasion was selected for the debut of Miss Florence Terry, who made her first bow to an audience as Louison...a part which she sustained charmingly. The house received her with unbounded applause" (18 June). This was not her first appearance at the Adelphi. In 1866, when she was eleven years old, she had appeared with her sister, Kate, in *A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*. *The Robust Invalid* had to "be pronounced a success" and with only "slight curtailment...may be expected to have a long run."

Whatever may have been said in disparagement, the manager had clearly been enterprising in putting on productions demanding so much effort at this time of the year. In a history of the Adelphi, in 1877, *The Era Almanack* mentioned both plays as having drawn "some good houses." The season, which ended on 19 July, was a not insignificant one for a summer.

Considering the year as a whole, high standards of acting had been maintained, and the scenery, if it did not always please the critics, was striking. There were several unusual dramatic effects on the stage. It is unfortunate that the performers did not always have the material their talents deserved.

AL

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1870-1871

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

On 24 October 1870 the *Times* said, "The appearance of Madame Céleste at the Adelphi on Saturday night, when it opened for the season under the joint management of Messrs. B. Webster and F. B. Chatterton, seemed to give a new aspect to a house once the most favoured in London" (p. 8). But this new aspect was an illusion. As Margaret Webster wrote a century later, the partnership of Webster ("the Nestor of the stage") and Chatterton was disastrous for the theatre and for Webster himself:

Chatterton "energetically endeavoured to revive the glories of the Adelphi and ended by swamping it and Webster." Ben emerged in print from time to time to protest furiously against the unauthorized debts contracted in his name. There is a touching description of him in his room at the Adelphi, surrounded by heaps and piles of manuscripts, all plays that he had bought at one time or another. Some bore only the cover, the title page and some blank sheets of paper. They had been bought on trust and the trust betrayed (*The Same Only Different*, pp. 87-88).

The Green Bushes, "for the twelve farewell performances of Mme. Céleste," headed the bill on opening night, with Céline Céleste in her celebrated role of Miami. This piece ran in fact for forty-two nights, and Mme. Céleste appeared in two other revivals, seven times in *The Flowers of the Forest* and once in *The Abbe Vaudreuil*. *Green Bushes* succeeded with its audience but not with the critics:

To playgoers whose recollections extend over a quarter of a century, a performance like that of *The Green Bushes* on Saturday last, is not very pleasant or edifying to witness...That the representation on Saturday was favorably received may be attributed to two causes—that the majority of the house did not recall the earliest performances of the drama, and that the minority swallowed its discontent, in order to take a friendly leave of Mme. Céleste (*Athenæum*, 29 October 1870, p. 569).

The *Times* and *Athenæum* found this *Green Bushes* inferior to the original production primarily in its comedy: the 1870 company had no comic actors as gifted as Edward Wright and Paul J. Bedford. However, both gallantly praised Mme. Céleste. The *Times* elaborated on what the *Athenæum* called her "strong and picturesque" acting style:

But what will most strike a modern public is the lady's thorough mastery of the pantomimic part of her profession. Her gestures are bold and decisive; she firmly takes her picturesque positions, and whenever she is on the stage, hers is the figure, on which the general attention is fixed (p. 8).

For Mme. Céleste's farewell benefit, J. B. Buckstone came from the Haymarket to play in *Box and Cox*. (This was his last performance at the Adelphi, where his *Green Bushes* would become the most popular play ever performed at that theatre.) Joining Buckstone was Mrs. Robert Keeley, who came out of retirement to "a general burst of enthusiasm" (*Times*, 19 December 1870, p. 10), to play her original role in *Betsy Baker*. Mme. Céleste bid a moving farewell at the end of the benefit performance, but, happily, she would appear in three subsequent seasons at the Adelphi. After her departure, the company returned to its current specialties: elaborate stage pictures and sensation drama. The Christmas burlesque, *The Mistletoe Bough*, which ran for forty-two nights, shows some of this emphasis: "The plot is a piece of ballad mosaic, which abounds in startling anachronisms while it enables the scene painter and the costumier to revel in picturesque mediaeval dresses and

decorations and in brilliant Christmas dances in old English castles and halls" (*Times*, 27 December 1870, p. 4).

F. C. Burnand's *Deadman's Point*, which opened February 4 and ran six weeks, was written as a sensation drama, a loose sequence of stage pictures calculated to thrill the audience. As the *Times* observed, however, when a scene in such an empty play was badly staged, it failed totally, as did a second-act storm scene. "The drowning man, who literally wears the waters as if they formed a gauze cloak, provokes not commiseration but mirth (6 February 1871, p. 8). The *Athenæum* found Burnand's play clumsy and shapeless and observed, "at the end of the play the audience seemed divided between laughter, hissing, and applause. Perhaps on the whole, the 'contents' formed the most numerous party" (11 February 1871, p. 184).

The most popular play of The Season, Andrew Halliday's *Notre-Dame; or, The Gipsy Girl of Paris*, an adaptation of Hugo's novel, ran with few interruptions from 10 April until March of the next season, for 254 performances. The critics found this work superior to most of what the Adelphi was offering, though an *Athenæum* reviewer made it clear *Notre-Dame* was at most an "effective melo-drama" written for an unsophisticated audience, most of whose members had no knowledge of Victor Hugo's novel. The same reviewer complained of the actors' ranting. Of T. C. King, who played Quasimodo, he says, "Some of his shouts were absolutely deafening. The general note of the performance was too high. Miss Furtado screamed much and Mrs. Mellon screamed more; Mr. King shouted and Mr. Brittain Wright whined" (15 April 1871, p. 473). The *Times* explained what held the audience's eye in this play:

Although...*Notre Dame* is not a mere spectacle, it contains much of the spectacular element, and those who seek "sensation" will find the fall of Claude Frollo from the tower as thrilling as anything of the kind hitherto attempted. The public gardens in Paris and the bird's-eye view of the French capital by night are excellent specimens of Mr. Lloyd's talent, and the eastern extremity of the Cathedral, built so as to cover a large portion of the stage, is one of those feats of scenic art by which modern audiences are so frequently surprised" (11 April 1871, p. 9).

While melodrama was featured throughout this season, the Adelphi also offered two ballets composed by Frederick Evans, "an able dancer and contortionist" (*Athenæum*, 15 April 1871, p. 473), and twelve comedies of various kinds and lengths, including John Oxenford's farce *Down in a Balloon*, which ran for 150 nights.

Since the Adelphi's season continued through the summer of 1871 and into the fall, the editors have arbitrarily chosen Saturday, 30 September 1871 as the end of the 1870-1871 season.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1871-1872

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

C. L. Kenney's farce, *Autumn Manoeuvres*, with Ashley, Lilley, Wright and Mrs. Alfred Mellon in the cast, was one of the first new pieces in the Adelphi's 1871-72 season. The *Athenæum*'s commentary was brief indeed: "This trifle provoked some laughter" (28 October 1871, p. 569), but the piece proved popular and ran for 85 nights. *Hidden Treasure*, a more ambitious play billed as a "new and original sensational drama" and employing the full resources of the company, fared less well. It lasted only 19 performances. The *Athenæum* denounced it:

Personages were introduced on the stage to serve no obvious purpose except that of showing how much noise they could make, and how generally extravagant they could be; and the piece came at last to an end, which seemed due rather to the exhaustion of the players than the termination of the story...As the piece contains a house which takes fire by spontaneous combustion, and a fall from a considerable altitude, it is possible that a succession of audiences may receive it with favour, and may dispense with such frivolities as plot, dramatic sequence and development, intelligibility of story or propriety of acting (2 December 1871, p. 729).

For the *Times*, the failure of *Hidden Treasure* was occasion to ponder the decline of the Adelphi acting company. Most of *Hidden Treasure* had been written twenty years earlier by Tom Parry and resembled plays of his that had triumphed as "real Adelphi drama."

The melodramatic force of the old days, which gave vitality to many improbabilities, seems to have taken another direction, nor do we find that comic *vis [vim]* which Mr. Wright would have displayed in the principal action of the underplot. The more striking *tableaux*, which are very elaborate, were, however, received with loud applause (30 November 1871, p. 12).

Benjamin Webster was baffled by his failure to attract a large audience to his splendid new theatre:

The secret of what will and what will not be a theatrical success "is as far from being discovered as ever. When my theatre was dirty, old, and uncomfortable, it was always crowded. The public made me rich and I tore down the old hovel and built them an elegant theatre to show my gratitude. Confound them! They won't come into it." (*The Same Only Different*, p. 86).

The *Times* did find much to praise in the new Christmas piece, Charles Millward's *Snowwhite*, "which was not this time a burlesque but an original fairy tale, reminding one of the pieces produced by Planché at the Lyceum under Mme. Vestris" (27 December 1871, p. 12). The reviewer praised Mrs. John Wood's *Snowwhite*, the acting of Mrs. Alfred Mellon, J. Cormack's ballet and groupings and some very novel scenic effects. "In the waterfall scenes, the waters were perfumed by Mr. Rimmel" (p. 3).

An expectant audience greeted Charles Fechter, just returned from America, on the evening of 5 March, when he began a four-week engagement as *Ruy Blas* in a play of that name. The *Times* praised the "earnestness of purpose and clearness of outline" of Fechter's *Ruy*, but of the rest of the company it could only say, "The chief actor is efficiently supported" (5 March 1872, p. 8). The *Athenæum*, as usual, was more candid:

It is to be desired...that, in future dramatic representations of the dramatic masterpiece of M. Hugo, the general casting may be more adequate...A comparison between the general representation of the play in Paris and that in London would explain why in one city the drama is prized and studied as an art, while in the other it can scarcely obtain the support of men of intellect as an amusement (9 March 1871, pp. 314).

Fechter, a great actor and innovator in the techniques of acting and play production, must indeed have stood out in the Adelphi Company of this season. *Ruy Blas* was one of his favorite pieces. Erroll Sherson says of it:

It showed off all his good points: his love-making, which gained for him the suffrages of crowds of women playgoers, for nothing at all like it had been seen on the English stage; his scenes of passion in the more melodramatic parts; his wonderful fencing; the élan of the whole. Here was at last something quite different from the mouthing periods and stilted action of his predecessors, something that was like life, and glowing, ardent life at that. No wonder the women sobbed audibly and the whole audience thrilled at his art (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 146-47).

On 1 April, *Hilda, the Miser's Daughter* opened and unlike that other "Adelphi drama" of this season, *Hidden Treasure*, succeeded, running for 89 nights. This adaptation of Ainsworth's novel by Andrew Halliday was the second performed at the Adelphi, Edward Stirling's version having been staged in 1842. The *Athenæum* conceded, "the story, though commonplace in outline, is dramatic." It also thought the miser's character was cleverly drawn. "In the other personages little attempt at psychology is witnessed. Old-fashioned characters, belonging to melo-dramatic intrigue, are presented in their familiar costumes, and the whole forms a masquerade of a kind such as the public never wearies of contemplating. The acting is no less melo-dramatic than the piece."

However, the critic also noted, "The reception of the piece was in the highest degree enthusiastic" (6 April 1872, p. 440). The *Times* shared that enthusiasm: "This is true Adelphi drama, honoured with a true Adelphi success" (2 April 1872, p. 3). The reviews of *Hilda* provoked a letter from the great illustrator George Cruikshank in which he claimed some credit for the principal themes and settings of Ainsworth's novel: "Wishing to let the public of the present day have a peep at the places of public amusement of that period [1745], I took considerable pains to give correct views and descriptions of the places which are now copied and produced upon the stage" (*Times*, 8 April, 1872, p. 14).

On 15 April, *Just Like Roger*, a farce by Benjamin Webster, Jr., was introduced as a prelude to *Hilda*, making pointed references to current events and having, the *Times* said, "more substance and genial fun than in most dramatic trifles of this kind" (18 April, p. 6). Stephenson, Ashley, Wright, Cooper, Lilly, Miss Phillips and Miss Stoker were the principals in this play, which ran 67 nights. The Adelphi's season ended on Saturday, 13 July, after 238 performances under the management of Benjamin M. Webster and Frederick B. Chatterton.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1872-1873

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Messrs. Webster and Chatterton thoroughly refurbished the auditorium of the Adelphi during the summer recess of 1872:

On Saturday night, the Adelphi re-opened its doors in a condition of unwonted brilliancy. Profiting by the designs of Mr. J. T. Robinson, it had thoroughly cleansed and re-decorated itself from the floor to the ceiling, which, always classical in form, now displayed a combination of delicate and harmonious tints. While it had studied splendour it had shrunk instinctively from the heavy, and the panels of its boxes look gay and refreshing in their new array of gold. It had also studied the comfort of the occupants of the boxes by providing them with a ventilation previously unknown (*Times*, 17 September 1872, p. 5).

The program for opening night, too, seemed designed to restore old Adelphi glories, for once again *The Green Bushes* headed the bill and Mme. Céleste once again took the role of Miami, "a part which she first played no matter how many years ago" (*Times*, p. 5). The second piece, C. L. Kenney's farce *Autumn Manoeuvres*, had played 85 times in the preceding season.

After 42 performances, *Green Bushes* gave way to Henry J. Byron's *Mabel's Life*. Mme. Céleste remained with the company for the run of this piece, and while the *Athenæum* was critical of Byron's play, this "poorest and flimsiest production its author has yet given to the stage," it praised Mme. Céleste, who "evinced a breadth of style such as no English actress imparts to melodrama" (9 November 1872, p. 607). The *Times* also noted the "singular power" of Céleste's performance and praised the acting of John Clarke and Mrs. Alfred Mellon (4 November 1872, p. 8). A two-level stage was used at times, so that the audience saw "the unholy trio in the shop plotting the death of Mabel while the proposed victim is innocently tending her birds in the room above." A change of scene "in which the basement of a house sinks, revealing the first story, is one of the most remarkable effects stage-machinery has yet obtained" (*Athenæum*, p. 607). However, the play, written apparently in haste by a busy and prolific author and actor, had its defects. According to the *Times*, "a few dissenting voices" in the audience were raised. According to the *Athenæum*, "marks of disapproval at one time threatened to bring the whole to a premature conclusion." The play ran for only four weeks.

December brought the first hit of the season, the loosely-structured *Adventures of Fritz*, which displayed the talents of the American actor J. K. Emmet and had done so in America, the bills said, for "upwards of 1000 nights." The *Athenæum*, not given to easy praise, saw Emmet as a great entertainer if not a great actor: "Mr. Emmet sings easily and well, and his dancing is the best we have seen. Repeatedly mere beauty of movement extorted, from an audience not apt to overprize grace or refinement of any kind, an enthusiastic *encore*" (7 December 1872, p. 740).

Although *The Adventures of Fritz* was so popular the *Times* thought Benjamin Webster would not offer a Christmas novelty this year, Charles Millward's burlesque *Jack and the Beanstalk* was given. The *Times* saw it as "a bright and pleasant piece, and it is well acted throughout." It noted especially the acting of Caroline Parks, Charlotte Saunders and John Clarke (27 December 1872, p. 8). In the spring, *Green Bushes* returned with Miss Furtado playing Miami. The *Times* commented, "This popular house is now in a normal condition, the perennial *Green Bushes* once more flourishing on its stage" (17 March 1873, p. 7). Teresa Furtado (Mrs. John Clarke) performed for nine seasons in the Adelphi Company. Erroll Sherson describes her as "a very pretty actress, who...made a great hit as various heroines of melodrama" (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p.

274). Other theatrical perennials that appeared for very short runs included *The Beggar's Opera*, playing 12 times, and *The Stone Jug*, a version of Buckstone's *Jack Sheppard*, modified in its title and other details to satisfy new requirements of the Lord Chamberlain's office, playing 13 times. The *Athenæum* thought the original *Jack Sheppard* succeeded because of its actors. "When now presented by a company of incapables, its faults become painfully evident" (29 March 1873, p. 417).

The second great success of the 1872-1873 season was Leopold Lewis' *The Wandering Jew*, which played 151 times between 22 March and 1 October. Lewis, the *Times* said, managed to reduce the complicated novel of Eugène Sue to meet the conditions of spectacle and melodrama. Also, his efforts were aided by the appearance of the great Benjamin Webster in a leading role, even if, like Mme. Céleste, he was no longer in his prime:

anyone ought to appreciate the finished acting and thoroughly artistic 'make up' of Mr. Webster as the arch plotter Rodin, into whose every gesture he infuses a distinct meaning. The voice of the veteran actor is no longer what it was, and occasionally his words are scarcely audible, but his by-play as Rodin is always eloquent, and many are the attitudes into which he silently settles himself which would form an admirable study for a painter. The facial expression is true throughout (6 April 1873, p. 60).

Rodin was the last new role Webster ever played. In 1874, he announced his retirement from the stage but not his managership of the Adelphi.

This season ended on 1 October 1873, after 321 performances.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1873-1874

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Frederick Chatterton became lessee as well as manager this season. He and Webster opened the season on 8 November, with *The Green Bushes*. The *Times* cited the anecdote of the traveler who, "however often he was abroad, and at whatever intervals he returned home...was sure to find *Green Bushes* in the Adelphi program." Independently of its merits as perhaps one of the best constructed and most interesting melodramas ever brought out upon any stage," the *Times* said, "it is a great historical fact in the theatrical annals of this century" (13 November 1873, p. 5). Mme. Céleste appeared, as the bills promised, for twelve nights only.

Immediately after this, another stock melodrama, Edmund Falconer's *Peep O'Day* was offered. Falconer, an accomplished stage Irishman, played his original role of Barney O'Toole. What the bills called this "great Irish sensational drama" played for a full 14 weeks. The *Times* said that though "it was never played at the Adelphi before Saturday, it is to all intents and purposes an Adelphi piece, reflecting the taste for subjects connected with Irish peasant life which, 12 years ago, had been newly awakened by the *Colleen Bawn* of Mr. Dion Boucicault" (24 November 1873, p. 5). The Christmas novelty, offered with *Peep O'Day*, was *Killarney*, written by Falconer. Balfe was the composer, John Cormack, the choreographer, and William Telbin, the scene designer. The *Times* admired Telbin's "moving picture of the Lakes of Killarney" (27 December 1873, p. 5).

On 31 January, Mr. and Mrs. John Billington returned to the Adelphi to star in the third melodrama of The Season, *Rough and Ready*, a new play by Paul Merritt. The plot, which pitted a gamekeeper against a gentleman, made both the *Times* and *Athenæum* reviewers uneasy. The *Times* commented, "The plot is at once slight and complicated, and there is overmuch of vapid dialogue, here and there spiced with democratic clap-trap." Nevertheless, it praised Billington: "He is a thorough master of the required dialect, and his delineation of a frank, generous nature, usually amiable, but capable of being stung into the most violent rage, is perfect" (6 February 1874, p. 3). "*Rough and Ready*," the *Athenæum* said, "bears marks of its East End origins. Proletarian virtue throughout its three acts is at war with aristocratic vice, which it in the end overpowers." It praised Mr. Billington, "unequalled in presenting unpleasant parts" (7 February 1874, p. 203).

The Billingtons were, by now, familiar figures on the London stage; John had left the Theatre Royal, York to make his London debut as Harry Mobray in Langford's *Like and Unlike*. Adeline had joined him the following year when she played Venus in *Harlequin and the Loves of Cupid and Psyche*. Among the many roles Mrs. Billington had created was Mrs. Valentine in *Rough and Ready*. Her husband had been in the original London casts of *The Colleen Bawn*, *The Octoroon*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *The Hunchback*. He was the first performer in many roles such as Sir Percival Glyde in *The Woman in White* (1871), Martin Gurder in *Dead Man's Point* (1871), and Mark Musgrave in *Rough and Ready* (Adams, *Dictionary of the Drama*, p. 159).

The ambitious *Elizabeth; or, The Exiles of Siberia*, staged to honor the Duke of Edinburgh and his new bride, failed and was withdrawn after 16 performances. This adaptation of Frederick Reynold's 1808 work offered little the audience could respond to except for a last-act "fete on the frozen Neva," an extravagant spectacle. However, Oxenford's modest comedy *Waltz by Ardit*, which opened on the same night, triumphed and ran for 143 nights. It impressed its audiences; the *Times* said, "simply through the goodness of the acting" (9 March 1874, p. 8).

Another resounding success, Benjamin Webster's *Prayer in the Storm*, a version of a French play popular in many forms in Britain and America, opened on 28 March and ran 143 nights until 11

September. The American actress Genevieve Ward, new to London, was much praised in this piece, as was the staging of the "Sea of Ice" tableau, with its skillfully contrived sensational effects. Erroll Sherson calls Genevieve Ward "undoubtedly one of the greatest actresses that ever trod the London stage." She had a prior career as an opera singer under the name Guerrabella. He said of *Prayer in the Storm*, "The great sensation scene was a floating block of ice on a raging sea with a maiden kneeling on it and praying earnestly for help. This never failed to bring down the house" (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 111).

Comedies and some ballets helped carry the great melodramas throughout this long Adelphi season. In late spring, the ballet farce *Magic Toys*, an adaptation of a French vaudeville by John Oxenford, opened and held the boards for 66 nights, "thanks to the agility and spirit of Miss Kate Vaughan who, in her representation of the supposed 'Toy' unites to a remarkable degree the qualities of the danseuse and the actress, and the arch simplicity of Miss Hudspeth, who plays the ingénue" (*Times*, 11 May 1874, p. 14).

Performances continued throughout the summer and into the fall of 1874, so the editors have arbitrarily chosen 1 October 1874 as the end of the 1873-1874 season.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1874-1875

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Mme. Céleste made her final Adelphi appearances in October 1874, once again playing Miami in Buckstone's *Green Bushes*. Reminiscing in 1925, Erroll Sherson wrote:

Miami was Céleste's great part and one which she played many hundred times. I saw the play...with her in this part when she appeared for the last time in 1874 at the Adelphi. She was then at least sixty years of age, if not more, but her acting was wonderful as the deserted Indian maiden; as was also that of Mrs. Billington, who was the Geraldine...Céleste, like many another actress, had got into the habit of advertising her "Very last appearance," and then a few years later taking another engagement and having another "very last." Few old actresses have stood so many reappearances so well (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 214).

Perhaps Sherson attended Mme. Céleste's farewell performances in more than one season, for in 1874 the Geraldine was not Mrs. Billington but Edith Stuart, whom elsewhere in his book Sherson describes as "an excellent dramatic artist" (p. 72). Mrs. Billington did play Geraldine in 1870.

After a run of 13 nights, *Green Bushes* was succeeded by G. F. Rowe's *Geneva Cross*, said to have been performed 500 times previously in the United States. This was a domestic drama set in the recent Franco-Prussian War. The *Times* described *Geneva Cross* as "a piece of huge dimensions," received by the audience "with vehement applause." It found in the play, however, "a strange lack of dramatic conciseness" and "reckless verbosity" and noted that the very long intervals between acts "caused occasional expressions of dissatisfaction" (19 October 1874, p. 8). Like the *Times*, the *Athenæum* saw the play as a probable success with its scenes of warfare and its "strong if rather familiar situations." It added, "There is, however, no passion or intensity, no dramatic grip or sequence" (24 October 1874, p. 554). Both the *Times* and the *Athenæum* praised Marie Henderson (a famous Mazeppa), making her first appearance at the Adelphi. *Geneva Cross* had a respectable run of more than seven weeks. It was followed by *Prayer in the Storm*, with James Fernandez and Genevieve Ward in the roles which won them acclaim in the preceding season.

E. L. Blanchard and Thomas F. Greenwood wrote the elaborate Christmas pantomime *The Children in the Wood*, which played for about eight weeks. John Cormack was the choreographer and Edwin Ellis, the composer. A large array of nursery characters predominated in this piece, not only the children in the wood but also "Father Aesop and Cock Robin and Jenny Wren, and Mother Bunch and Dame Trot and the Old Woman who lived in a shoe, to say nothing of her family and a host of other well-known characters, which have nothing in the world to do with the story but a very great deal to do with our amusement" (*Times*, 28 December 1874, p. 4). The traditional pantomime figures appeared as well: Miss Parry and Miss St. Pierre were Columbines; Edward Dean, Harlequin; A. Forrest, Clown, and Paulo, Pantaloon.

In January, Buckstone's *Dream at Sea* was revived. The *Times* found it typical of Adelphi plays of forty years earlier, "sensational and wildly improbable" (11 January 1875, p. 4). The *Athenæum* agreed, "yet the play has stuff in it. It is even, in its way, a miracle of ingenuity, and we watch it with something of the interest inspired by an acrobat who keeps himself poised on a rolling ball, and whirls knives and forks around his head and shoulders." However, if the *Athenæum* was merely bemused, the audience was intent: "So genuine... is the interest that the audience listens still with rapt attention, and the Adelphi gallery howls forth thunders of applause" (16 January 1875, p. 95).

Uncle Tom's Cabin played in February but was withdrawn after two weeks. It may have failed for two reasons, the *Times* suggested: "the abolition of slavery in America has taken from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the special interest it once possessed, and the frequent change of scenes may not be viewed with favor at a time when a desire for something like unity of place is apparent" (15 February 1875, p. 8). Adelphi audiences saw many new faces in *Lancashire Lass* and *Lost in London*, which immediately followed *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *Lost in London* was written by Watts Phillips, who had died in the winter of 1874. He was somewhat of an Adelphi writer. His first play was produced at the Adelphi and his *Dead Heart*, starring Benjamin Webster, played there many times. The new faces were from the cast of *Lost in London*, which had been at the Princess's Theatre and was now brought over to the Adelphi. Many of them later appeared in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

The one great popular success of this season was Andrew Halliday's version of *Nicholas Nickleby*. It played for some 175 evenings. The *Times* called the play an "immense success" (22 March 1875, p. 8). *The Athenæum*, called the Adelphi's cast "as satisfactory as the present generation is likely to see" (22 March, p. 436). It considered George Belmore's Newman Noggs "unsurpassed by any previous performance in the same line, not forgetting the famous representation of Mr. O. Smith" (p. 435).

Erroll Sherson held an equally high opinion of George Belmore (George Garstin), "one of the cleverest actors that the London stage had seen since the death of Robson and of much the same style...He was a great character actor whose equal would be very hard to find on the stage today" (pp. 190-91).

An extended benefit took place in March for the widow and five children of James Crabb, a member of the London Society of Compositors. He had died of phthisis. A bill of March 22 says the benefit was to last from "Monday to Saturday, 22nd and [sic] 27 March, inclusive." There would not be a performance on March 26, which was Good Friday. The goal was to raise enough money to "place his widow in some business."

In the spring and while *Nicholas Nickleby* continued, the Vokes family brightened the Adelphi program. The Vokes were famous for their dancing in the Drury Lane pantomimes. This year at the Adelphi they appeared in four pieces, two of them written especially for them by E. L. Blanchard. Sherson describes a third piece, *Fun in a Fog*, which they performed again in 1879 at the Aquarium Theatre, as "a rough sort of 'tumble and trip' entertainment, something like what is called a Revue in England" (*London's Lost Theatres*, p. 299).

The Adelphi stayed open through the summer and into the fall of 1875.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1875-1876

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

In this season, proprietor Benjamin Webster and his manager Frederick B. Chatterton filled their bills prudently. They consistently scheduled a proven melodrama as the featured piece and supplied plenty of comedy before and after it. They took few chances.

Andrew Halliday's *Nicholas Nickleby*, which had begun on 20 March 1875, ended its long run on 29 October of this season. It was replaced by *Little Em'ly*, another Halliday adaptation of a Dickens novel, *David Copperfield*.

On Saturday night, *Little Em'ly*, one of the most successful of Mr. Andrew Halliday's adaptations, took the place of *Nicholas Nickleby* in the Adelphi program; Peggoty, on whom much of the interest of the piece depends, being represented, as at the Olympic, by Mr. [Samuel A.] Emery, who made that part one of his best. Miss Lydia Foote is Em'ly; Mr. Fernandez, Micawber; Miss Edith Stuart, Rosa Dartle; Mr. John Clarke, Uriah Heep; and Mr. McIntyre, Ham. *Little Em'ly* has already been played in London more than 200 times, but, to judge from the applause it met with on Saturday night, it will probably be repeated until the *Shaughraun* is transferred from Drury Lane (*Times*, 1 November 1875, p. 8).

The Shaughraun [Vagabond] began on 27 December and ran for 24 nights. Dion Boucicault and his wife, Agnes Robertson, absent from the Adelphi stage since 1861, began a virtual festival of Boucicault drama. They were popular figures, and thirty-five of Boucicault's plays were performed at the Adelphi. After this season, Boucicault retired to America, repudiating his wife and making what the *Dictionary of National Biography* delicately calls "other so-called nuptial arrangements." He appeared briefly in two more Adelphi seasons and died in 1890 four years after his last performance.

Three more Boucicault plays were given this season. *Grimaldi* was played only twice—at benefit performances. Immediately after *Shaughraun* came another Irish drama, *Peep O'Day*, with the author Edmund Falconer in his original role of Barney O'Toole. This tried and true piece played for more than ten weeks.

The most novel offering of the season was the American play *Struck Oil*. It introduced the Americans Maggie Moore and James C. Williamson. The piece had the longest run of the season, playing more than 100 times. The *Times* and *Athenæum* agreed that it had little merit but that Williamson was a very funny comedian, though not the equal of his predecessors Jefferson and Emmett. Williamson's Pennsylvania Dutch dialect and mannerisms won over the Adelphi audiences. "Mr. Williamson," the *Athenæum* wrote, "possesses...distinct originality, and the performance has both pathos and drollery" (22 April 1876, p. 575).

Boucicault's *Colleen Bawn* and *Arrah-na-Pogue* [Annah of the Kiss] were the final major offerings of the season. The Boucicauls did not act in these plays, but Williamson and many other skilled actors did, including Mrs. Alfred Mellon, who had been in the original cast of *Colleen Bawn*, McIntyre, a veteran melodrama villain, and Shiel Barry, acclaimed for his spy and informer roles in Irish plays. Erroll Sherson writes that *Colleen Bawn*, first produced in 1860, "was seen again and again by playgoers on account of the cave scene where the Colleen Bawn is rescued from drowning. This was something quite new in sensational effects and was the forerunner of many sensational scenes in subsequent dramas" (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 157).

H. Barton Baker identifies the precise mechanical effect, which drew the spectators to this play: "the shaking waters and rolling billows and watery effects." He notes that "transparent stage water had never before been seen, and a few yards of blue gauze did more than all the finest acting in the world could accomplish" (*History of the London Stage and its Famous Players*, p. 97).

Sherson singles out the Adelphi's revival of *Arrah-na-Pogue* this season for special praise:

Boucicault's part was taken by an American actor, Williamson, and the hero, Beamish McCoul, was that ideal dramatic lover—Will Terriss. Shiel Barry...was the Michael Feeny in the Adelphi revival, a part that had been previously taken by Dominick Murray. There was one great scene in "Arrah-na-Pogue" which never failed to 'bring down the house.' This was the climbing of the outer prison wall by Shaun the Post by means of the ivy, and his hiding in the ivy when the soldiers looked out of the window with their lighted torches (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 159).

The Athenæum praised the "idyllic grace" with which Boucicault presented Irish rebellion in *Arrah-na-Pogue*: it was praise that suggested both the playwright's cleverness and his limitations:

So evenly does Mr. Boucicault hold the balance between contending factions that neither the nationalist party nor the party of order finds its feelings shocked. He treats of Irish rebellion, and solicits the sympathy of the audience for those who are in open revolt against English authority. He goes so far as to give upon the stage a ballad, one verse of which, thirty years ago, delivered in an Irish theatre would have produced riot and bloodshed; yet the authorities are subject to no alarm. Changed conditions have doubtless something to do with this. The author, however, has manipulated his story with extreme skill (19 August 1876, p. 252).

The editors have designated September 22, 1876, as the end of the 1875-76 season.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1876-1877

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Early in the season, a *Times*' reviewer noted that Boucicault's *Shaughraun*, which he saw at the theatre on 18 November, was not a good play, "but in its time it pleased, and will no doubt please again, the audiences which are mostly attracted to this house." The absence of Mr. and Mrs. Boucicault from the leading roles, he said, "must always be felt, though felt perhaps in a less degree at the Adelphi than elsewhere." He focused on the curtain raiser, a new piece called *Give a Dog a Bad Name*, and its reception:

As it is set down to begin at 7 o'clock, it is probably not intended to serve any other purpose than that of 'playing in' the audience, and if the behavior of a considerable portion of the audience on Saturday night may be taken as typical of the general behavior of an Adelphi audience being 'played in,' this piece may do as well as no doubt any other. Perhaps a more literal interpretation of the phrase by the orchestra would do better still; at least it would serve to drown the remarks of the gallery, and one would at least be spared the unpleasantness of seeing actors of the capabilities of Mr. Emery and Miss Coghlan reduced to the position of the performers in the farce which ushers in the pantomime on Boxing night. On that particular night the custom of years has sanctioned such licence, but in any other circumstances such behaviour is little short of disgraceful (20 November 1876, p. 7).

The *Athenæum* reviewer said nothing about the audience, but he had kind words for Rose Coghlan's acting in *Give a Dog a Bad Name*. He found Charles Sullivan's performance as the Shaughraun "not a little startling. This gentleman has a voice of such range he seems capable of communicating, in his own person, an idea of the hubbub at the Tower of Babel, or of performing the feat ascribed by Butler to Cerberus, of pronouncing a 'leash of languages at once'" (25 November 1876, p. 698). Such a startling voice may have had its value in the sometimes-noisy Adelphi.

Not all the audience was rowdy, however, for the Adelphi was a house divided in many ways. In *Discovering Theatre Ephemera*, John Melling says, "By the 1880s, it was noted that the lower-priced sections of the house received an inferior, thin, folio sheet, heavily and odoriferously printed, whilst the expensive seats got a scented octavo programme advertising the particular perfumer" (p. 46). Eugene Rimmel's company, which specialized in novelties and choice perfumes, began advertising on the Adelphi's programs in December 1870. Whether there was any scent, we cannot say at this date. However, we do know that Rimmel perfumed the waterfall in the 1871 pantomime.

The management had to beware not only of noise and rowdiness but also of the danger of fire. On 21 December, "after the recent tragedy in the Brooklyn Theatre, at New York," the Lord Chamberlain's Office issued a memorandum to all managers reviewing the fire rules and warning against putting additional seats in the gangways, as some theatres had been doing (*Times*, 22 December 1876, p. 6).

The most extraordinary success of this season was a pantomime, *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, written by E. L. Blanchard and performed entirely by children. According to the *Times*, "The management here has got together 18 clever children to play a pantomime which occupies two and a half hours in the representation and through it all leaves nothing to be desired" (27 December, p. 5). This piece played more than 150 times, at first only in matinee performances at reduced prices but by February in

evening performances as well. Sometimes the whole pantomime was given and at other times only the opening. This section, the *Times* said, was "almost a fairy play, it is so full of pretty thoughts, graceful sentiments, and poetry." More surprising, the "comic business" was not neglected. "In the two scenes of the harlequinade, the fun is fast and furious" (p. 5).

So successful was the pantomime that in August the management offered a second one of the same kind, again written by Blanchard. The *Theatre* praised *Little Red Riding Hood* but suggested: "the full warmth of sunny August" was unsuitable for such entertainment (7 August, p. 1). However, this second pantomime ran into November 1877, for some 85 performances.

As in the preceding season and except for the children's pantomimes, the Adelphi's programming showed little imagination or innovation. It continued to depend on Dion Boucicault revivals and such other proven works as *True to the Core*, one of the most successful of nautical melodramas. In a very terse notice of Falconer's *Peep o' Day*, which returned once again to the Adelphi, the *Athenæum* observed, "Some stirring of the waters of the Adelphi is much to be desired if the house is to maintain its place among theatres" (28 April, p. 556.)

Just after *Peep O'Day*, the management succeeded with yet another Boucicault work, *Streets of London*, which played for twelve weeks. Boucicault's was one of the several adaptations of *Les Pauvres de Paris* (1856). Erroll Sherson writes, "There were two sensations—a house on fire with real fire-engines and horses galloping on to the stage, and a scene where the heroine and her brother are saved from being suffocated by charcoal fumes" (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 158).

Paul Merritt's *The Golden Plough*, a new melodrama, followed *Streets of London*. The *Theatre* said of it "if ever there was a thorough-going Adelphi melodrama of the good old Jack Sheppard school, this is one" (14 August, p. 33). Like the *Athenæum*, the *Theatre* praised the work for its construction and some effective scenes rather than for any profound qualities. It thought John Billington was not up to his usual standard and McIntyre was "extremely disappointing. Nor was Mr. S. Emery altogether satisfactory" (p. 34).

The editors have designated 24 August as the end of the 1876-77 season.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1877-1878

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Boucicault's melodrama *After Dark* opened in late August, 1877. According to Sherson, who saw it earlier at the Princess's, "It was a very good specimen of a melodrama of London Life."

The sensation scene was on the Underground Railway (then somewhat of a novelty) where a man is laid on the rails, drugged, for the train to run over him. Another of the *dramatis personae* is shut up in a neighbouring cellar and just manages to tear down the brickwork of the intervening wall before the train comes dashing by. The act was worked up to perfection, and few sensation scenes of a later date have produced the same amount of excitement (*London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 161).

In October another Boucicault revival, *Formosa; or The Railroad to Ruin*, shared the new bill with Burnand's *Deal Boatman*. The *Times* found Boucicault's piece ridiculous and wondered why it had ever been popular. It derided Boucicault's upper-class characters as unreal and impossible; "The young gentlemen of his ideal Universities run about London in their boating costume, which it is the custom of these gay young fellows to wear at all times and all places and company." It judged the actors inferior to those in the original production, with the exception of Clara Jecks, who played little Lord Eden. It did admire, however, the staging of the boat race on the Thames and the "picturesque 'set-piece'" of Formosa's villa at Fulham (2 November, p. 8). Margaret Leighton was Formosa, the heroine of the piece. The Adelphi public was less critical than the *Times*, keeping the play on the boards for some 15 weeks.

At Christmas, another pantomime, *Robin Hood and his Merry Little Men*, was performed entirely by children, as in the preceding season, but this year in matinee performances only. The *Theatre* warmly praised "Chatterton's company of mannikin artists...Thanks to these and to the clever arrangement of Messrs. Stafford Hall, Bradwell, Ellis, and John Cormack, a delightful scene is made out of the Market Place of Nottingham and its May Fair of 1188; and indeed, the whole pantomime is refined and pretty and spirited from beginning to end" (26 December, p. 338). More mature and skilled pantomimists appeared in the evenings:

The most genuinely amusing pantomime fooling takes place at the Adelphi, where, after a display of dancing and contortion quite unequalled in its way by three acrobats known as the Girards, who have won a high and deserved reputation at music halls, a number of pantomimists, styling themselves the Martinetti troupe, give an admirable performance. Anyone desirous of knowing of what pantomime is capable should see this representation, the whole of which occupies little more than half an hour (*Athenæum*, 5 January, p. 29).

From 11 February until 6 April, the Carl Rosa Opera Company took the Adelphi. This company, famous for training young singers and giving opera in English, was founded in 1875, but by 1878, it had already a distinct character the critics respected. The *Theatre* said, "Completeness of *ensemble* and fidelity to the text of composers have been the chief objects aimed at for some time by Mr. Carl Rosa...He has now bid farewell to the 'star' system, and he has claimed support for his company, as a combination of competent and satisfactory *artistes*, whose united efforts ensure a faithful rendering of the works in which they take part" (20 February, p. 49).

This season the company offered Otto Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The *Standard* was particularly impressed:

The wives perched among the branches of Herne's Oak, the demons in the background, Sir John with the horns on his head, the glittering fairies engrouped around the tree—and the knight may well have been excused for accepting Mrs. Ford as a veritable woodland fairy, if she appeared and sang as her representative at this theatre does—with moonbeams allowing a silvery light over the whole scene, constitute a picture which no wise person will miss, and which few will fail long to remember, beautiful as it is by the charm of Nicolai's music (quoted in the *Times*, 14 February 1878).

Other pieces included Sir Julius Benedict's *Lily of Killarney* (derived from Boucicault's *Colleen Bawn*); Ignaz Brull's *The Golden Cross*, (a popular piece that attracted a large audience because "the production of a new opera is so rare an event in London" *Theatre*, 6 March); Michael Balfe's *Bohemian Girl*; Gounod's *Faust* (with Marie Fechter, daughter of the famous actor, singing Marguerite in her first English appearance); Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* ("The audiences here are spellbound," *The Athenæum* said); Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*; and Vincent Wallace's *Maritana* ("which was performed with a poor cast," according to the *Theatre*).

It appears from the reviews these operas drew large and enthusiastic audiences. The reviews were with very few exceptions laudatory. They consistently emphasized the ensemble work rather than the excellence of individual singers, although many well-regarded English singers performed, including Charles Lyall, W. Ludwig, J. W. Turner and T. Aynsley Cook. Of these, the critics noticed Ludwig most often.

After a recess of two weeks, during which James Macintosh redecorated the theatre, the Adelphi performers returned with a Burnand melodrama. The *Athenæum* called *Proof* "a typical Adelphi melo-drama but for one omission. It is wholly without comic interest," and attributed this omission to a dearth of low comedians on the English stage at this time. It thought *Proof* "a very powerful drama," but badly staged and poorly acted (27 April, p. 550). A program from the Westminster Public Library offers a corroborative manuscript commentary. The aggrieved writer states, among other things, "Emery made his part a duet with the prompter, and allowed his character to drop down to the level of a comic servant." Several reviews were generally favorable, and the play became a great popular success, running for several months.

This was Chatterton's last year as manager. His various theatrical ventures had not, overall, succeeded. He had become acting manager of the Lyceum in 1857, was lessee of the St. James's in 1859, and was associated with Drury Lane beginning in 1863, becoming lessee in 1866. Five years later, he had entered into co-management of the Adelphi with Ben Webster. After leaving the Adelphi, he struggled to keep Drury Lane solvent, but in February 1879, he closed that theatre when his debts reached 36,000 pounds. He is credited with the famous aphorism "Shakespeare spells ruin, and [Lord] Byron bankruptcy" (Adams, *Dictionary of the Drama*, I, 277).

The editors have designated 31 August as the end of this season.

FM

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1878-1879

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Benjamin Webster was still proprietor this season, but Agostino and Stefano Gatti, London restaurateurs, succeeded Frederick B. Chatterton as "sole lessees and managers."

The Gattis assembled an excellent acting company, a fact frequently mentioned in the reviews, and showed a willingness to experiment long absent from the Adelphi. Writing of the dull theatrical times preceding Easter, the *Theatre* said, "At the Adelphi, however, a bold and liberal bid for popularity was made by the Messrs. Gatti; new brooms determined to sweep very clean, no matter what may be the cost of such an operation" (1 April, p. 187). The reference was to *The Crimson Cross*, which opened on 27 February.

In the first part of The Season, until the theatre closed for repairs on 1 February, *Proof*, which had begun in the spring of 1878, still headed the bill. "Mr. Burnand's well-constructed version of *Une Cause Célèbre*, an ingenious and striking, if somewhat lengthy, melodrama, still holds its own at the Adelphi, a house which has not of late years been too largely blessed with the breath of public applause" (*Times*, 27 December, p. 36). The *Daily Telegraph* was impressed: "All the parts of the story are made to act and react on each other with the certainty and precision of watchwork, and those movements are so accurate in their adjustment that the plot always strikes, so to speak, at the exact time." During its long run, four actors took the principal role of Pierre Lorence: Bandmann, Charles Kelly, Henry G. Neville and Hermann Vezin. This "ancient Adelphi drama" was revived ten years later at the Princess's with Carlotta Leclercq in the cast (Sherson, *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 181).

The Gatti brothers showed their good intentions by engaging the theatre's architect, Spencer Chadwick, to make extensive renovations and redecorations during the three-week interregnum. The house reopened on 27 February, with an elaborate new piece, *The Crimson Cross*, written by "Saville Rowe" (Clement W. Scott). The play failed, as everyone, including the author himself (after the fact), conceded. However, the cast and staging exceeded recent Adelphi standards.

Miss Adelaide Neilson, Mr. Hermann Vezin, and Mr. Henry G. Neville are each of them artists who have made for themselves a prominent position and can command high remuneration for their services. The mounting of the play was elaborate, and many of the dresses were the best of their kind that have been seen on the stage for many a long day (1 April, p. 187).

Queen Isabella was Miss Neilson's last original role.

In the excitement of this first Gatti undertaking, perhaps, "Saville Rowe" overstated the originality of his contribution and provoked critical invective more entertaining than *The Crimson Cross* itself. He defended his claims to originality of authorship with such arguments as the following:

I am asked by a manager to do a "new" version of *Nos Intimes*, by Sardou...The manager does not want the "old" versions, but a new one. I change the scenes, the characters...rightly or wrongly, I venture to reconstruct, and I offer the result to the public. Am I a dishonest man and an impostor if I call this a new play and tell the public from whence I derive my material? (*Theatre*, 1 May, p. 228).

Nevertheless, Dutton Cook, one of several of Rowe's critics, would not have this sophistry. He pointed out that in the Adelphi playbill, which "had the air of conveying much information," Rowe had provided obfuscation and not information about the specific source of his work, an old play, *Perrinet Leclerc*, which he had followed closely but not even named in the playbill. As for Rowe's "reconstruction" of the original:

It is quite true that Mr. Rowe made certain alterations in the elder drama: otherwise *The Crimson Cross* would have been not an adaptation but a translation. He professes to have reconstructed *Perrinet Leclerc*; but this I cannot admit...The leading characters and incidents of the French play are substantially reproduced in the English version. With one omission, the scenes in *Perrinet Leclerc* are identical with the scenes in *The Crimson Cross* and follow each other in the same order (*Theatre*, 1 June, p. 310).

In his final sally, Cook reflected on the vanity of adapters: "According to my experience, adapters are naturally apt to plume themselves upon their originality, and are never more confident that the inventive faculty is strongly animating them than when they are translating from a foreign language" (p. 311).

Sheridan Knowle's *Hunchback*, a stopgap when *The Crimson Cross* failed, ran for more than fifty performances instead of the twelve originally contemplated. This was largely due to the strong cast. "A cast," the *Times* said, "including Mr. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Henry Neville, Mr. Flockton, Mr. Harcourt, Miss Neilson, and Miss Lydia Foote is not to be found every day" (24 March, p. 10).

Sheridan's *School for Scandal* played only three weeks, but its very appearance on the Adelphi bill shows how the Gattis' management differed from Chatterton's. The *Theatre* said that Miss Neilson and Flockton were excellent actors in their lines, but they were not suitable for "Sheridan's merry wit" (1 June, p. 327).

The costume drama, *Richelieu* survived only five performances. It was an opportunity for Hermann Vezin to shine, and the *Examiner* approved.

It is a piece of acting worthy of our stage in its best days, and fit to take rank with the best work now to be seen during the French tenure of the Gaiety. It leaves us at a loss to understand why a performer as gifted is not oftener seen in parts of this kind...All who have seen his *Richelieu*, and all who regard him as we do, as occupying the very first rank of English speaking artists, must look with earnest solicitude for his next appearance in a part alike worthy of his great powers (quoted in the *Times*, 15 July 1879).

Miss Neilson closed her engagement with *Amy Robsart*, Halliday's adaptation of *Kenilworth*, supported by Bella Pateman, Neville and Vezin. The *Daily Telegraph* commented that Miss Neilson "resumes possession of a part, not only originally played by her, but peculiarly adapted to display to the best those endowments conferred by nature, and those acquirements of her art since attained by assiduous study in the higher paths of her profession" (quoted in the *Times*, 20 June 1879). At the end of this season, Miss Neilson went to America for a short time and then traveled to France, where she died on 15 August.

Tom Taylor's *Ticket-of-Leave Man* was the final major production of the season. Neville played his original role of Bob Brierley, which he performed more than two thousand times in his career. Lydia

Foote was May Edwards, a role she played in part of the first run of this play. The *Sunday Times* said she "was once more supremely tender and touching in her original part of May Edwards" (*Times*, 16 August 1879).

The season ended 27 September 1879.

FM

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1879-1880

Ed. Frank McHugh & Gilbert Cross

Benjamin N. Webster relinquished proprietorship of the Adelphi Theatre to the Gatti brothers in October 1879. Webster died in 1882 and is buried in Brompton Cemetery, London.

On two of every three evenings this season, a Dion Boucicault play headed the Adelphi bill (the *Daily Telegraph* called the dramatist "the Napoleon of dramatic art"). The first of the four offerings, *Rescued*, a "new and original sensational drama," was apparently the worst and had the shortest run. The critics condemned it except for the sensation scene, "but it is to the carpenter and not the author, that the praise is due...A bridge is swung aside at the moment when a train bearing the hero and his fortunes is about to cross—the villain's work, of course, but equally, of course, foiled by the two heroines" (*Times*, 4 October p. 10). This scene, the *Athenæum* said, produced much applause. "A scene of love-making, however, in which the heroine, Lady Sybil, makes advances to an engine-driver, provoked open derision" (4 October, p. 444).

The *Athenæum* commented, as critics in the preceding season had, on the waste of good actors on such bad drama: "In this wretched piece actors like Messrs. Hermann Vezin, H. Neville, and G. Taylor, Misses Lydia Foote, Moodie, and Pateman, take part" (p. 444). Vezin, to take one of the people named, was an accomplished Jacques in *As You Like It* and had played Iago to Phelps's Othello.

Rescued was withdrawn in late October and Halliday's version of *Nicholas Nickleby* returned. It had prospered in previous Adelphi seasons and did so again. The *Times* commented, "Mr. Halliday's version of *Nicholas Nickleby*, like all previous versions of Dickens's novels, is but a poor play, but there is a strong cast to play it at the Adelphi." It named Lydia Foote (as Smike), Fernandez, Taylor, Neville and Vezin as those who give "a distinction to the performance beyond what the merits of the play itself would be able to impart" (6 November, p. 8).

When four weeks later *East Lynne* joined *Nicholas Nickleby* on the bill, the Adelphi had an attractive program, which carried it into February. The *Times* was not favorably impressed by *East Lynne*: "Miss Pateman plays the part of the sinning and suffering heroine, and plays it in a style which has apparently its admirers at the Adelphi. However, the piece, under no conditions an exhilarating one, cannot be said to have attained any fresh distinction in its present circumstances" (3 December, p. 10).

In February, the house enjoyed the novelty of a play, W. G. Wills's *Ninon*, given for the "first time anywhere." The *Saturday Review* liked Miss Wallis.

It gives an actress, who appears likely to take the highest rank, an opportunity of showing that tragic power which, always rare, is especially rare now. It is seldom that anything is seen on the English stage so fervid and so full of real feeling as the acting of Miss Wallis in the last scene of the play, where Ninon implores her lover's forgiveness. It may not impossibly remind some spectators of Madame Sarah Bernhardt's rendering of the final scene of [Victor Hugo's] *Hernani*, and, indeed, in one respect, is superior to it, for Miss Wallis does not overstep the modesty of nature (quoted in the *Times*, 9 March 1880).

The critics also praised strong situations, eloquent dialogue and his evocation of the French Reign of Terror. "Altogether appropriate is the background. Tumbrils loaded with those destined to the

guillotine roll through the streets, the Megaeras of the Revolution fill the public places with threats and curses, and the chief actors in the drama of the 'Terror' are brought upon the stage" (*Athenæum*, 14 February, p. 227). The first-night audience was stirred: "Fresh from the excitement of the closing scene, the audience on Saturday night, after calling the leading performers before the curtain, clamoured loudly for Mr. Wills" (*Times*, 9 February, p. 8). *Ninon* ran for almost three months.

Shaughraun returned yet again to the Adelphi in late April. The *Weekly Times* said, "Never before has there been so fine a cast, and never has it been presented in such a perfect and satisfactory manner" (quoted in the *Times*, 26 April 1880). However, the *Times* reviewer thought only Boucicault himself, in the role of Conn, was worth seeing and insincerity and burlesque had crept into the performance of the other actors, who could no longer take the play seriously (29 April, p. 10), but the public apparently took another view, for the play had a solid run.

In July, two prolific Adelphi dramatists were represented in one program when Buckstone's classic *Wreck Ashore* was offered along with a Boucicault piece playing for the first time in London, *Forbidden Fruit*.

Wreck Ashore lasted for seven weeks, when it gave way to *Therese; or, the Maid of Croissey*, a sentimental comedy that had been popular in England and America for half a century. It was the source of the libretto of Ignaz Brull's *The Golden Cross*, an opera given at the Adelphi in 1878. Dion Boucicault adapted the original French play for the present Adelphi production, and the *Times* applauded his work: "The play has been altered, and for the better, for production on the Adelphi boards" (20 August, p. 6). This work and *Forbidden Fruit* continued until the end of the season. The *Times* praised Boucicault who had "carried the theatre through a trying summer season with unparalleled success" (4 September 1880).

The beginning of this season saw the death of one of the Adelphi's greatest sons, John Baldwin Buckstone. He was born in 1802 and as a youth became a solicitor's clerk before running away to the more exciting world of the stage. His London debut was as Ramsay in *The Fortunes of Nigel* at the Surrey, 1823. His first performed piece was *The Bear-Hunters* (1825). After this start, he wrote more than 100 plays—many for the Adelphi and the Haymarket, of which he was a manager from 1853 until his death.

Buckstone came to the Adelphi in the 1827-28 season where he played Bobby Trot in his own *Luke the Labourer*. His *Green Bushes; or, A Hundred Years Ago* was the most popular piece ever performed at the Adelphi. During the century, it was produced twenty-one times. Percy Fitzgerald said of Buckstone:

A more singular face could not be devised—the intensely droll eyes set in their places a little crookedly, a delightfully grotesque nose, cheeks something after the pattern of cutlets, and whose muscles went up and down, delicately relaxed; and the mouth! That, drawing it over to one side, into a corner as it were, until by the act a sort of money-box slit or aperture was made; with this difference, that the good things were projected out of it, instead of anything being dropped in;—that twist was special to himself (quoted in W. Davenport Adams, *A Dictionary of the Drama* I, 224).

FM

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1880-1881

Ed. Peggy Russo

The Gatti Brothers did not become the official proprietors and managers until March 1881, but at the beginning of the 1880-81 season, they were in control, and they set about renewing the fortunes of the Adelphi. Unlike the previous proprietor Ben Webster, the Gattis were not performers; rather, according to George Rowell:

The two Swiss-Italians were known as "restaurateurs" who saw their new acquisition as much as an extension of their catering interests as a base for theatrical ambition. Nevertheless, they soon formulated a complementary recipe to Drury Lane melodrama. Though spectacle was not lacking, stirring sentiment proved their stock in trade (*Theatre in the Age of Irving*, p. 143).

The initial ingredient of the complementary recipe stirring sentiment came from Dion Boucicault, who had been "engaged to play at the Adelphi and write plays for that theatre for several years to come" (*Theatre*, 1 Oct. 1880, p. 250). The Gattis announced in their *Evening Guide* that Boucicault had "proposed to produce...romantic and domestic drama with as much perfection as tragedy is done at the Lyceum." In addition, plans for the fall season included "alterations and additions in every department of the theatre," and "overtures to actors...with the object of forming a powerful dramatic company." The Gattis also announced their intention to follow Boucicault's suggestions regarding choice of plays and philosophical attitude toward the audience. Boucicault believed that the Adelphi had lost popularity because:

romantic and domestic drama [had] given place to modern comedy and a less emotional and stirring entertainment. Gradually, the great middle class [had been] edged out of its place in the leading theatres and managers [had begun] to cultivate the 'upper crust' of their audiences; [thus] Mr. Boucicault urged Messrs. Gatti to...abolish the orchestra stalls and restore the pit and gallery (*Gattis' Evening Guide*, October, 1880).

Nevertheless, renovations for the new season were primarily cosmetic; they included "change and redecoration" to the front of the theatre, the entrance redone in white, blue and gold, and the box corridors re-decorated. Still, a few minor changes indicated that the Gattis were listening to their new advisor: "from the upper circle, one row of seats has been taken, and larger stalls replace them. The partitions in the private boxes have been removed."

The season opened October 21st with Boucicault's *The O'Dowd* and two farces *Wanted 1,000 Milliners* by Joseph S. Coyne and *Shocking Events* by John B. Buckstone. Although advertised in the *Times* as Boucicault's "entirely new Irish play," *The O'Dowd* had been previously performed in New York (as *Daddy O'Dowd*, 1873) and in Dublin. Based on *Les Crochets du Père Martin* by Messieurs Cormon and Grange, the piece had been previously adapted in 1858 by John Oxenford as *The Porter's Knot*. Although little different from its source, biographer Townsend Walsh maintains that "Boucicault, in transferring the scene to Ireland, gave the play new atmosphere, and his own performance of the old Galway fisherman was the most moving and affecting thing he ever did on the stage" (*The Career of Dion Boucicault*, p. 122). Unfortunately, Boucicault had transferred the story, not simply to give the play new atmosphere, but rather to promote a pro-Irish political message. Although Boucicault's acting was universally praised in the *Times* (23 October 1880), the *Athenæum* (30 October 1880), and *Theatre* (1 December 1880), critical opinion about the political content of the play was universally negative. The *Athenæum* said, "Mr. Boucicault's political explanations fail to commend themselves to the public" (p. 580). The *Times* called his timing

"unwise: Ireland and the Irish form scarcely now a fit subject for theatrical gasconading" (p. 8). In response to such "expressions of displeasure," Boucicault announced the withdrawal of the play in a *Times* advertisement on 11 November. On 13 November, the Adelphi management, in its turn, advertised the withdrawal of the play after it had played thirteen more nights and lamented that the end of the run would mark "the last appearance of Mr. Boucicault in London." Thus, the promising partnership between the Gattis and Boucicault ended abruptly. Faced with such a disaster, the Gattis did what proprietors of the Adelphi were wont to do they revived *The Green Bushes*. The *Athenæum*, in a brief review, called it "a dramatic curiosity" (4 December 1880, p. 754). The piece opened 29 November, accompanied on the bill by *The Illustrious Stranger*.

In the meantime, as managers of Covent Garden, the Gattis produced *Valentine and Orson* for the pantomime season, beginning on Boxing Day (27 December) and running through 19 February. The pantomime was well received, but the divided interest of the Gattis had a direct effect on the operation at the Adelphi. After pulling J. G. Taylor out of the cast of *The Green Bushes* so that he could appear at Covent Garden (Taylor left the Adelphi 22 December and returned 25 February), the Gattis replaced him in the part of Muster Grinnidge with Robert Pateman, who had previously played Jack Gong. It seems significant that upon Taylor's return to the role in February, Bella Pateman left the cast (replaced in the lead role of Miami by Mrs. Bernard Beere) and Robert Pateman also disappears from the *Times* advertisements. Bella Pateman had been a leading actress with the company since 1877; Robert had been with the company since 1878. Also, Henry Neville announced at the end of January that he would be joining the company at the Princess's Theatre (*Athenæum*, 29 January 1881). He too had been with the Adelphi since 1877 (he returned in 1883).

During the month of February, three matinees were presented *Her World Against a Lie* (12 February) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (9 and 26 February) performed by Horace Wigan's company. Neither production was well received. *Her World Against a Lie*, adapted by Florence Marryat and George Neville from her novel of the same name, had "Played with Great Success in the Provinces for over Five Months," according to the Adelphi program. Miss Marryat appeared as Hephzibah Horton; it was her first performance on the stage. The *Athenæum* called the piece "wearisomely long, much of its matter...superfluous, and the whole...indifferently acted," but Miss Marryat showed "genuine ability, uncultivated as yet, but capable of cultivation" (19 February 1881, p. 274). In an unidentified review, the writer maintained, "what the lie was we may be able to tell; but what was represented by the other thing could not be made out." Originally scheduled for January 22, Wigan's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was first presented on 9 February. The *Standard* claimed, "such rash attempts as this vain one should not be encouraged." The major negative factor was the acting of Henry Murray: "Murray is just as little like Falstaff as one padded to his size and wearing a white beard, which came off and left him in the last act with a bare chin." The rest of the cast did not fare much better: "to say nothing of the majority of the cast would be the kindest way of dealing with them" (The *Standard* attached to an LTM program, 9 February 1881).

The Gattis spared neither time nor expense with their next production. H. J. Byron was given four months to prepare an adaptation of Jules Verne's *Michael Strogoff*. Besides hiring a competent adaptor, the Gattis secured the services of scene painter William Beverley, who had aided in the success of their Christmas pantomime at Covent Garden. Beverley's innovative work not only contributed to the success of this production, it was also historically important: "In this play still-life accessories were, for the first time upon the British stage, adroitly arranged in harmony with the background, after the manner of the French cycloramas" (*DNB*, suppl. i. 192-3).

The cycloramas necessitated lengthy scene changes, however, causing audience complaints. The *Standard* criticized the battlefield cyclorama because "the dead horses [were] so palpably made of

cloth and stuffing," but admitted, "this trifle was overlooked, and the audience was comfortably horrified." In addition to the spectacle provided by the cycloramas, the piece included a processional and a grand ballet. The Gattis also introduced Mlle. Francesca Zanfretta, who had starred in their Covent Garden pantomime, as the principal danseuse.

In addition, the Gattis assembled a strong cast of actors, including a number who were new to the company. Most important of these was Charles Warner, who directed and portrayed Michael Strogoff "in that robust fashion which makes him highly welcome to a sympathetic house" (*Standard*). Warner's performance was so robust, however, that he was wounded in the hand on opening night during a duel "fought with a scimitar dangerously and unnecessarily sharp" (*Times*, 16 March 1881, p. 86). Warner continued in the role despite the injury until 8 April, when "having been advised by his medical attendant to take a few days' rest...J. H. Clynds [was] specially engaged to sustain the part" (*Times*, 8 April 1881). Clynds' performance as Strogoff was not reviewed; nor was that of J. A. Rosier, a member of the cast who replaced Clynds on 18 April, and continued in the role until Warner's return on 23 April.

Mrs. Hermann Vezin, playing Strogoff's mother, was praised for her "genuine power," and for aiding in crowd control on opening night:

the gallery, having been surfeited with music and kept waiting for a considerable time between the acts, thought it proper to take exception to some helmets of rather eccentric design, and a dangerous spirit of ridicule seemed likely to spread when the timely appearance of the actress restored interest in the drama (*Standard*).

Other cast members included Mrs. Bernard Beere as the Gypsy accomplice of the villain, and Miss Gerard as Nadia. The bills also show R. M. Archer in the role of 1st traveller. George Rowell in *William Terriss and Richard Prince* is convinced this is the first positive identification of Terriss' future murderer (p. 59). Archer's given names were Richard Millar. Programs of the season show an Archer in two previously performed pieces. There are no other Archers playing the Adelphi before this season.

The *Standard* predicted "a long and prosperous career" for *Michael Strogoff*, and indeed, it played for 100 performances; moreover, the demand for tickets necessitated postponement until the following season of *Janet Pride*, scheduled to open on 11 June (*Times*, 11 June 1881). Another measure of its popularity was a royal visit on the penultimate night of The Season by "the Princess of Wales and the Grand Duke of Hesse and his daughters" (*Times*, 8 July 1881). The Gattis terminated The Season on Friday, 8 July, but presented a benefit for Mrs. Bernard Beere on 9 July, in which Dion Boucicault made an appearance despite his announcement the previous November that he would never appear in London again.

The matinee performance of Boucicault's *Kerry* was favorably reviewed in the *Athenæum*. Boucicault's rendering of Kerry was termed "admirably touching," and Mrs. Beere's portrayal of Mrs. Desmond "showed command of pathos" (*Athenæum*, 16 July 1881). *Kerry* was followed by scenes from *The School for Scandal*, with Mrs. Beere as Lady Teazle and Hermann Vezin as Sir Peter. Considering its unpromising beginning, the season's ending revealed the Gattis were perfecting their recipe for success.

PR

Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1881-1882

Ed. Peggy Russo

During the autumn of 1881, the Savoy Theatre opened with electric lighting, the current generated by steam engines situated on land adjoining the theatre. Soon every major theatre in London would follow suit in an attempt to win audiences by decreasing the heat and fumes resulting from gaslight. However, the Gattis were still struggling to win audiences by pleasing their taste. They chose to continue presenting what had worked in the past. Thus, following the final two weeks of July, during which the theatre was dark, the Adelphi season commenced with the oft-postponed revival of Boucicault's *Janet Pride* with Charles Warner as Richard Pride and Miss Gerard playing Janet. A farce—*The Middy Ashore*—preceded *Janet Pride* on the bill. The *Athenæum* gave the production of *Janet Pride* faint praise, claiming even though it was "one of the best instances of adaptation extant, and was in its day one of the most popular," it had begun "to appear a little old fashioned." Even so, Miss Gerard received plaudits: she "reveals an amount of pathos nothing in her past performances led us to expect" (6 August 1881, p. 7).

The Gattis' next move revealed their continuing effort to stay within the tradition of the "celebrated Adelphi drama." After announcing on 6 September that notwithstanding its "success," they were "compelled to withdraw *Janet Pride*" because they had arranged with playwright Charles Reade to produce his drama *It's Never Too Late to Mend* under his direction and that of Charles Warner, the Gattis also made clear their future intentions:

Largely increased audiences testify nightly to the admirable acting of the star melodramatic company engaged to perform the best and most legitimate dramas of the day. No trouble or expense will be spared to keep untarnished the reputation of the Adelphi prominent as the home of melodrama (*Times*, 6 September 1881).

It's Never too Late To Mend opened on 8 September, preceded on the bill by a one-act farce, *A Lad from the Country*. Charles Warner, who had previously played the role of Tom Robinson in *It's Never Too Late to Mend* was lauded by the *Daily Telegraph* for "advantageously" resuming that role, and Clara Jecks was praised by both the *Morning Post* and the *Chronicle* for the pathos with which she acted Little Josepha (quoted in the *Times*, 13 September 1881). Once more, the theatre received a royal visit. The Prince and Princess of Wales, with their suite, attended the production on 12 October (*Times*, 13 October 1881).

Even though they continued to use traditional pieces, the Gattis also strove to mount new plays. On 31 December, they presented *Taken from Life*, advertised as "a new and original drama" by Henry Pettitt. Once again, Charles Warner directed and starred. As the Gattis had promised, expense was not spared. F. Lloyds designed new scenery, and Karl Meydar provided new music. Reviews were mixed. The *Theatre* called it "an Adelphi drama of the old pattern carefully adapted to modern taste," and praised the "simple story of love and persecution." The greatest plaudits were reserved for Charles Warner, of whom it was said: "There is no better actor at present on the stage to carry a play of this kind through" (C. S., *Theatre*, 1 February 1882, p. 110). The *Athenæum* awarded the production a single paragraph, and called it "a respectable specimen of a melo-drama [which] makes no pretence to novelty of treatment or to literary excellence." Warner played "with force as the hero," and Miss Gerard was judged "monotonously tender" (7 January 1882, p. 27). The *Times* and *Standard* reviews were negative. The *Times* noted that despite the "extraordinary fervour" exhibited by the audience, the piece,

with its highly-coloured and conventional pictures of country life, town life, prison life, racing life...is quite in keeping with the traditions of the theatre, and will, no doubt, be found grateful to the taste of its habitual patrons [but] if gauged by the not extravagant standard of modern melodrama, Mr. Pettitt's contribution cannot take a very high place (4 January 1881, p. 12).

Warner's work was judged by the *Times* to be "robust rather than refined," and his method of expressing emotion was compared to that "employed by the players in the lamentable comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe." According to the *Standard*, the "audience's enthusiasm...was almost rapturous [but] originality of subject or treatment may be said to have been entirely lacking." Spectacle was not lacking, however; the *Standard* cited the "vivid reproduction" of the Fenian explosion at Clerkenwell in which "substantial-looking walls are shattered, and brick-built houses topple down with alarming realism." Another spectacular scene was that of the hero's escape on a Derby horse following a "game of hide and seek...in and out of the hay-lofts" (clipping, LVT). This Adelphi production also received a royal visit—this time by Prince Christian—on 17 April (*Times*, 18 April 1882).

During the run of *Taken from Life*, seven additional productions were presented in matinee performances: *The Merchant of Venice* (18 March); *Kevin's Choice*, a benefit for Wallworth (25 March); *Hamlet* (30 March); *The Kingmaker* (15 April); *Love's Anguish* (3 May); and a special performance benefit for E. H. Brooke, including *Good for Nothing*, *Who Speaks First*, and scenes from *Money*, *Macbeth*, and *The Kingmaker* (17 June). Of these, J. W. Boulding's *The Kingmaker* and its sequel, *The Double Rose*, received scathing reviews in the *Times* and polite notices in the *Athenæum* and *Theatre* (although Sophie Eyre was praised for her acting in *The Double Rose*). The *Times* said of *The Kingmaker*:

the author's ambition has been confined to bringing down the drop scene on a series of grotesque tableaux...There were titters when there ought to have been enthusiastic applause [but] now that it has had the imprimatur of a representation at the Adelphi [it] will probably lead a chequered existence for some time among provincial audiences, who must have misgivings as to the literary value of a 'great Adelphi success' (17 April 1882).

Also reviewed was Oscar Schou's *Love's Anguish*, based on Georges Ohnet's novel *Serge Panine*. It was panned by the *Athenæum*: "a careful supervision of the dialogue, backed up by an almost complete change of cast, might give it a chance of popularity" (*Athenæum*, 13 May 1882, p. 614). The *Referee* said of it, "it was balderdash and no mistake" and added:

Miss Annie Baldwin, who played Jeanne [*sic*] and Mr. Beveridge, who represented Micheline's original lover, alone escaped ridicule.... The great artist who played the footman, and who began by saying in tragic tones, 'My lord, the carriage is ready' had the greatest part of the cheering. Whenever he put in an appearance, there was a round of applause...Oh, yes, it was a cruel audience, but it must be said the cruelty was provoked (LTM clipping, 7 May, 1882).

Following the run of *Taken From Life*, the Adelphi embarked upon what the *Times* called "a season of theatrical experiments, when the regular companies resign their places for a time to adventurous strangers" (29 June 1882). The adventurous stranger was Edwin Booth, who opened in Lytton's *Richelieu* on 26 June. His company included Eben Plympton in his first London appearance. Booth was also supported by a few Adelphi regulars, most notably E. M. Brooke. In addition, the Patemans returned for the Booth season with Bella playing opposite Booth and Robert. She performed and

shared the duties of stage manager with E. M. Brooke. Although London audiences had seen Booth as Richelieu before, the performance was praised by the *Times* and *Athenæum*, and warranted a royal visit by the Prince of Wales on 20 July (*Times*, 21 July 1882). On 24 July, Tom Taylor's *The Fool's Revenge* opened, starring Booth and Bella Pateman. Neither the *Times* nor the *Athenæum* was impressed. The *Times* noted that even though "the performance had all the usual features of a 'benefit'...a recent controversy as to the propriety of the 'benefit' system in the case of managers seems to have deterred Mr. Booth from using the objectionable term in the playbill" (5 August 1882).

Booth appeared in *Don Caesar de Bazan* by Gilbert Abbot à Beckett and Mark Lemon on 3 August. The piece was of interest because it was "a part in which Mr. Booth has never hitherto appeared in England and which, unlike his familiar impersonations, appertains to the domain of light comedy" (*Times*, 5 August 1881). The end of Booth's special season on 5 August signaled the end of the Adelphi's '81-'82 season and the return of the regular company to the theatre for the bank holiday opening of *Drink* on 7 August.

This season was marked by the deaths of Mme. Céleste in Paris from cancer (12 February) and Ben Webster (8 July) who were long associated with the Adelphi as manageress and lessee, and whose names were synonymous with Adelphi drama throughout most of their careers (M. Webster, *The Same Only Different*, p. 91).

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1882-1883

Ed. Peggy Russo

On 7 August 1882, while the Savoy Theatre was again drawing crowds to its seasonal opening with the novelty of electric lighting, the Adelphi commemorated the bank holiday with a revival of *Drink*, adapted by Charles Reade from Emile Zola's French version and first produced at the Princess's Theatre in 1879. Reade directed, and Charles Warner, Fanny Leslie and Amy Roselle re-enacted their roles from the Princess's production. The revival received no special notice in the press, but Charles Warner's highly regarded performance as Coupeau guaranteed a box-office success and warranted royal visits from the Prince and Princess of Wales on 14 September (*Times*, 15 September 1882) and the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh on 21 October (*Times*, 23 October 1882). *Families Supplied* an original farce by Ernest Cuthbert, preceded *Drink* on the bill.

On 30 September, The Adelphi offered audiences a "first-time-ever" matinee performance of "a realistic adaptation of Ouida's novel" *Chandos or The Jester Who Turned Traitor* by Hartbury Brooklyn (prog). The *Athenæum* called the adaptation "extreme in length and disconnected in story," and bemoaned the actors' lack of preparation (7 October 1882, p. 474). The *Times* celebrated the "comic effect" achieved by an adaptor striving for "high-flown sentiment," claiming that at first, the audience was "mystified," but "as the utterly incomprehensible character of the play dawned upon it, it entered into the humour of the thing, and the two last acts were received with laughter" (3 October 1882, p. 4b). "Especially engaged for the race scene" was George H. Chirgwin, the White-Eyed Kaffir, a popular burnt-cork comedian and musician (*Times*, 30 September 1882). *Chandos* was preceded on the bill by the "first London performance" of *Mariette's Wedding*, an operetta composed by Haydyn Millars and co-authored by W. E. Morton.

On 17 November, the Adelphi invited the officers and men of the Indian Contingent and those of the Household Cavalry who had served in the Egyptian campaign to a special commemorative performance of *Drink*. Following the performance, Charles Warner recited a new poem to "mark the occasion"—Clement Scott's "The Midnight Charge" (*Times*, 13 November 1882). This also marked the final performance of *Drink*.

From 18 November through 8 March 1883, Charles Reade and Henry Pettitt leased the Adelphi and put together what the *Times* called a "scratch" company to perform their new melodrama *Love and Money*. Harry Jackson, of Augustus Harris's company, was brought in to "superintend" the production. Cornetist Henry Sprake performed entr'acte music by E. Ellis. Despite a complaint about "comic situations that interrupt the action," the *Athenæum* found *Love and Money* worthy of "the highest praise" because "few dramatists know better than Mr. Reade how to touch the heart" (25 November 1882, p. 707). The *Times* praised the piece for exhibiting a return to the "fountain of old-fashioned sentiment" instead of "the sordid realism of *The Romany Rye* and other plays containing such a gutter element." The *Times* also praised spectacular scenes of a mine explosion during which the heroine and her father were buried alive and then threatened by an underground flood: "Water—real water—pours in...and a clever device...represents it as slowly rising to overwhelm the survivors" (10 November, p. 10a).

After the first week, during which *Love and Money* was alone on the bill, Reade and Pettitt experimented with a variety of companion pieces. On 25 November, *Fogged*, a "laughable farce," was added as an afterpiece. It starred John Morris who made "seven marvelous changes" for the seven roles that he played—some of them female (*Times*, 25 November 1882). *Fogged* lasted through 15 December when Reade replaced it with his own "rustic drama" entitled *Rachael the Reaper*.

On 22 January, a revival of Reade's three-act adaptation of Tennyson's *Dora* replaced the two-act *Rachael*. *Dora* failed at the Adelphi in the 1867 season, but Reade blamed the scene painter and this time set about planning a production that would prove the quality of this work—with new scenery, new music, and Charles Warner to play the lead. The *Times*, while noting improvements in the revival's scenery, cited the piece's "inherent weakness and want of story" (23 January 1882, p. 5f). The *Athenæum* saw improvement in the production quality, but noted the wearisome length of the evening and likened the play to "a merchant craft which has, to meet some emergency, been turned into a man-of-war." (27 January 1883, p. 130). Alerted to the danger of using *Dora* as a 9:00 afterpiece, on 29 January, Reade placed it before *Love and Money* on the bill where it remained until the end of the run (8 March); but given every chance, *Dora* sank.

Besides offering a variety of companion pieces during the run of *Love and Money*, the Adelphi hosted Samuel Hayes' tenth annual matinee on 21 February. *The Love Chase* was presented, followed by a "miscellaneous concert" (*Times*, 21 February 1883). The Adelphi was again honored by two royal visits: The Duchess of Edinburgh and Prince Louis of Battenburg on 21 November (*Times*, 22 November 1882, p. 5 d), and the Prince and Princess of Wales on 12 January (*Times*, 13 January 1883, p. 9f).

In the New Year, the theatre's name was changed to Royal Adelphi Theatre, a name it had borne earlier in the decade. Two months later, the management received a legal summons that had been initiated by the Metropolitan Board of Works. The Gattis were ordered to "remedy defects in the theatre...to prevent danger to the public...from fire." While the Gattis claimed that only a "few structural alterations" were needed, the Board insisted that there were eight "requirements" (*Times*, 3 February).

The theatre was dark from 9 March through 13 March as preparations were being made for the Gattis' production of *Storm-Beaten*, a drama in a prologue and five acts adapted by Robert Buchanan from his popular novel *God and the Man*. *Storm-Beaten* was a sensational melodrama in the Adelphi tradition with a shipboard fire, passengers shipwrecked in the Arctic, and the break-up of ice floes upon which passengers had taken refuge. William Beverley was responsible for sensational settings and effects enjoyed by audiences and praised by critics who also commended Charles Warner, who directed and starred as Christian Christianson. But those same critics were disappointed in Buchanan's adaptation: "From the drawbacks which attend most stories converted into dramas 'Storm-Beaten' is not free," said The *Athenæum* (24 March 1883, p. 387). Buchanan had given his story a happy conclusion because the traditions of Adelphi melodrama demanded it, but the ending did not seem believable. Both the *Times* and the *Theatre* agreed with the *Athenæum*. Among the cast members on opening night, playing Jabez Greene, a shepherd, was H. Beerbohm Tree. This was the year before he gained recognition in the farce *The Private Secretary* at the Globe. *Brother Bill and Me*, a farce, accompanied *Storm-Beaten* on the bill through 28 April, when it was replaced by *Betsy Baker, or Too Attentive by Half*, also a farce. *Storm-Beaten* received one royal visit; on 20 March, the Duchess of Edinburgh and her suite attended (*Times*, 21 March 1883, p. 10a).

During the run of *Storm-Beaten*, there were two matinee performances. On 16 March, Mark J. Quinton made his debut in the title role of the first four acts of *Richelieu* and as Romeo in the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. The *Athenæum* was lukewarm: "To natural advantages Mr. Quinton adds a certain amount of training. He is, however, far too restless in manner" (24 March 1883, p. 388). On 14 May (Whit-Monday), there was a matinee performance of *Storm-Beaten* due to "special desire" (*Times*, 14 May 1883, p. 8).

On 9 June, the summer season began under the management of Edgar Bruce with a disastrous production of *Rank and Riches* by Wilkie Collins. The *Theatre* called the play "predestined for failure," and claimed that it "was deservedly and properly laughed at" (2 July 1883, p. 47). The *Athenæum* concurred: "we must assert that an idea more perversely absurd seldom came into human brain" (16 June 1883, p. 774). The author's idea did not constitute the only absurdity, for on opening night:

Mr. Anson, the stage manager, lost temper, and...in his eccentric garb as the bird-doctor, made an angry appeal to the house to cease its...hostility to the work of a "great master." Cries from the pit of "Bosh," "Nonsense," "Get on with the play," etc., testified to the spirit in which this ill-considered interruption was received.... The fate of the play was sealed (*Times*, 11 June 1883, p. 12a).

Betsy Baker, a one-act farce, preceded the drama on the bill. *Rank and Riches* received more laughter.

Collins's new drama was replaced on 16 June by a hastily thrown together version of *Camille*, advertised "for a few nights only" (*Times*, 15 June 1883). After having endured audience derision in *Rank and Riches* for a week, Miss Lingard much preferred dying of consumption in *Camille*. *Betsy Baker* was retained on the bill on 16 and 18 June, and appeared in the *Times* for 19 June; but according to the program for 19 June, *Camille* was preceded by a production of Ben Webster, Jr.'s, *The Laughing Hyena*.

The Laughing Hyena remained on the bill until the end of the season; *Camille*, like *Rank and Riches*, lasted only one week. On 25 June, it was replaced by a revival of *Pluck: A Story of 50,000 Pounds*, written by Henry Pettitt and Augustus Harris and produced by Harris at Drury Lane the previous August. Kate Pattison starred in her first London appearance following her American tour with Mrs. Langtry. The *Athenæum* called *Pluck* "sensational and slightly preposterous" (30 June 1883, p. 838). The *Times* termed the transference of *Pluck* from Drury Lane to the Adelphi "the last indignity inflicted upon...Collins's unfortunate play," because *Pluck* was not a play, but rather:

a succession of *tableaux*...a railway collision, the breaking of a bank in the City, a snowstorm in Piccadilly, and the destruction by fire of a dilapidated tenement in the Seven Dials—incidents which the authors make no pretence of stringing together by a dramatic idea (27 June 1883, p. 10c).

Like the two preceding productions, *Pluck* did not last long; after twelve performances, it closed on 7 July; and so the season ended with a whimper.

The theatre was dark from 7 July through 25 July, except for 21 July when a matinee benefitted the Royal College of Music. The program included a "grand concert" and a "new three-act play"—*Retaliation*, a comedy by Rudolf Dircks (*Times* 17 July 1883). Special features were performances by Lord Lonsdale's Private Band and Madame Antoinette Sterling, who sang "Sunshine and Rain" and "Caller Herrin" (*Times*, 20 July 1883).

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Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1883-1884

Ed. Peggy Russo

At the beginning of the 1883 season, the Adelphi turned once more to a work by Dion Boucicault and opened on 25 July with a revival of his *Streets of London*, first produced as *Streets of New York* in that city in 1864. Directed by Charles Harris, the production featured "new scenery" by Bruce Smith (*Times*, advertisement, 25 July 1883). Charles Warner appeared as Badger and was praised by the *Athenæum* for his "mixture of melodramatic energy and animal spirits which [are] the distinguishing feature in his acting." Also praised were Mrs. H. Leigh and Miss Clara Jecks (*Athenæum*, 28 July 1883, p. 122). Despite its vintage, the Boucicault revival rated a matinee performance for the bank holiday on 6 August, and drew a royal visit from the Princess of Wales, Prince Albert Victor, the Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, and Prince Louis of Battenberg on 13 August (*Times*, 14 August 1883, p. 7f). Although the Gattis originally announced that *Streets of London* would be "performed for a limited period," the production continued to draw a good house for over two months, ending on 4 October. A popular farce called *Turn Him Out* preceded *Streets of London* on the bill.

Following the close of *Streets of London*, the Adelphi was dark on Friday, 5 October, in preparation for an original melodrama, which was to become one of the theatre's hits of the eighties. Although the Adelphi had previously produced work by Henry Pettitt (*Taken From Life*, 1881, *Love and Money* (with Charles Reade), 1882, and *Pluck* (with Augustus Harris), 1882, *In The Ranks* was the first Adelphi production written by the collaborative team of Pettitt and George R. Sims. Works by them (both alone and in collaboration) became standard fare at the Adelphi for the rest of the decade. *In the Ranks* opened on 6 October, under the direction of Charles Harris, with music by Henry Sprake. *Turn Him Out* was retained on the bill as the opening piece. The *Athenæum* classed *In the Ranks* "as a good Adelphi melodrama with no claim to be anything more" (13 October 1883, p. 474). The *Times* agreed, and added: "None of the characters of the story belongs to the category of living men and women. They are all puppets of the stage, whose life-blood has long since been dried up within them by the footlights" (8 October 1883, p. 7b).

Playing one of the puppets, however, Charles Warner had "plenty of scope for the display of heroism of that robust and acrobatic order dear to the Adelphi public" (*Times*). Isabel Bateman, who had been absent from the stage for some time, played Ruth Herrick, the heroine who is subjected to a "drugging scene" which the *Times* claimed fell "flat, in part it may be from Miss Bateman's want of practical experience of the effects of morphia." The *Theatre* was more enthusiastic: "The acting of the play has been entrusted to well-known and competent artists, and is altogether exceptionally good." James D. Beveridge, playing the villain, was especially commended: "he is howled at and hooted at every opportunity...if some of the excited spectators could lay hands upon him they would quickly make way for his understudy" (1 November 1883, p. 258).

Even though the characters and acting of *In the Ranks* did not gain a consensus of approval among critics, it was immensely successful with Adelphi audiences who enjoyed a plot that included the arrest of the hero on his wedding day for a crime he has not committed, followed by separation of the happy couple, prison and military scenes, pursuit by the villain, and an ending with virtue triumphant over vice (a formula that was to be repeated in future productions). Moreover, its scenic effects, designed by Walter Mann, Thomas W. Hall, and Bruce Smith, delighted both critics and audiences. These were not spectacular effects; rather, they were innovations in scene changes:

Not only are elaborate scenes whisked up...to disappear in the flies, but also whole "sets" are moved on and off the stage, turned outside in, or otherwise made to undergo a complete change of aspect under the eye of the house. A striking application of

this...occurs when...the "set" [is] suddenly pulled round and made to exhibit the exterior instead of the interior of the guard-room (*Times*, 8 October 1883).

The *Athenæum* was equally enthusiastic: "Nothing equally elaborate and ingenious in the way of stage mechanism has been seen on the Adelphi stage" (13 October 1883). Thus, perhaps because of the familiarity of plot, character, and theme, plus the novelty of set-change techniques and the heroic acting of Charles Warner audiences remained enthusiastically in attendance until 28 March 1885. Royal visitors during the run of *In the Ranks* included the Prince and Princess of Wales (*Times*, 8 February 1884, p. 9d) and the Duchess of Edinburgh (*Times*, 12 February 1884, p. 5d).

In the cast of *In the Ranks* was a bit-part actor named Archer (playing O'Flanigan). This Archer was later to become the notorious Richard Prince, the murderer of actor William Terriss. Playwright George R. Sims (quoted in *William Terriss and Richard Prince* by George Rowell) remembers Archer: "Prince or Archer—that was the name we knew him by at the Adelphi—was known to many members of the profession as "Mad Archer"...While in a small part in *In the Ranks*, he complained to me twice that another actor was trying to "queer him" (p. 60).

We have no clue to the identity of the other actor. Perhaps he was Warner, an actor out of the same man's man mold as Terriss.

Two matinee performances were presented at the Adelphi during the 1883 season's run of *In the Ranks*: *Money*, 14 December 1883, and *Little Cricket*, 27 March 1884. According to a *Times* advertisement, the special performance of Lord Lytton's *Money* was to be a "compliment" produced by a management committee of over forty theatre notables in order to "serve an old professional friend who has ever been ready to serve members of the dramatic profession" (the professional friend is not identified but may have been Edward H. Brooke, who had earlier received a benefit at the Adelphi and who was to die the following November). For this purpose, the Gattis donated the use of the Adelphi, and Thomas Thorne permitted his Vaudeville Theatre Company to appear. In addition, several members of the committee appeared in the "well-known club scene" (*Times*, 12 December 1883). Also on the bill was *Young Fra Diavolo, the Terror of Terracina*, a burlesque of Auber's opera (first scene only), written by Henry J. Byron and with musical arrangements by Herr Mayer Lutz.

The production of *Little Cricket* was advertised in the *Times* as "Miss Lydia Cowell's Matinee" (*Times*, 27 March 1884). Its purpose, according to the *Times*, was "to remind playgoers of [the play's] existence." *Little Cricket* was adapted by James Mortimer from George Sands *La Petite Fadette* and had been first produced several years earlier at the "obscure" Duke's Theatre where, after a brief run, it was "lost to the stage." The *Times* found the play "slight in texture" but also found its loss "regrettable." Lydia Cowell's re-appearance in the lead role earned praise, especially her dancing which featured "a commendable regard for local colour." The "rustic setting" was unfortunately supplied by "scenery which nightly does duty for *In the Ranks*" (29 March 1884, p. 6b).

Besides being dark on 5 October (preparation of *In the Ranks*), 25 December (Christmas), 27 February (Ash Wednesday), and 11 April (Good Friday), the Adelphi also closed unexpectedly on Saturday, 5 April "in consequence of the funeral of his late Royal Highness the Duke of Albany" (*Times*, 5 April 1884). Except for these interruptions, *In the Ranks* continued daily with no regard to seasonal breaks. For this reason, we end The Season arbitrarily on 4 October 1884.

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Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1884-1885

Ed. Peggy Russo

The 1884 season promised to be as commercially successful as that of 1883. On 6 October 1884, the Adelphi planned an anniversary performance of *In the Ranks*, which had played continuously since its opening on 6 October 1883. In their *Times* advertisement, the Gattis proudly announced the 310th night of their "immensely successful drama" (6 October 1884). Moreover, the melodrama continued to draw or re-draw audiences. On the following Thursday, for example, the Duchess of Edinburgh, who had seen *In the Ranks* the previous February, paid her second visit to the production, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and also the Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia (*Times*, 10 October 1884, p. 7f). Such was the popularity of *the play*, that it remained on the Adelphi stage without interruption (except for dark nights on Christmas and Ash Wednesday) until 28 March 1885, when the Gattis announced that the play would be performed that evening for the "457th and last time" (*Times*, 28 March 1885).

Following the final performance of this Adelphi hit, the theatre was dark for five nights (29 March through 3 April) in order to prepare for the opening of *The Last Chance*, a new five-act melodrama written for the Gattis by George R. Sims, whose collaboration with Henry Pettit had produced *In the Ranks*. With Sims as playwright, the Gattis obviously assumed that they would have another hit on their hands, and judging by reports of enthusiastic opening-night response, they were correct. Critics were quick to point out, however, that *The Last Chance* amounted to little more than hackwork—there were too many plot and character parallels between the new piece and *In the Ranks*. Once again, Charles Warner played a hero outdone by villainy who spends time in the middle of the play suffering as a dock laborer (rather than a soldier) while his wife, at her lowest point, lies down in the snow to die. Once again, the hero and his wife are restored to good fortune. The *Athenæum* noted, tongue-in-cheek, that Sims's "inventive and literary gifts have been put to no very great strain," but added that the piece "is wholly to the taste of his patrons" (11 April 1885, p. 481). The *Times* agreed, but lamented the taste of Adelphi patrons: "They like the cant of philanthropy with which his dialogue is loaded and applaud his lofty sentiments with the fervour with which an audience of East-end wife beaters may be trusted to receive a moral aphorism" (6 April 1885, p. 10c).

The *Theatre* also criticized the typical Adelphi audience, calling it a "baby, ready to laugh if you only tickle its toes, and equally ready to cry if you only pretend to cry yourself." Moreover, Adelphi drama was labeled "not so much a play as a huge and perfectly legitimate commercial venture" (p. 252). Nonetheless, the harshest criticism was aimed at Sims: "If I were asked—could Mr. Sims write a really high-class melodrama for the Adelphi, supposing he were to try, I should say, no—because the Adelphi does not want a really high-class melodrama, and Mr. Sims is mentally incapable of producing what is not wanted" (*Theatre*, 1 May 1885, p. 255).

Besides re-hiring Sims as playwright and director for the re-hash of the *In the Ranks* plot and characters, the Gattis aspired to a repetition of some of the scenic effects. But the scenery, designed by Bruce Smith, Walter Hann, and William Telbin, did not stimulate the universally positive response awarded that of *In the Ranks*. The *Athenæum* praised the scenes of "the West India Docks with the crowd of hungry applicants looking for work," but the *Times* suggested that if the audience wanted realism, they should "save the price of a seat...and travel eastwards to see the reality in preference to the sham." The *Theatre* was also unimpressed and pointed to the plight of the actors who were outweighed by the scenery: "Mr. Warner seemed to be everlastingly clutching, convulsively...at effects which were not in his part. He appeared to be yearning...to 'let himself go,' but there was nowhere for him to go...the actors supported the scene-painters" (p. 254).

The Gattis gave *The Last Chance* every chance at success. Following the opening on 4 April and publication of the *Times*' criticism on 6 April, the brothers began running an advertisement on 8 April designed to counter the critique's negative effects. It read: "*Adelphi.—The Last Chance.—Immense Success,*" and appeared daily through 28 April, after which the Adelphi advertisements started to shrink in size and number (for the final performances, there was a single advertisement with no cast list). Despite negative critical consensus, the Gattis continued presenting *The Last Chance* through 19 June, but their attempt at a successful sequel to *In the Ranks* did not succeed and may have cost them their heroic leading man. Charles Warner severed his ties to the Adelphi, after a five-season commitment (1880-1884), perhaps in search of a less commercial environment (the Olympic Theatre). After the close of *The Last Chance*, the Adelphi shut down for a full month (22 June through 24 July). *The Last Chance* was accompanied on the bill by *Borrowed Plumes*, a farce by Alfred Maltby. Early in the run, the loyal Duchess of Edinburgh paid a royal visit, accompanied by Princess Louise (*Times*, 8 April 1885, p. 9f).

In addition to its demoralizing end, the season that had begun so well was marked by the death of actor Edward H. Brooke on 30 November 1884 (*Era Almanack*, p. 41). Brooke, who had been a regular player at the Adelphi during the seasons 1878 through 1882, was popular with audiences and among his fellow actors, many of whom had taken part in the benefit for him at the Adelphi on 7 June 1882.

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1885-1886

Ed. Peggy Russo

Following the disappointing run of *The Last Chance*, which closed on 19 June 1885, the Adelphi remained dark until 25 July. It re-opened for the 1885-86 season with yet another Boucicault revival—this time of *Arrah-na-Pogue*, accompanied by a farce, *Leave It To Me*, by Colin H. Hazlewood and A. Williams. While pointing out that the Boucicault "revival appears designed only to meet the modest requirements of the summer season," the *Times* praised the "great care and completeness" afforded the production, noting that the public's opinion of the play had changed in the eighteen years since its first production at the Princess's Theatre on 22 March 1865. Public sentiment at that time had forced the play to be "prematurely withdrawn" because "the political element of the story" surrounding Irish rebellion against the British was considered "seditious." This time, however, audiences listened to the "rebel sentiment" with "equanimity" and even with "pleasure." The cast was termed "adequate" (*Times*, 27 July 1885, p. 8b). Recalling the original cast, the *Athenæum* called Mary Rorke "a worthy successor to Mrs. Boucicault," and praised J. D. Beveridge's Colonel O'Grady, but found Charles Sullivan "lacks as Shaun the Post the humour and tenderness of Mr. Boucicault" (*Athenæum*, 1 August 1885, p. 154).

Following the somewhat unexpected success of *Arrah-na-Pogue*, the Adelphi mounted a revival of *The Colleen Bawn*, another of Boucicault's Irish dramas. Moreover, this revival achieved popular success. In an attempt to explain their popularity, the *Times* noted: "after the complicated and too often sordid plots invented by the dramatist of the present day, the simplicity and directness of motive and the romantic incidents of these impossible stories of Irish life are as refreshing as the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (26 October 1885, p. 4c).

Boucicault's skill as a playwright certainly should be considered as cause for success. Also worthy of note is the *Times* news story appearing on the same page as the play review which reflects an interest in equal rights for Irish tenant farmers. This concern is surely an indication that British public sentiment on the Irish question was softening. In part, the cause for this change may be attributed to Boucicault's attempts to change attitudes through his Irish dramas.

Mary Rorke again appeared in the part originally played by Mrs. Boucicault, and both she and Miss Millward earned praise from the *Times*. Also praised was the treatment of Boucicault's major sensation scene: "The famous water cave scene where the Colleen Bawn is thrown into the pool by Danny Mann and rescued by Myles-na-Coppaleen thrills the house as it has always done" (26 Oct. 1885, p. 4c).

During the run of *The Colleen Bawn*, there was a special matinee of the "first London production" of *Roma; or The Deputy* by Gospodin Lubimoff, adapted from a play by Sardou (*Times*, 28 November 1885). Elaine Verner starred as Roma. The run of *The Colleen Bawn* continued until 12 December 1885.

The theatre was dark from 13 through 22 December in preparation for one of the Adelphi's biggest hits of the eighties. *The Harbour Lights* was the second collaborative effort of George R. Sims and Henry Pettitt, who had co-authored *In the Ranks*, the Adelphi hit of the 1883 season. *The Harbour Lights* was primarily "a naval version of the recent military drama by the same authors, *In the Ranks*, eked out with scenes or ideas derived from *The Colleen Bawn* and other familiar sources" (*Times*, 24 December 1885, p. 9f). The *Athenæum* noted that there was "in character and in incident no element of novelty," but it was "a distinct success...well mounted and acted" (2 January 1886, p. 43).

Despite its lack of originality, the *Theatre* called *The Harbour Lights* "all that an Adelphi melodrama should be—a strong, touching play, excellently placed on the stage, and admirably acted" (1 January 1886, p. 42). Especially praised was William Terriss for "courageously saving a woman from a watery grave, represented by some hundreds of yards of undulating calico" in a scene obviously borrowed from Boucicault's *Colleen Bawn* (*Times*). The *Theatre* said: "There never was a better hero for this kind of play than Mr. Terriss, who looks the handsome young lieutenant to the life, and is always active, easy and vigorous" (p. 44).

Indeed, in William Terriss, the Adelphi had found a much-needed replacement for Charles Warner, who was now part of the rival Olympic Company. Also, when the Gattis made the decision to pair William Terriss and Jessie Millward as romantic leads, they had finally perfected their recipe for the Adelphi melodrama of the eighties. Terriss and Millward had acted together before, in *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Lyceum, but *Harbour Lights* represents the beginning of their career together in Adelphi melodrama. The *Times* applauded this pairing, claiming that Terriss and Millward "impart into popular melodrama the finished style of the Lyceum" (12 April 1886, p. 4a). Terriss and Millward were to remain as romantic leads at the Adelphi through the 1889 season and would later return for the seasons 1894-97. Terriss was to be murdered outside the Adelphi Theatre on 15 December 1897. As George Rowell aptly points out, Terriss: "gave the expression "Adelphi melodrama" a new meaning, and by his association with Jessie Millward...provided the theatre with the double attraction that the Lyceum possessed in Irving and Ellen Terry or the Criterion in Wyndham and Mary Moore" (Rowell, *Theatre in the Age of Irving*, p. 143).

Mary Rorke was also a drawing card for the Adelphi in the 1885 season. Calling her "one of our most gifted emotional actresses," the *Theatre* ran a full-page picture and biography of her (1 March 1886, p. 116a, 162).

The Adelphi announced the one-hundredth performance of *Harbour Lights* on 5 April 1886, and marked the occasion with "the adoption of a new act drop, painted by Hawes Craven from a picture lent by Mr. Irving and giving a glimpse of old English life as it was lived by Robin Hood and his merrie men in the glades of Sherwood Forest" (*Times*, 12 April 1886, p. 4a).

While taking note of the one-hundredth performance and the new act drop, the *Times* gave *The Harbour Lights* a mid-run review, asserting, "The play itself is, as yet, far from needing any adventitious attractions...and time after time one may sit it out with pleasure." Indeed, a significant number of London playgoers must have sat it out time after time. Beginning on 9 January, Saturday-matinee performances were held weekly, and this practice continued until 15 May. The production received three royal visits during this season: the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh (*Times*, 30 December 1885, p. 7e); the Duchess of Connaught and the Duke and Duchess of Oldenburg (*Times*, 12 May 1886, p. 9d); and Prince and Princess Henry of Battenburg and Countess Erbach (*Times*, 23 March, p. 12a).

On 23 June 1886, the Adelphi hosted a special matinee performance of *The Suspicious Husband* by Benjamin Hoadley to "aid the Thimble League" (*Times*, 22 June 1886). (The League was formed by women who supplied clothes to the poor.) First produced at Covent Garden in 1747 with Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard, Hoadley's comedy "requires for its successful presentation a class of acting now not easily to be found," according to the *Athenæum*, and this production "did not rise much above the level of amateur representations." Nevertheless, the *Athenæum* praised Amy Roselle's delivery "with spirit" of a prologue by Walter Besant and Bessie Hatton's recitation "with much pathos [of] Mr. [Robert Traill Spence] Lowell's poem 'The Relief of Lucknow'" (26 June 1886, p. 856).

Performances of *The Harbour Lights* continued through the summer and into the fall. Thus, the season, which had begun with productions of Boucicault revivals to recover from the disaster of *The Last Chance*, ended with the perfection of the Gattis' formula for success—pairing William Terriss and Jessie Millward in a popular play. Because of the extended run of *The Harbour Lights*, the theatre did not close between seasons; for this reason, we end the 1885 season arbitrarily on 4 September 1886.

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1886-1887

Ed. Peggy Russo

The 1886 season continued where the 1885 season left off—with the long-running hit, *The Harbour Lights*, starring William Terriss and Jessie Millward. *Harbour Lights*, which had given its 241st performance of the 1885 season on 4 September 1886, was given its first performance of the 1886 season on the following Monday, 6 September. The play continued to draw audiences until the end of the 1886 season.

The explanation for such a success does not lie in the text of the play. Written by George R. Sims and Henry Pettitt, the piece represents little more than a competent piece of hackwork. Adelphi audiences loved it—primarily because they loved William Terriss. The actor's face was not a new one in the London theatrical scene; he had first unveiled it at the Prince of Wales's in 1868, and he had continued to act successfully on London stages and American ones from 1868 on. In 1880, he had joined the Lyceum's company under Henry Irving, and by 1885, had established himself as a popular and competent second lead. It was not until he starred at the Adelphi in *The Harbour Lights*, however, that Terriss became what he remained until his death in 1897—the matinee idol of the melodrama.

In *Theatre in the Age of Irving*, George Rowell explains why the move to the Adelphi changed Terriss' image: "At the Adelphi, he was ideally cast as a man of action, often in the services, whose honour was usually impugned but whose bravery was overwhelmingly displayed and credit ultimately restored" (p. 143-4).

Women in the Adelphi audience, it seemed, loved him for his good looks and the brave and honorable roles which he played. The male audience also liked him: "Terriss had served briefly at sea, and sailing and swimming were his chief occupations, so 'Breezy Bill' was an apt and affectionate nickname for him" (Rowell, p. 144).

In a comparison between melodrama at the Lyceum, Drury Lane and Adelphi theatres, Rowell gives another clue to Terriss' sudden success: the Lyceum "elaborated on the sinister and sardonic vein in which Irving excelled;" at Drury Lane, "heroes were comparatively minor figures, and the villains numerous and variegated;" but at the Adelphi, "the play's impact derived from the athleticism and forthrightness of Terriss' acting, and from Jessie Millward's quiet appeal opposite him" (Rowell, p. 146). In *Forty Years on the Stage*, J. H. Barnes calls some of Terriss' roles before his Adelphi years, merely "splendid" or "admirable." However, says Barnes: "as the hero of the dramas at the Adelphi, such as Henry Kingsley in *Harbour Lights*, and indeed in the whole series of the plays done about then at that theatre, he was absolutely unapproachable, and up to now unapproached (p. 218).

Thus, the actor, the actress, the theatre, and the melodrama itself were already in existence—the proper ingredients—waiting to be combined to create a popular success. The Gattis' success with *Harbour Lights* may be explained by their willingness to experiment with different combinations of ingredients until they found the recipe that most satisfied the palates of their audience. Saturday matinee performances of *Harbour Lights* were a weekly practice at the Adelphi from 11 September 1886 through 19 February 1887. *Family Jars* continued as the accompanying farce at evening performances (there was no farce for matinees) until 27 May 1887. On 28 May, *A Kiss in the Dark* by J. B. Buckstone replaced *Family Jars*, and remained on the bill with *Harbour Lights* until the end of the season.

Mary Rorke, who played the original Lena Nelson, left the cast on 10 January, replaced by Miss Achurch. Miss Achurch, in turn, left the cast on 26 March. Daisy England, who played Emily in *Family Jars*, played Lena for one night, and then Annie Irish, who remained Lena until the end of the run, took the role. The other major cast change occurred during the week of 16 May (Monday) through 21 May (Saturday) when Jessie Millward was replaced by Miss May Whitty (later Dame May Whitty, who was married to Ben Webster, grandson of old Ben Webster long associated with the Adelphi). This weeklong engagement was the first appearance by Whitty at the Adelphi (she returned in 1897). Millward returned to the production the following Monday, 23 May.

On 14 June, the Gattis donated their theatre as the site for a complimentary matinee for the benefit of J. A. Cave, theatre manager and composer. There was a variety of presentations: *Cool as a Cucumber* presented by Charles Colletre and his company; Charles Warner and Alma Murray appeared in the second act of *Held by the Enemy*. The third act of *The Red Lamp* starred Beerbohm Tree and Lady Monckton; the fourth and fifth acts of *Heartsease* were performed by Grace Hawthorne, Maurice Gally and the Olympic Theatre Company; the cast of *Mr. and Mrs. White* included Miss M. A. Victor, and J. A. Cave himself. There were also several short "incidentals" (*Times*, 14 June 1887).

On 21 June 1887, the Adelphi held a special early performance (6:00 p.m.) to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. There was no accompanying farce. On 25 June, the Gattis announced the 512th and final performance of *The Harbour Lights*, and thus ended the 1886 season (*Times*, 25 June 1887).

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1887-1888

Ed. Peggy Russo

After being dark from 26 June through 27 July 1887, the Adelphi, enlarged and improved, reopened on Thursday, 25 July, with a new melodrama—*The Bells of Haslemere*, written by Henry Pettitt and Sydney Grundy. With this season, the Adelphi began the practice of presenting a new piece minus the accompanying farce for its premiere performance, perhaps to copy Henry Irving's practice of opening night curtain-call speeches at the Lyceum. Indeed, according to the *Telegraph*, the authors and the Gatti brothers were called before the curtain to receive the applause of the audience and presumably to give speeches following the opening-night performance of *The Bells of Haslemere* (*Times*, 30 July 1887).

The Bells of Haslemere was "a plain, homely, old-fashioned melodrama, of a kind of which an unsophisticated audience does not easily tire" (*Times*, 6 August 1887, p. 191). Sydney Grundy, praised for his skill in creating dialogue, was also lauded for turning out a play not only full of the thrilling situation and the *ad captandum* [*vulgus*] sentiment familiar to the Adelphi playgoer, but strong, sound, vigorous, and humanly interesting even to those who may be described as the public of the stalls (*Times*, 29 July 1887, p. 9f).

Although *Bells of Haslemere* followed the established Adelphi formula, there were some innovations. The *Theatre* noted that because William Terriss had become "the actor at whom the pit rises and the gods shout," the authors had been compelled to make "him the one figure that shall stand out from the others." In doing so, they had "dwarfed" the other characters, especially the heroine, and even though the heroine is true and steadfast in her love, is persecuted by an objectionable lover and goes through much mental anxiety, there is little of that rescuing from imminent danger and hair-breadth 'scapes which so rouses the enthusiasm of the pitites (*Theatre*, 1 September 1887, p. 147).

The *Athenæum* also pointed out this production differed from normal Adelphi drama because of the absence of low comedy but blamed this on the then current scarcity of low-comedy actors and on public taste rather than on the authors' compulsion to concentrate on Terriss. A "species of half-comic interest," was provided by a village blacksmith, but when the blacksmith followed Terriss to America, it was "in so uncertain a capacity and in so purposeless a fashion that the idea is conveyed that the actor cast for the part refused to play it unless room were found for him in the American act" (6 August 1887, p. 191).

The *Times* noticed another major difference—the addition of a third villain:

Time was when one single villain of sufficiently unscrupulous habits might be trusted to work all the necessary amount of mischief in a five-act melodrama; but with the introduction of revolving scenery and the general quickening and intensifying of the action of such plays, the want has been itself felt of some additional pressure of villainy to the square inch. In addition, the new type of villain was no longer interested in love and revenge; rather "the sordid acquisition of property...causes him to devote himself to the meaner arts of forgery or blackmail" (29 July 1887, p. 9f).

The technical effects and scenery won praise from the *Theatre*, especially the paintings for the American settings: Bruce Smith's "The Bayou," "Canebrake," and "Mississippi Mangrove Swamp;" and W. Telbin's "'Desmond's Plantation,' with its field hands bearing their baskets of golden fruit and singing as they go the old Negro melodies, so plaintive and so sweet" (*Theatre*, p. 149). The

Athenæum, however, presented an opposing view, complaining that the number of scene changes was "so intricate and elaborate as to perplex almost more than they please. It is sincerely to be hoped that the present fashion of revolving scenery is a passing whim, and that the public will either be elevated to something better, or allowed to fall back on something more simple" (p. 191).

Despite these minor negative criticisms of the production, the actors were praised by all. "In truth," said the *Times*, "the success of the evening belongs...to the acting rather than to the carpentry of the piece; and second only to the heroism of Mr. Terriss and Miss Millward is the villainy of Messrs. Beveridge, Cartwright, and Beauchamp as a factor in that success (p. 9f).

Even though *The Bells of Haslemere* was not as big a hit as the previous two seasons' *Harbour Lights* (there was no demand for continuous matinee performances), the Gattis' formula of sensational melodrama plus Millward and Terriss in the leading roles guaranteed them another solid Adelphi success.

During the run of *The Bells of Haslemere*, a special matinee was presented on 19 November 1887 to benefit the Actors' Benevolent Society. Presented were *Lady of Lyons* and *Tears, Idle Tears*. Actors taking part included major Adelphi company members (Terriss, Beveridge, Millward, Jecks, etc.) and some former Adelphites—most prominently, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Stirling and Carlotta Leclercq (*Times*, advertisement, 17 November 1887). During the week of 19 March through 24 March 1888, there appears to have been a special run-through performance of a play being planned for the next season. "*Union Jack*, the forthcoming drama at the Adelphi, was very unostentatiously given this week at the Adelphi with the idea of securing all privileges" (*Athenæum*, 24 March 1888, p. 382).

A disastrous conflagration at the Exeter Theatre and the Lord Mayor of London's subsequent relief fund drive served to remind the theatre-going public of the danger of fire. The Adelphi, like several other London theatres, felt it necessary to assure the public that it had sufficient exits to permit speedy evacuation and announced "Captain Shean, the Vice-President of the Fire Brigade Association, reports...the time taken in emptying the Adelphi Theatre is six minutes, this being less, with the exception of the Avenue, than any other theatre in London" (*Times*' adv., September 10, 1887).

This season, the Adelphi was visited by the nobility: the Duchess of Edinburgh, and the Duke of Connaught in company with the Russian Ambassador (*Times*, 16 August 1887, 6b); and by royalty: the Prince and Princess of Wales (*Times*, 21 December 1887, p. 8a). *The Bells of Haslemere* ran for the entire season. On Monday, 4 June 1888, the Gattis announced the 276th performance; the final performance was the following Friday, and thus ended the 1887 season (*Times*, 4 June 1888).

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1888-1889

Ed. Peggy Russo

In 1888, the Gatti brothers became trendsetters, and the Adelphi became the darling of the critics. During the summer, the theatre was dark for an extended period (from 9 through 18 July), but when it re-opened, it dazzled its audience with electric light, winning accolades from the *Times*. In 1882, the Savoy Theatre had introduced electricity, but in 1888, the major theatres were still gas-lit. Despite the well-known danger of fire due to "the fierce furnace of gas constantly blazing in the 'wings' and in the 'flies'...dries its surroundings to tinder," most theatre managers resisted the change to electric light, citing its "insufficiency...for stage purposes, especially in the production of spectacular drama." Electricity, they believed, worked well only for comedy and comic opera such as those written by Gilbert and Sullivan for the Savoy. According to the *Times*, however, on opening night of the 1888 season (19 July), the Adelphi proved those managers wrong: "The enhanced safety and comfort of the Adelphi have...been secured without any drawback whatever, and the example thus set is one that the managers of the other larger places of amusement may unhesitatingly be expected to follow" (21 July 1888, p. 15a).

The *Times* also approved of certain structural changes, "including an imposing frontage in the Strand," and praised a significant plot-change in the new melodrama presented on opening night—a "new motive."

The new melodrama was *The Union Jack* by Henry Pettitt in his second Adelphi collaboration with Sydney Grundy (the first was *Bells of Haslemere*). The new motive involved the hero, played by William Terriss, in defense of his sister's honour, a plot-device guaranteed to excite audience emotion. The *Times* asserted with approval that this new motive was "more in accordance with that free treatment of the passions obtaining in French drama than with the namby-pambyism of typical English fiction."

Of course, *Union Jack* was not entirely new. Pettit had successfully used the army as a background for *In the Ranks* and the navy for *The Harbour Lights*; now he combined both in a plot that pitted two military villains against a naval hero. Despite what might be viewed as a subtle insult to the military, the *Times* claimed that the public was not displeased: "it has long been an accepted conventionality that a blue jacket should always champion defenceless woman, and that a redcoat should persistently endeavour to compass her betrayal."

Ever the nautical hero, Terriss shone in his major sensation scene during which he leaped from a ship's porthole and swam to shore. Ever the suffering heroine, Jessie Millward shone also, even though the *Athenæum* described her sensation scene with wry humor: "The night when the heroine, who has been drugged and imprisoned, escapes and wanders bareheaded along miles of lonely road, is the very snowiest we can recall upon the stage. When at length she falls blind and fainting in the snow, her escape is secured [in] a real gig with a real horse" (28 July 1888, p. 139).

Olga Nethersole's was the new face in the cast. Previously seen in comedy, she gained praise for her emotional portrayal of the dishonored sister. Indeed, she played the role so well that midway through the run; she was lured away from the Adelphi to star in *The Dean's Daughter*, a play written by Sydney Grundy and F. C. Philips for the re-opening of the St. James's Theatre. Dorothy Dene replaced Nethersole on 13 October (see *Times*, 4, 12, and 13 October 1888).

From 19 July through 7 September, *The Union Jack* was preceded on the bill by *The Refugees* a new comedietta written by J. M. Campbell. On 8 September, however, *The Lottery Ticket*, a farce by

Samuel Beazley, Jr., was added to the bill, replacing *Refugees*. *Union Jack* and *Lottery Ticket* continued through 8 December 1888, after which the theatre was dark for two weeks in preparation for the next production.

On 22 December 1888, *The Silver Falls* was given its premiere. George R. Sims and Henry Pettitt had previously collaborated for the Adelphi on *In the Ranks* (1883) and *The Harbour Lights* (1885), and *The Silver Falls* represents another of their Adelphi successes. However, *Silver Falls* also represents a step toward believable villains, making for a more dramatically realistic melodrama. Welcoming this change, the *Theatre* claimed that the villains (played by Olga Nethersole and Charles Cartwright) were more interesting than the hero and heroine (played by Terriss and Millward) and took great pains to explain why:

the adventuress Lola is so bold and yet so fascinating in her wickedness, and...the suspected murderer Marcos Valles has more than one redeeming point—he loves with a blind passion the woman who betrays him, and he has a nobility of soul that makes him repair as far as lies in his power the wrong he has done to one whom he imagined was his enemy (1 February 1889, p. 97).

This change in the character of the villains reveals a new sophistication much applauded by the critics. The *Times*, for example, praised the two playwrights for "breaking with the cut-and-dried methods of melodrama" (24 December 1888, 5d). Moreover, both the *Theatre* and the *Times* were so impressed by the depth of Olga Nethersole's character portrayal they hailed her emergence as an established star. This actress, who had left the Adelphi to play the lead in Sidney Grundy's *The Dean's Daughter* at the St. James's and returned to play a secondary role, ended up stealing the show.

Fully expecting that the new play would be a major success, the Gattis opted to present only the main piece on the first night, and they were not disappointed. The audience awarded numerous special curtain calls, including those to the authors and Nethersole and Cartwright. On the night following the opening (23 December), the Gattis added a farce to the bill—*A Dead Shot* by J. B. Buckstone, and the run lasted through 13 April 1889.

The part of Diego, a silver miner, was played by Richard A. Prince. This was a new stage name, adopted by Richard Archer—the man who would assassinate William Terriss in 1897. Prince also appeared briefly in *Union Jack*, replacing Edward Lennox as Tim O'Grady from 21 November through 8 December 1888.

From 14 April through 19 April, the Adelphi was dark. It re-opened for the Easter holiday season with a revival of *The Harbour Lights*, the Adelphi's big hit of the 1885 and 1886 seasons. *A Dead Shot* was held over as the opening piece. Despite the recent eighteen-month run of *Harbour Lights*, during which the entire city of London must have seen the play at least twice, the *Times*, the *Theatre* and the *Athenæum* seemed pleased at its re-appearance (*Times*, 22 April, 1889, p. 6c; *Theatre*, 1 May 1889, pp. 285-6; *Athenæum*, 27 April 1889, p. 546). Obviously, the Gattis could no longer do wrong in the eyes of the critics. William Terriss and Jessie Millward repeated their roles as the sailor and his lass and were praised by the *Times* as being "the ideal exponents of their parts." A new addition to the cast was Gertrude Kingston, who played Lina Nelson, the role originally held by Mary Rorke. The *Theatre* reported a favorable audience reception and predicted another long run.

During the *Harbour Lights* run, there was one special matinee performance. On the afternoon of 1 June, the Gattis donated the theatre to an amateur group who presented a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer*. The benefit was to aid Charing Cross Convalescent Hospital.

Harbour Lights ran for a full two months (through 20 June), and after one dark day for preparation (21 June), the theatre re-opened with another revival—Dion Boucicault's *The Shaughraun*. The farcical *Dead Shot* was once more retained on the bill. The entire company gained praise for *The Shaughraun* production, and the *Times* predicted that the play would be "a profitable stop-gap pending the production of a new play by Messrs. Sims and Pettitt" (*Times*, 27 June 1889, p. 3c).

In *The Shaughraun*, William Terriss and Jessie Millward took what the *Times* called "subordinate" parts, playing "a pair of refined lovers." J. L. Shine, who played Conn, was compared favorably to Boucicault: "if a little more robust, [Shine] displays an equally fine sense of Irish humour and a brogue which would pass muster with an Irish car-driver."

Despite a comment regarding the scarcity of Irish actors in the company, the *Athenæum* also praised the acting, but could not resist comparing Boucicault's artistry to present-day, poorer playwrights: "in strength of motive, in construction, and in characterization 'The Shaughraun' is immeasurably in advance of most melodrama of a subsequent date. Its love scenes are delicious, its personages are warm-blooded human beings, and its action is conceivable and progressive" (29 June 1889, p. 834). As far as the *Athenæum* was concerned, current melodrama, including the Adelphi's, contained few of the qualities of Boucicault's plays.

The run of *The Shaughraun* lasted two and a half months, testifying to its lasting popularity and to the quality of the Adelphi's production. On 7 September 1889, at the end of almost fourteen months with electric light, after two new melodramas and two revivals—all well received by critics and audiences—the Adelphi ended this successful season.

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1889-1890

Ed. Peggy Russo

The 1889 season opened on 14 September, following a week for preparation of a new play by George B. Sims and Henry Pettit during which the theatre was dark. This season saw the Adelphi bereft of one of its main attractions. William Terriss, accompanied by Jessie Millward, had embarked on a tour of the United States, and although he would return to London within a year, he was not to return to the Adelphi for five years. With Terriss gone, playwrights Sims and Pettit were not obligated to create a hero tailor-made to Terriss' measurements. Thus, in *London Day by Day*, the Adelphi audience were treated to changes in scene and character focus: the scene was London; the heroine regained the spotlight. After claiming that the Adelphi had for "twenty years maintained pretty close relations with the realism of the London streets," the *Times* noted "the public [had] come back to this class of fare with a relish all the keener from their recent studies of soldiering and sailing, and of mining, emigrant, and Irish life" (16 September 1889, p. 6c).

The title was taken from the name of a popular newspaper column, and the authors included familiar London scenes from all occupations, thus ensuring audience interest among all classes. Realistic scene paintings by Bruce Smith and Williams Perkins were highly praised, including those of a moneylender's office, Hampton Court, Leicester Square, and St. Katherine's Wharf (*Theatre*, 1 October 1889, p. 208). Most delightful, according to the *Times*, were Sims's "broad humanitarian sympathies and Dickens-like humour" which showed the "bright side of slum life."

The two new leading ladies were Mary Rorke (the main heroine) and Alma Murray. George Alexander was the new leading man, recruited from the Lyceum. All three were praised by the critics. The *Athenæum* was particularly taken by changes both in characterization and acting: "The hero no longer struts and swaggers, the heroine moderates the transports of her grief, the villain is bland and affable, and the traditions generally of the Adelphi are violated" (21 September 1889, p. 394).

Besides improving the artistry of characterization, the Adelphi was lauded by the *Times* for taking advantage of electricity to initiate a new technique for changing scenes "while the stage is plunged in absolute darkness."

London Day by Day enjoyed a healthy run from 14 September 1889 through 17 April 1890. On the second night (15 September), a farce was added to the bill—*The Secret* (possibly by W. T. Moncrieff). On 19 October, *The Secret* was replaced by T. Malcolm Watson's *Polly's Venture*. On 25 January, P. P. O'Callaghan's *The Married Bachelor* debuted and remained on the bill through the end of the *Day by Day* run and was retained as the opening farce for *Green Bushes*, the final production of the season.

During the run of *London Day by Day*, there were two special performances. On 13 March, the Gattis donated the theatre to Samuel Hayes and Company for their Annual Matinee. The main piece was J. S. Knowles's *The Hunchback*, starring Mrs. Pat Campbell as Helen in what the program calls "her first appearance." Also performed were *Delicate Ground* by Charles Dance and some "miscellaneous entertainment," including "The Charge of the Light Brigade," recited by Amy Roselle; "The Song that reached my Heart," sung by Fannie Leslie; and Buchanan Reed's "Sheridan's Ride," recited by Edmund Leathes. Signor Odoardo Berri provided piano accompaniments.

On 25 March 1890, there was a special performance of *Jess*, a new drama by Eweretta Lawrence and J. J. Bisgood adapted from H. Rider Haggard's novel. The Adelphi's J. D. Beveridge directed

and starred as Silas Croft, an English farmer living in South Africa. Eweretta Lawrence played Jess. Both the *Times* and *Athenæum* gave it lukewarm reviews. Although the background was of topical interest—the Boer troubles in the Transvaal—the plot followed the usual melodramatic formula. The *Times* noted that "after making a solitary bid for applause in the stirring scene where Frank Muller tries to drown John Niel and Jess in the Vaal River, the adapters allowed the story to die of inanition" (26 March 1890, p. 8d).

The *Athenæum* complained of interminable speeches that Eweretta Lawrence as adaptor had provided for Eweretta Lawrence as an actress, but praise was given for a scene in which Lawrence entered carrying a "knife red with [the villain's] heart's blood" (29 March 1890, p. 414). The *Times* praised the "more than...matinee measure of justice" given the production, "except for the fact that the banks of the Vaal River bore a suspicious resemblance to the rockbound Irish lake in which the Colleen Bawn is accustomed to seek a watery grave" (26 March 1890).

After the final performance of *London Day by Day* on 17 April, the theatre was dark for one day, and re-opened on 19 April with a revival of the Adelphi stalwart *The Green Bushes* by J. B. Buckstone, first produced at the Adelphi 45 years earlier and most recently revived by the Gattis during their first year as proprietors (1880). The *Times* testified to the warm response of the audience and based on that response, theorized that public taste in melodrama was swinging back toward the romantic (21 April 1890, p. 6c). While approving of the "drama of yesterday," The *Athenæum* noted that the "acting of yesterday" also had "more breadth and colour than that of today." "For the first time," said the *Athenæum*: "the melodrama has been given by actors who, not having seen its original cast, retain only such traditions concerning the manner in which it is to be rendered as ordinarily linger in the case of a successful play" (26 April 1890, p. 541).

Although Clara Jecks was praised for her rendition of Tigertail, Mary Rorke's Miami could not compare with Mme. Céleste's: "Mme. Céleste...was an admirable pantomimist, who by simple gesture could fill the stage. Her figure as she stood on the bridge in front of the house and contemplated her guilty husband in the arms of another woman will not be banished from the memory" (*Athenæum*).

It was suggested that had the Gattis cast Olga Nethersole as Miami the choice would have been more "felicitous." Even so, *Green Bushes* ran until the end of the season.

There was a special matinee on 21 May. *The Bride of Love* was a new poetic drama based on the myth of Eros and Psyche, written by Robert Buchanan with music by A. C. Mackenzie and Walter Slaughter. Enthusiastically received by the audience, the play received mixed reviews from critics. The *Times* noted "many pleasing features" but also noted that the actors mispronounced Greek words (22 May 1890, p. 8b). The *Athenæum* complained at length about the atmosphere: "A Venus who has grown old and is expressly declared to be a bit of a shrew, and a Cupid who goes to bed early at night, having apparently to be up early in order to go to a board school, need the accompaniments of Offenbach rather than of Mr. Slaughter or Dr. Mackenzie" (24 May 1890, p. 683).

Buchanan was advised to "dip again into Keats" before meddling with such a theme again, with the added suggestion that he should "henceforward leave it alone" (*Athenæum*). Both the *Times* and the *Athenæum*, however, had nothing but praise for Letty Lind, who danced the cymbal dance of Euphrosyne—obviously a highlight of the production.

Curiously, for the last two performances of *Green Bushes*, the Gattis discarded *Married Bachelor* as the opening farce. Thomas J. Williams' *The Little Sentinel* took its place with Clara Jecks playing the

leading role. The final performance of *Green Bushes* on 12 July 1890 ended the season and the first decade of the Gattis' proprietorship. It seems both ironic and appropriate that the old Adelphi melodrama *Green Bushes*, produced both in 1880 and 1890, served as a frame for the decade. Despite the many innovations initiated by the brothers, the Adelphi remained what it had been—the home of melodrama.

PR

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1890-1891

Ed. Meredith Klaus

The season began on 2 August 1890, under the continuing management of the Gatti brothers. The company was not significantly strengthened during the break, though Bassett Roe, T. B. Thalberg and Mrs. Essex Dane became regulars. The stalwart Howard Russell was missing after thirteen years of service, but he would return the following season. William Terriss had gone to the Lyceum after a tour of North America, and Jessie Millward was trying to follow an independent career. It would be four seasons before their return to the regular cast. Alma Murray, a regular for eight seasons, left and never again performed at the Adelphi. The heart of the company remained: Abingdon, East, the Northcotes, Rignold and Shine among the men. Clara Jecks appeared for her sixth consecutive season, and Madge Midren reappeared after a year's absence. Mary Rorke began her sixth season. The famous Mrs. Pat Campbell was back but only for another single night's performance.

The first piece of the season was *The English Rose*. Written by George R. Sims and Robert Buchanan, it was acclaimed by the critics from its first through the celebration of its one hundredth performance.

In spite of its English title, the play takes place entirely in Ireland, its major theme being the Irish land problem. While not a realistic drama, the play nevertheless presented a true-to-life picture of the serious problems in Ireland. Rather than depending on the traditional stage portrait of the Irish as quaint, contented and comic, the play followed the precedent set by Dion Boucicault in his Irish dramas, especially *Arrah-na-Pogue*, *The Shaughraun*, and *The O'Dowd*, and attempted to show Irish grievances in a sympathetic manner, at the same time avoiding a direct confrontation with conservative English opinion. It achieved this goal first through the personal appeal of its Irish hero, Harry O'Mailley, played to perfection by Leonard Boyne, and second by exculpating the Irish protesters, placing the guilt on the blackly villainous steward, MacDonnell, who was played by W. L. Abingdon.

What cannot be doubted is the continuation of Boucicault's attempt to break the stereotype of the stage Irishman (or woman) and of life in Ireland, "the romantic nonsense which hitherto passed as Irish drama." Particularly commended in the *Times*' review as attempts to remove this stereotype are the portrayals of the ruined Irish gentry—the Knight of Ballyreeny and his "chivalrous" son Harry O'Mailley, the "thrifless tenants," who, "left to themselves, would be honest enough to let their landlord go scathless," and a female counterpart of Harry, Bridget O'Mara, a victim of unrequited love, and the daughter of the misguided assassin, played by Mary Rorke (*Times*, 4 August 1890).

The *Times* reviewed *The English Rose* again at its one-hundredth performance "before a crowded and enthusiastic house" and described it as "one of the most remarkable Adelphi successes of recent years" and "very skilful from a literary point of view" (28 November). Particularly commended were the performances of Leonard Boyne and Lionel Rignold as "the English renegade" Nicodemus Dickinson.

On 1 September 1890, the *Theatre* echoed the praises of the *Times*, and referred to Boyne's performance as "gallant" and "bold," and described Rignold's characterization of a "particularly sharp but thoroughly dishonest horsey individual" as "very droll." W. L. Abingdon was commended as "a thorough-faced villain." The heroine, portrayed by Miss Olga Brandon, "still weak and hoarse," presumably from a temporary indisposition, was nevertheless "a favourite at once by her truth to nature."

This review took the time to comment that the scenery was beautifully painted and the stage management of the very best. The *Times* also noted, in referring to the murder of Sir Phillip, "The dark deed is done at a spot called the Devil's Bridge, one of the most picturesque scenes ever presented on the Adelphi Stage." The *Theatre* review continued:

Besides the murder on the bridge, the play contained a steeplechase in which Harry defeats his rival MacDonald; Harry's furious but unsuccessful ride to save Sir Phillip; the rescue of Harry by the mob of Irish tenants after his conviction for murder; and the search for him by the British soldiers when he has taken refuge in his brother's chapel. These scenes not only built suspense but also provided an opportunity for skillful scenic design.

The final scene takes place at the chapel of Father Michael O'Mailley, brother of the accused Harry and the confessor of the murderer, O'Mara. Harry, escaping from custody, has sought refuge in the chapel, which is also the site of the romantic resolution of the melodrama. The *Times* (4 August), noted "Half a dozen picturesque interiors...one of the prettiest of which is the little chapel by the sea, where the drama finds its *dénouement*." The *Times* praised the unusual realism of the piece. The authors had "swept away the comic opera *personnel* which had hitherto represented the Irish character." The review continued:

Theirs is not the Ireland of Mr. Boucicault or Charles Lever, but that of the daily newspapers or the Parnell Commission—the Ireland of judicial rents, threatening letters, police protection, moonlight outrage, and murder, side by side with a fund of law-abiding sentiment and a fair sprinkling of the heroic virtues. It may be thought that these are dangerous elements to juggle with in a popular entertainment. So they are; but the authors have taken care to hold the scale so evenly between all parties, to be so unbiased in views, so unpolitical, in a word, that *The English Rose* can be applauded by Unionists and Home Rulers alike, if indeed under the spell of a strongly dramatic theme all political partisanship is not forgotten.

In fact, as early as 1880, Boucicault had made a serious effort to portray a politically realistic Ireland in *The O'Dowd*, but public outcry forced him to withdraw the piece. Whether enthusiastic Irish patriots would have agreed with the English reviewer either about the realistic qualities of *The English Rose* or the "scale so evenly balanced between all parties" is an open question. The plot hinges on the murder of an Englishman, Sir Phillip Kingston, by oppressed and starving Irish tenants. Rather than being justified by the oppression they suffer, they are acquitted of guilt because they are "misled" by the villainous steward. Other "realistic" elements in the play also seem somewhat ambiguous. "There are, of course, thriftless tenants who think Sir Phillip's exactions hard and *outrage is darkly hinted at*" notes the *Times* (editor's emphasis).

The season continued with a revival of *The Streets of London* enthusiastically acclaimed in a *Times* review of May 8, 1891, an enthusiasm echoed in the *Theatre's* review of June 1. The play, first adapted from the French by Dion Boucicault, had not been seen at the Adelphi for many years, but it seemed to have survived its long hibernation.

Changes in popular taste made it difficult for the audience, or at least for the *Times* reviewer, to reconcile character and event in the play with the mundane realities of everyday life. As the *Times* pointed out, "He who would see melodrama aright must not scrutinize it in too carping a spirit, but must frankly surrender himself to the emotion of the scene." This difficulty in reconciliation focused on the character of Badger, a combination of Machiavelli, Horatio Alger and Tom Swift, who "suffers

many vicissitudes of fortune between selling matches on the street and becoming an inspector of police."

The part of Badger, however remote from the mundane, was played with great skill by Leonard Boyne, who imparted, "an amount of jovial devil-may-care-ism to Badger that makes one forget what a rascal he is." Confronting him is his opponent and archenemy Crawley; an unscrupulous moneylender, played by Frederick Glover. The *Times* and *Theatre* disagreed to a certain extent on the success of Glover as Crawley, the *Times* gave a rave review, while the *Theatre* noted that Glover was "not quite the Crawley one would expect."

The rest of the cast was also highly recommended, especially the romantic leads Olga Brandon and T. B. Thalberg. Concerning the low comedy of the Puffy family—Lionel Rignold and Mrs. H. Leigh as Mr. and Mrs. Puffy and Clara Jecks as Dan—the *Times* commented, "the traditional business of the actors has assumed proportions never contemplated by the French authors or even by their English adapter, the late Mr. Dion Boucicault."

The plot concerns Badger's attempts to outwit the villainy of Crawley. As Crawley's clerk, Badger has gotten hold of a receipt for an investment of 20,000 pounds—a sum that Crawley makes his own on the death of the depositor, thus defrauding the legitimate heirs. Their struggles in poverty lead Badger to attempt the restitution of their fortune while Crawley stops at no skullduggery to regain the receipt.

Scenic effects were, as usual for the Adelphi, ingenious, efficient and highly effective. The special effects department must have worked overtime on two scenes—in the first, Crawley has set fire to the house where Badger has hidden the receipt, though Badger, at great risk to his life, saves the incriminating document at the last moment. Both the *Times* and *Theatre* were greatly impressed, the former commenting

"the fire is contrived on a truly alarming scale. The doomed house faces the audience and occupies the depth of the stage. Soon after the lurid glare from the windows has attracted a crowd the flames burst forth, and the whole interior of the building with its network of blazing rafters becomes a veritable furnace...volumes of acrid smoke...pervade the auditorium.

The *Theatre* was also impressed with a real fire engine on the stage in this scene and enthused over another scene representing Charing Cross on a snowy night with "real cabs, hot potato sellers, beggars and young swells" all "faithfully reproduced."

Others of the company appearing in the play for this season were, for the men: Charles Dalton, Frank Gillmore, J. Northcote, H. Cooper, James West and W. Northcote. Among the women, Ada Ferrar was commended by the *Theatre* for "as good a performance as any" in her role as "the imperious but stony-hearted Alida."

During the season, there were two special matinees. On 19 February, Samuel Hayes' Company presented *The School for Scandal*, and on 28 February, a special performance of *The English Rose* was presented to aid the Irish Distress Fund.

The season ended on 20 June 1891.

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1891-1892

Ed. Meredith Klaus

The 1891-92 Season opened with George R. Sims and Robert Buchanan's new play, written for the Adelphi, *The Trumpet Call*. The *Times* (3 August 1891) described Sims and Buchanan as "masters of melodrama" and hailed the "stirring title" as presaging an equally stirring performance. The reviewer called the play "one of the best" by these authors.

The plot details the fortunes of Cuthbert Cuthbertson, a young man cursed in not only being given the same name twice, but also inadvertently marrying two wives. To save his second and currently beloved wife from this shame, he enlists in the army and disappears for six years. On returning, he finds his first wife, a disreputable Gypsy fortune teller, in a "Doss house on the Mint," and his second wife, about to marry her cousin, who has faithfully loved her all these years, but who is also the only person to whom Cuthbertson has confided his secret. Both friend and wife believe Cuthbertson to be dead. All is well since it turns out the Gypsy fortune teller was married twice, making her later marriage to Cuthbertson illegal. Cuthbertson saves the Gypsy's life when her first husband tries to stab her, in return for which she stops the marriage of Constance and Featherston in a dramatic scene in the Royal Chapel.

Leonard Boyne was highly commended in his role as Cuthbertson. The *Times* reported, "there could not tread the boards a more gallant soldier." Miss Robins played the part of second wife Constance (not exactly a patient Griselda, but still well-named) "more artistically but less dramatically" according to the *Theatre* (1 September 1891). The *Times* noted an aura of Hedda Gabler remained in her performance of Constance.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell played the disreputable Gypsy. Both reviewers applauded her costume, makeup and general appearance though her acting was described as amateurish.

James East played the part of Redruth, the Gypsy's first husband, a good man ruined by a bad wife, now moody, dissolute and given to drink. The *Theatre* commented East was "moody and reckless at first, he lets you see that there was a good, brave, fellow spoilt by his misfortunes."

Also complimented in their roles were R. H. Douglas as the young trumpeter, Charles Dalton as the unsuccessful suitor, and J. D. Beveridge as a Sergeant Major.

The 1891-2 season closed with the production of *The White Rose*, an adaptation of Sir Walter Scott's novel *Woodstock* by Sims and Buchanan. The playwrights made rather free use of Scott's characters, not to mention their historical precedents. The plot involves the young Colonel Markham Everard, a Roundhead, in love with the aristocratic Alice Lee. When her father Albert's Woodstock estate is confiscated by Cromwell and granted to one of his followers, Everard defends the Lees and throws out the intruder, who of course complains of his conduct to Cromwell. However, Cromwell's daughter Elizabeth, secretly in love with Everard, defends him, and his cause prevails.

The plot is further complicated when Albert Lee hides the escaping Charles Stuart in his house. Charles, unable to resist any woman, tries to make love to Alice, but his attempt is interrupted by Everard. A duel follows, dramatically ended when Alice throws herself in front of the King and reveals his identity. Everyone agrees to smuggle Charles through the Parliament lines, but his deed is detected by Colonel Yarborough, the ousted would-be estate snatcher. Everard is condemned to death by Cromwell, but saved in the nick of time by Elizabeth; he nevertheless goes on to marry his Alice.

According to the *Theatre* (1 June 1892), the part of Everard was played with "romance and earnestness" by Leonard Boyne. Charles Cartwright "gave a very powerful rendering of the Cromwell that the authors drew." A dream sequence, where he was supposed to witness the execution of Charles I and the subsequent death of his daughter, "brought down the house." Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Elizabeth was pathetic and moving, "the perfect type of a gentle, loving woman." George Cockburn "made his mark as the intriguing and envious Colonel Yarborough." Miss Evelyn Millard pleased the audience as Alice Lee though the reviewer thought she was a bit too stagey at times. Clara Jecks, Lionel Rignold and Charles H. Collette supplied comic relief.

The theatre closed on January 20, 1892, for the funeral of the Duke of Clarence, the unfortunate Albert Victor Christian Edward, eldest son of the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VII). His dissolute life caused much royal concern, but he died of pneumonia before he could marry or rule. His only claim to fame is the discredited theory that he was the infamous Jack the Ripper.

The season ended on 10 June 1892.

MK

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1892-1893

Ed. Meredith Klaus

This season saw three new plays at the Adelphi—*The Lights of Home*, *The Lost Paradise*, and *The Black Domino*, all by the redoubtable Sims and Buchanan. Of these, the first play echoed the nautical strains of *Black Ey'd Susan* and *Harbour Lights*, although, as the *Times* remarked, sailors no longer danced the hornpipe or shivered their timbers. Modern innovations on the marine conventions notwithstanding, the play had the Adelphi's usual melodramatic success.

As noted by the *Times* (1 August 1892), the plot begins with a Romeo and Juliet motif. The feuding families are the Garfields and Carringtons, and the star-crossed lovers are Phillip Carrington and Sybil Garfield. The lady comes complete with a hotheaded brother Edgar and a rival for her hand in Arthur Tredgold. As the loving couple elope, not to the cell of Friar Lawrence, but on Phillip's ship bound for Baltimore, the hero and his rival struggle briefly but inconclusively. Phillip and Sybil board ship bound for America and romance, but the unsuccessful suitor meets his nemesis. Arthur, it turns out, has villainously seduced a village maiden, Tress Purvis, and her vengeful father appears to seal Arthur's doom. In Arthur's second struggle of the day, he inadvertently topples over a nearby cliff, leaving in everyone's mind the ugly suspicion that he was done in by his rival Phillip. Phillip, as heroes will, feels compelled to return home to clear his name, a return climaxed by a shipwreck where Phillip's ship breaks up on a rocky shoal. All are rescued but Phillip, who is presumed dead. It is Tress, the betrayed maiden, who attempts to rescue him. She fails in her attempt, but Phillip manages to swim to safety himself, dragging her unconscious body. His dramatic reappearance resolves all difficulties.

The shipwreck scene provided a marvelous opportunity for sensational scenic effects—an opportunity brilliantly realized by the stage technicians of the Adelphi. In the words of the *Times*,

The steamer lies athwart the stage, and, being supposed to strike upon a rock during a terrible storm, sinks into the raging billows under the eyes of an awe-struck and breathless house, while the hero, unaccountably left behind by the rescuing party of coastguardsmen, swims for his life, holding in his arms meanwhile the betrayed village maiden who has vainly come to his assistance in her father's boat. If this is not the *dernier mot* of the stage carpenter, then marvels are, indeed, in store for us (1 August 1892).

At the beginning of The Season, Kyrle Bellew was replaced by Leonard Boyne as romantic lead. The *Times* commended him—"as a mere physical achievement his performance is remarkable"—while the *Theatre* commented: "Mr. Bellew lavishes upon the Adelphines refinements and natural touches to which they have been unaccustomed since Mr. Alexander left the house."

The *Theatre* was even more enthusiastic about the minor roles, finding the parts of Tress Purvis and her father Dave to be truly outstanding:

Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Mr. W. A. Elliot create a fine effect in these parts. Mrs. Campbell's nervous frame vibrates with emotion. Her artistic instinct serves her truly. In her picture of Tress, she is never at fault. Of singular pathos, of unutterable mournfulness, exquisite in womanly feeling is her playing in the great scene; and for Mr. Elliot's strong, sturdy, earnest work almost equal praise is due. Only a great actor could do more with Dave than he does, and Dave, it may be said, is a part not unworthy of a Willard or a Tree (1 September 1892).

In *The Lost Paradise*, the Adelphi authors turned from the maritime to the political and to a product which is heavily socialist and proletarian. The subject of the play is a workers' strike for higher wages, which pits the oppressed but noble workers against the devious capitalists. The workers are led by a valiant young foreman, Reuben, played by Charles Warner, whose crusade against his employer is additionally motivated by the fact that Andrew Knowlton, the senior partner, played "with one or two excellent character touches" by W. A. Elliot, has stolen from Reuben the invention which made him rich, and upon which the prosperity of his gun factory depends. The junior partner and fellow conniving capitalist was played with the requisite villainy by William Abingdon. T. B. Thalberg and Mary Keegan played the parts of a "vapid pair of lovers," while the usual comic routines were ably performed by Clara Jecks and Welton Dale. The *Times* found the piece "curious and interesting." The most remarkable comment by the *Times* critic concerned the role of Margaret Knowlton, Andrew's daughter and heiress, a rather haughty and aristocratic young lady, who at first spurns but later requites the loyal affection of the hero Reuben. The *Times* found in the character "a strong-mindedness which is somewhat disquieting in a heroine," and was relieved the part was played by Dorothy Dorr, "whose winning personality invests it with a tender interest."

The Black Domino was received by the reviewers with considerably less enthusiasm than it apparently had been by the public. Turning from the portrayal of the noble but misrepresented hero, who struggles under a false accusation but remains true to his amorous or matrimonial vows, Sims and Buchanan "revert to the dramatic methods of the Buckstone period" with a hero who not only juggles the love of two women but stoops to forgery to finance his finagling.

The first act of *The Black Domino* is a wedding scene where Lord Dashwood is married to the wealthy and beautiful Mildred Vavasour:

Lord Dashwood has studied what George Meredith calls 'The Wild Oats Theory' to advantage. He has played the prodigal son, and has eaten the husks, and now intends settling down with loving Mildred Vavasour to one long course of fatted calf. One oat, however, springs full-blown from the earth, clad in sumptuous raiment, on his wedding morning (*Theatre*, May 1, 1893).

While the marriage ceremony progresses, watched by a chorus of gentlemen in hunting dress and a crowd of curious rustics, complications crowd the background. Dashwood has been keeping company with a village girl named Clarice Berton, daughter to the honest (though French) village organist. She would betray Dashwood to the wedding guests, but is restrained temporarily by her father. However, further snares await the bridegroom. Clarice departs for London to become Belle Hamilton, a popular courtesan in the style of Camille. Dashwood, now ensnared by Belle, neglects his loving wife and falls deeply in debt. The villainy of Belle/Clarice is compounded by Captain Greville, Dashwood's purported friend and Mildred's erstwhile suitor. Determined to revenge his disappointment in love, Greville tempts Dashwood to forge his father's name to a document (later redeemed by a wealthy friend). While Belle is seducing Dashwood, Greville has designs on Mildred. Affairs climax at a fancy dress ball (hence the black domino which will disguise both Belle and Mildred). Dashwood informs Mildred of her husband's perfidy and she arrives at the ball in disguise only to discover the truth. Fainting as a result, Mildred is carried unconscious by Greville to his bedchamber. Meanwhile, Belle discovers what has occurred, rushes to Greville's chamber, and changes places with the revived Mildred, concealing herself with Mildred's Black Domino. Both Greville and Dashwood are amazed at the unmasking. Dashwood determines to commit suicide, but is forestalled by Belle, who clears Dashwood's name and swallows poison to redeem herself. The *Times* compared this piece with an earlier Adelphi success.

Old Adelphi playgoers remember with something like affection Buckstone's *Green Bushes*, which was one of the great successes of Mme. Céleste. Connor O'Kennedy was by no means the ideal hero of these later times [see *The Lights of Home* and *The Lost Paradise*]. However, his sins and the suffering they entailed served only to endear him to the public, whose eyes were wet with tears for the sorrows of his devoted and betrayed wife and her unwitting rival Miami. Exiled from home, the Irish patriot contracted new bonds in the far off valley of the Mississippi, and his expiation came when the two women he had wronged met face to face (3 April 1893).

The *Times* felt that the acting ability of Charles H. Glenney saved the role of Dashwood from being as despicable as he might have been while his almost-virtue was complemented by the devious villainy of Grenville and lost nothing "in the practiced hands of W. L. Abingdon." A comic moneylender was played by Arthur Williams. Clara Jecks and Welton Dale supplied additional comedy though the *Theatre* felt Clara Jecks' talents "pitifully wasted upon a wretched part" (1 May 1893). The female rivals for Dashwood's questionable favors were Evelyn Millard and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the latter of whom, according to the *Times*, "connives to establish some points of resemblance between Belle Hamilton and the consumptive heroine of *La Dame aux Camélias*."

Scenic wonders, the stock in trade of the Adelphi, were found in the rustic wedding chapel in the first act, the terrace of the Star and Garter at Richmond, and the fancy dress ball at Covent Garden. Neither the *Times* nor the *Theatre* lavished their usual praise on the scenic effects, possibly because the wedding chapel looked like any rustic chapel, while the Covent Garden and Richmond scenes would be familiar to the Adelphi audiences as well as to their readers.

This successful season ended on 27 May 1893.

MK

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1893-1894

Ed. Meredith Klaus

The Adelphi opened the 1893-1894 season with a tried and true formula—Henry Pettitt's play *A Woman's Revenge* (rather a misleading title, since the woman neither sought nor found vengeance), which gave the audience the sensational murder of a villain whose victim is then wrongfully accused. The *Theatre* recalled a former Adelphi success, *The Cotton King*, and quoted "the pious and bow-legged Mr. Binks" who, though only a parish clerk, had his head screwed on the right way. "Give me a good murder," declared Binks, "one as puzzles judge and jury and well-nigh gets the wrong man hanged" (1 August 1893, p. 102). The wrong man in this case was a woman, Mary Lonsdale, played by Elizabeth Robins.

At the beginning of the play, Mary is married to Frank Drummond (played by Charles Warner). It is a marriage of true love, interrupted by the machinations of a trio of villains—Mabel Wentworth (Gertrude Kingston), Jephtha Grimshaw (Charles Cartwright) and Robert Overstone (Herbert Flemming). Before his marriage, Frank had been carrying on a torrid love affair with Mabel. He had faithfully but foolishly recorded his love in a series of letters to the lady, letters which she saved. Jephtha and Robert conspire with the lady to use the undated letters, forging on them false dates after that of the wedding of the hitherto happy pair. Confronted with these letters, Mary flees from her husband's house, leaving Frank neither an explanation of her flight, nor of her whereabouts. He believes she has eloped with Robert Overstone, who had long nourished an unrequited passion for both the lady and her property.

Seven years later, the villains fall out. Having no one left to cheer but each other, Overstone leaves Grimshaw to starve, a gratuitous piece of folly that will soon lead to his doom. Grimshaw tracks Overstone to his hiding place, and in the words of the *Theatre*:

The fleeced wolf follows the fleecer to Miss Robins' lonely retreat, and there, after a thrilling struggle, rendered more thrilling by deafening claps of thunder and blinding flashes of lightning, shoots him. That is sensation the first. On its heels comes sensation the second. The wife, on circumstantial evidence, is accused of...murder, and her husband, now convinced that he has misjudged her from the first, and being a leading light of the criminal bar, conducts her defence (p. 103).

The trio of villains consist of Herbert Flemming, a new recruit to the Adelphi, who had been "temporarily associated elsewhere with the 'advanced' drama;" Charles Cartwright, "whose villainous propensities likewise possess an agreeably intellectual cast" and Gertrude Kingston, who played the adventuress "of whom she is making a speciality."

Both the *Theatre* and the *Times* commended the trial scene in which the barrister husband bravely and skillfully defends his wrongly accused wife, though the *Times* was more wholehearted in its praise, the *Theatre* remaining rather tongue-in-cheek. The *Times* noted:

Mr. Charles Warner was warmly welcomed on Saturday night to the scene of his former triumphs, and indeed, the part of Frank Drummond, barrister, is one in which this actor's exuberant method and sympathetic personality are seen to the best advantage...his fiery and passionate but well-restrained performance...won him the ungrudging good will and admiration of the house (3 July 1893, p. 4).

The *Times* said of Elizabeth Robins, "It is strange to find Miss Robins, the accredited exponent of Ibsenism, engaged in the delineation of Mr. Pettitt's somewhat artless heroines" (3 July 1893).

Scenic effects included not only the smashing thunder and blaze of lightning in the murder scene but even more remarkably, a representation of the famous Old Bailey "depicted in all its grimness and vulgarity," as the *Theatre* put it. "The body of the court is thronged with witnesses and the junior bar. The public strains over the gallery balustrade. Everything is there that ought to be" (*Theatre*, 1 August 1893, p. 103).

The long run of *A Woman's Revenge* was followed by three plays in quick succession—*The Cotton King*, *The Two Orphans* and *Shall We Forgive Her?* The first two ran only one month each, and the third for two.

With the opening of *The Cotton King* by Sutton Vane, the *Theatre* lamented the death of Henry Pettitt, being of the opinion that Vane could not replace him because Pettitt cast "the overshadowing reputation of the one and only master of melodrama" (1 April 1894, p. 228). The *Times* was less laudatory of Pettitt, claiming that Sutton Vane had gained his theatrical experience in "the transpontine and provincial stage, where the Pettitt tradition strongly prevails" (12 March 1894).

The Cotton King follows the fortunes of Jack Osborn, played by Charles Warner. In the final thrilling rescue scene, he saves the heroine, Hetty Drayson, played by Marion Terry, from being crushed to death by a descending lift, set in motion by the villain. The *Times* commented, "The lift sensation is probably the most thrilling of its kind ever devised since Boucicault bethought him of tying a man to the metals of the Underground Railway to be crushed by a passing train."

Both the *Theatre* and the *Times* agreed the production was saved by the quality of the acting, particularly commending Warner, Terry, and Cartwright, playing the part of a "pasty-faced drunkard" and Mrs. Dion Boucicault, playing a minor role.

The Two Orphans, a revival from 1878, was praised by the *Theatre* as one of the best melodramas ever written (1 June 1894, p. 334). Though the *Times* was enthusiastic about the acting of all the players, the *Theatre* regretted a certain lack of polish found in the earlier production and missed a "certain distinction, a breath of the grand air which can exalt and dignify even melodrama" (1 June 1894). However, the *Theatre* found solace in the present production because of the performance of Marion Terry as the blind beggar girl, Louise. Despite thunderous applause, which greeted the first performance, and optimistic predictions of a long run, alas, the play survived for only one short month.

The Two Orphans was quickly succeeded on 20 June by *Shall We Forgive Her?* a new play by Frank Harvey with an Ibsenesque quality. Indeed, the plot sounds like an attempt at a sequel to *A Doll's House*—the husband, after learning about a secret in his wife's past, banishes her from his home and their children. The husband, played by Fred Terry, was labeled a "Pharisee" by the *Theatre*, a man who, "at the corners of the streets, so to speak...gives thanks that he is not as other men are" (1 August 1894, p. 69). Obviously, this is not a typical hero of melodrama, and the *Theatre* asserted that the title should be changed to *Shall We Forgive Him?* Julia Neilson played the wife, "the queenliest heroine conceivable." Ada Neilson earned high praise for playing a difficult part, "Any task more thankless than to gather up virtuous skirts lest they brush the tainted heroine whom the house adores could scarcely be devised" (p. 70). *Shall We Forgive Her?* played until 18 August when the season ended.

MK

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1894-1895

Ed. Meredith Klaus

The 1894-1895 season was almost equally divided between two plays with long runs—*The Fatal Card* and *The Girl I Left Behind Me*. Though they shared an American setting, *The Fatal Card* moved quickly from its beginning in California to a more traditional English background. Both plays featured the welcome reappearance of the popular William Terriss.

Though hampered by a plot fraught with coincidence and what the *Theatre* described as puerile humor, both the *Times* and *Theatre* were commendatory, as was usual in their reviews of the Adelphi. The *Theatre* was slightly perturbed, however, by what it called a dangerous scene—"in which a gentleman, clad in the scantiest of bathing costumes, is called upon to make a love declaration from behind a mass of bulrushes." Fortunately, the scene had "been assigned to Mr. Harry Nicholls, whose personal popularity alone served to extricate him from the dangerous position in which the authors had placed him" (1 October 1894, p. 190).

The *Times* mentioned a concurrently running French version of the play at the Porte St. Martin Theatre in Paris, noting that "it is a good sign for our playwrights that French theatrical managers are beginning to show themselves almost as ready to translate or adapt English plays as we have been for so long to found our dramas upon French originals" (2 September 1894).

The *Theatre* commented that much of the plot material was familiar to Adelphi audiences, including

the attempted lynching of a scoundrel in California and his prompt rescue by the hero; the murder of a niggardly banker by a couple of desperadoes in circumstances that point to the dead man's son as the culprit; and finally the destruction of the villain by means of an infernal machine, the explosion of which brings the walls of the laboratory tumbling about his ears, and finally buries him beneath their weight (1 October 1894, p. 189).

Particularly commended among the actors were Terriss, Nicholls, W. L. Abingdon, for his portrayal of the villain's "cowardly, repulsive, and heartless accomplice" a "masterpiece of its kind," and Murray Carson for his portrait of the villain, George Marrable. Carson was apparently able to create a complex villain, at once repulsive (he cheats at cards, steals bonds and contemplates blowing up the hero with a bomb) and attractive (he is a fond and doting father). The rest of the actors and actresses were described in the *Theatre* as "thoroughly efficient in their respective ways."

Stage effects maintained their usual force and appeal. The bomb explosion, which wrecked both laboratory and villain, was tremendously effective in its shock-effect on the audience. Before the climax of the bomb scene, the audience was expecting the explosion to take place on stage, which would have made it relatively tame. However, at the critical moment, the villain picked up the bomb and heaved it out of the window. After the smoke cleared, the stage was littered with debris, some of which had crushed the villain.

Equally stirring was the sole other piece of the season, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*. The title is somewhat misleading, apparently, as the *Times* noted that Post Kennion, in the Blackfoot country of Montana, had almost as many female as male inhabitants (1 January 1895, p 6). General Kennion, in fact, was more to be commended for his role as doting father to his daughter Kate, than for his military prowess. The post was surrounded by threatening and warlike Indians (or "Redskins" as the

Times denominated them) throughout the play and was saved only by the timely return of the hero, Lieutenant Hawkesworth, played by William Terriss. The plot, as the *Times* remarked, is based on a love story rather than a military adventure (15 April 1895).

The *Theatre* also criticized errors in staging, pointing especially to the "general's home [which] reminds one of a Vanderbilt mansion in Fifth Avenue rather than an unpretentious dwelling-place in the wilds of a North-Western State." The *reviewer* maintained that since it was an American play, it needed "an American expert or some English stage-manager who knew exactly how it should be presented" (1 May 1895, p. 294). Despite its faults, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, which opened 13 April 1895, ran through the end of the season (10 August).

MK

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1895-1896

Ed. Thirza Cady

The 1895 season began on 31 August with *The Swordsman's Daughter*—an adaptation by Brandon Thomas and Clement Scott of a French play, *Maître d'Armes*. It received a favorable review, especially for "the brilliant scene in the fencing club" (*Times*, 2 September 1895, p. 4). The popularity of this scene ensured the success of the drama, which played from the summer right up to the holiday season.

The plot revolves around a distinguished Parisian fencing master and his daughter. She has been compromised before the start of the story and has a child. During the course of the play, her father discovers this secret, and through various plot maneuvers comes face to face with the villain of the piece, Count Henri de Rochefière, in a duel to the death.

There are a number of issues germane to the plot. One of these is that the daughter becomes the object of the affections of a coastal pilot. However, she refuses his offer of marriage due to her previous dishonor.

Another issue is the continued dishonorable conduct of the count who kills a disarmed man during the course of a duel. The slain man was a close friend of the pilot, the daughter's new suitor. The count is brought to trial for his crime, and it is in this context that the dueling master has his chance to avenge his daughter's dishonor. The scene of the duel in the court is one of those extolled by the *Times*. Another is the launching of a pilot boat in a rampaging storm—ambitious staging that was admired.

The cast of the play was made up of the resident players of the time, led by William Terriss and Jessie Millward in the title role. Harry Nicholls had the task of sustaining "almost the whole comic element," and W. L. Abingdon took the role of the villain. Terriss took his usual heroic role, assisted by Charles J. Fulton, the pilot, and Vincent Sternroyd as the French officer.

The Swordsman's Daughter ended its run on 30 November. The theatre was dark until 21 December when George Edwardes' and Seymour Hicks' *One of the Best* was played—one of a number of dramatizations of the Dreyfus case. Terriss once more played the hero, but as the *Times* stated, in so spectacular a production there was less room than usual for acting (23 December 1895, p. 11). There was further comment about the lack of critics in attendance. However, at least one was present and decidedly unimpressed. After seeing *One of the Best*, George Bernard Shaw pronounced it "one of the worst."

Again, the production itself gained plaudits. The stage was filled with marching, kilted regiments providing a magnificent military show designed to stir the patriotic British heart.

Jessie Millward "was hardly at her best as the female villain of the piece, but that was the fault of the character rather than of the actress" (*Theatre*, 1 February 1896, p. 100.) She was absent from the cast from the end of January 1896 until almost the end of February.

One of the Best played through the first part of June, with the theatre dark on Good Friday. Near the end of April, Edward Sass was replaced by J. Cole in the role of Lt. General Coventry, and J. D. Beveridge replaced Athol Forde as Jason Jupp. Both replacements lasted until the end of the season (June 6, 1896).

George Rowell claims that a supernumerary in *One of the Best* was Richard Archer Prince, who was tricked by Abingdon into believing he was to understudy Terriss. A mock rehearsal was called, and Prince became the object of much ridicule. He was not rehired after the run of the play because, he was informed, few supernumeraries were needed in the future. In fact, a large number was required. In his unbalanced state, he came to blame Terriss for his misfortune (*William Terriss and Richard Prince*, pp. 65-66).

The 1895 season was the first when the Adelphi used its telephone to sell tickets. Although the theatre had subscribed to the Exchange System (number 2645) of the United Telephone Company as early as 1885, it had apparently restricted use of the phone to business calls. At twenty pounds a year, most families could not afford to be private subscribers. To encourage domestic use of the telephone, the company published extracts from articles extolling its virtues. "Sometimes my husband telephones to me from the City that 'he has asked two friends to dine with us in the evening; to be sure to give them a good dinner, and to order a carriage to take us to the theatre in the evening'" (*Three Victorian Telephone Directories*).

TC

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1896-1897

Ed. Thirza Cady

The Adelphi fall season started with *Boys Together*, an "original drama" by Haddon Chambers and Comyns Carr, billed in the *Times* as an "innovation in melodrama" (27 August 1896). The innovation was the villain's motive: unreasoning, undying hatred not greed brought about his dastardly deeds. However, the plot still had a persecuted hero, some ambitious settings, and the climactic confrontation between hero and villain.

While the play was described as a praiseworthy attempt to leave the beaten path of conventional melodrama, it failed to convince the critics. The author's work was compared unfavorably with Henry Pettitt's former successes. They especially took Comyns Carr to task, accusing him of letting material considerations take precedence over those of art.

The story concerns the fortunes of two men who had been to school together as boys (hence the title). The hero, Frank Villars, is about to sail with his regiment to Egypt when the villain, Hugo Forsyth, reappears in his life. Forsyth hates Villars because of a "well-deserved" boyhood thrashing. A further complication arises because Forsyth is the husband of Ethel Wood, Villars' betrothed. Conveniently, she believes him dead.

Off the two men go to Egypt, only to be captured and imprisoned, giving Forsyth a great opportunity to plot and carry out his revenge. He almost succeeds, and Villars pursues the villain to exact his own vengeance. The climax of the play takes place in the Tyrol, where Villars has tracked Forsyth. The two struggle and find themselves suspended precariously over an abyss. This scene was immortalized on theatre posters. In vain, Villars tries to save his enemy. Once more good triumphs over evil, and the hero returns to the arms of the long-suffering heroine. It was Adelphi melodrama at its best.

William Terriss was described by reviewers as showing tremendous energy while declaiming his lines with inflated chest and noble accent. Faint praise perhaps, but after the description of Jessie Millward's tearful fashion plate, and Harry Nicholls doing all that was "feasible" in the comic relief, moderate enthusiasm was as much as could be expected.

The elaborate staging also came in for praise, as it often did in Adelphi melodramas. Special mention was made of both the scenes in the Sudan and the backdrop of the Tyrolean mountain peaks in the finale. After opening on 26 August, the play ran through 5 December 1896.

On 23 December 1896, the Adelphi winter season opened with a revival of *Black-Eyed Susan* by Douglas Jerrold. The play had originally opened some 70 years before but remained a perennial favorite. For many years, Thomas Potter Cooke had been identified with the part of William in this nautical drama. It was a credit to Terriss that his hornpipe, yarns and songs could captivate audiences in much the same way.

The story concerns the carefree sailor, William, who is court-martialed for striking his superior officer. The incident was precipitated by an insult to Susan, played by Jessie Millward. Her performance was praised "for her really beautiful and superbly womanly portrait of the devoted Susan" (*Theatre*, 1 February 1897). Charles Fulton, Harry Nicholls and Vane Featherston were also commended.

Another revival, *All That Glitters Is Not Gold*, was added to the bill because of the comparative brevity of *Black-Eyed Susan* (two hours). Some of the actors were in both pieces. Among them were Luigi Lablache, J. D. Beveridge, Oscar Adye, Charles Fulton, Harry Nicholls and Kate Kearney. They were joined by Jarvis Widdicomb, and Misses Margaret Halston and Vane Featherston. Although *All That Glitters Is Not Gold* was of the same period as *Black-Eyed Susan*, it did not elicit the same response. The play was referred to as less dramatically effective and even as better left in retirement. Retired it was in the first week of May to make way for an American import.

The American production of *Secret Service* opened 15 May 1897 with William Gillette starring in his own play. The *Theatre* (1 June 1897) declared it "the best play of its kind which America has yet sent us." It follows the basic rules of melodrama and includes a war theme. The heroine of one side falls in love with the hero of the other. Love rises above politics. After bowing to these conditions, the author brought a small part of the American Civil War to the London stage.

The action takes place at a home in Richmond, Virginia, while the city is under siege. A Northern spy in disguise in the home of a Confederate officer is trying to maneuver into a position for espionage, and inevitably falls in love with the general's daughter. There are many intricacies and twists within the plot and plenty of opportunities for Northerners and Southerners to show their nobility.

The *Times* felt that William Gillette went out of his way to provide a successful conclusion (17 May 1897, p. 15). In the natural course of events, the spy, once unmasked, would indeed be shot. However, both the heroine and the plot contrived to commute his death sentence to imprisonment.

The actors were all commended, from the forceful yet restrained performance of Gillette, down to that of the merest supernumerary. There were many small parts in addition to the listed cast, which included Misses Ida Waterman, Blanche Walsh, Odette Tyler, Alice Leigh, and eighteen-year-old Ethel Barrymore.

The middle of June brought the return of Sarah Bernhardt. Her first presentation, *Lorenzaccio*, was an adaptation by Mons. Armand D'Artois of Alfred de Musset's four-act drama. Mme. Bernhardt apparently did her best, but the rest of the cast was judged "fairly adequate," with Darmont as the Duke Alexandre de Medicis receiving slightly more favorable mention (*Theatre*, 1 July 1897). *Lorenzaccio* was likened to a boyish Hamlet, fighting the oppressive rule of Florence by his relative, the Duke. The reviewers, on the other hand, felt the role to be nowhere near the complexity of a Hamlet.

The next play, *Spiritisme*, by Victorien Sardou, opened at the Adelphi on 6 July 1897. According to several sources, the play had had little previous success, in either Paris or America. One reason for inclusion of the play may have been the second act where the actress's powers were taxed to the utmost. Alas, not even Sarah Bernhardt could "galvanize into life a piece so inherently feeble and tedious" (*Theatre*, 1 August 1897). Conveniently, for all, the play had only three performances. The remainder of the plays in Mme. Bernhardt's season were familiar and favorites of her London audience.

La Dame Aux Camélias was performed six times. Written by the younger Dumas, the play was a favorite vehicle for Mme. Bernhardt. In the summer of '97 the play was presented in period costuming—bare shoulders for the women and plum-colored coats and nankeen trousers for the men.

Frou Frou was staged at the Adelphi at the same time as Mme. Røjane was playing in it at the Lyric. There was an obvious comparison, with the *Times* feeling that Mme. Bernhardt's identification with the part in the past was only one reason she seemed to be on the favorable side of the comparison (2 July 1897). The other French actress played the part with a different character, probably deliberately. The divine Sarah, the *Times* felt, would continue to interpret the character of Gilberte as the public had come to expect (2 July 1897, p. 10).

When the Bernhardt season concluded on July 14, the American company returned and continued performing *Secret Service*. When the Americans left on 4 August, the Adelphi Company, headed by William Terriss and Jessie Millward, took over. (For convenience, the editors have designated the productions as if they were different pieces). Despite the complete change in the cast, the English production was well received. The Adelphi troupe "closely imitated their predecessors in accent and make-up." Creagh Henry as the Southern secret service agent and Miss Georgie Esmond as Caroline Mitford received special mention. In its "somewhat louder key," the *Times* felt the month-long run an undeniable success (7 August 1897).

During the season, Agostino Gatti died. His funeral was held on 16 January 1897, and the theatre was dark.

TC

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1897-1898

Ed. Thirza Cady

The fall season began on 9 September with *In the Days of the Duke*, by Haddon Chambers and Comyns Carr. The plot of many Adelphi dramas took a back seat to the setting, and this play is no exception. It opens with a prologue in India in 1800, and then shifts to England and the Continent in 1814 and 1815, with the fourth act on the fields of Waterloo. Most impressive were the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond, the gambling rooms at Palais Royal, Paris, and the glade where a duel is fought between the hero (William Terriss) and one of the villains, Jim O'Hara, played ably by J. D. Beveridge.

The lion's share of praise went to the villains, J. D. Beveridge as O'Hara, and Charles Cartwright as the chief villain, Captain Lanson. While Jessie Millward received her usual praise for "sweet womanliness," her part gave her too few opportunities to demonstrate any more ability. Miss Marian Terry was warmly praised for her work. The *Times* believed that so excellent a comedy actress was somewhat wasted in melodrama, but admitted she performed admirably (10 September 1897, p. 8). The comedy, although not much in evidence, was capably handled by Harry Nicholls and Vane Featherston.

The *Theatre* complained that the hero and heroine were too often relegated to subordinate positions. Terriss had a role "after his own heart" but had only to look handsome and speak his lines earnestly and manfully as the heroic and persecuted Colonel Aylmer (1 October 1897, p. 192-94).

In the Days of the Duke was replaced on 24 November by a revival of the English production of *Secret Service*, which had preceded the Adelphi's fall season. This play continued for less than three weeks before the tragic events at the stage door on 16 December 1897.

George Rowell believes the hectic tempo and desperate search for acceptable entertainment during that summer and autumn had left Jessie Millward depressed and full of foreboding. She even had a recurring dream that Terriss called out to her from a locked room and had some stage door encounters with a "short dark man with a pronounced squint." Millward later related: "In the midst of my dressing I heard Mr. Terriss put his key in the pass door, and then there was a strange silence" (quoted in *William Terriss and Richard Prince*, p. 56).

The silence was apparently the actual time of the stabbing, when the wretched Prince dashed across the street as Terriss bent to unlock the private entrance. He stabbed him twice in the back and again in the heart when Terriss turned to face him. The last wound proved fatal. He cried out to his friend waiting in the cab, "My God, I am stabbed." The friend, John Henry Graves, seized Prince and held him until a constable appeared. Terriss, meanwhile, staggered inside the theatre and collapsed in the arms of Jessie Millward.

The audience in the theatre that night was met with a cryptic announcement by Herbert Budd, the Adelphi's assistant acting manager:

Ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply grieved and pained to announce to you a serious, nay terrible, accident, which will render the performance of *Secret Service* this evening quite impossible. I will also ask you to pass out into the street as quietly as possible. It is hardly necessary for me to add that your money will be returned on application at the pay boxes (*Daily Telegraph*, 17 December 1897).

In the *Times* the next day, Terriss was described as a "too sound and well-graced actor not to acquit himself with credit in all he undertook; he had degrees of success, but none of failure." He had become identified with melodrama, most especially melodrama at the Adelphi. Terriss was said to be as simple and straightforward off stage as on. George Bernard Shaw was so impressed that he wrote the part of the Devil's Disciple for him. Alas, poor honest Bill was not up to the task of being Dick Dudgeon. He fell asleep during the author's reading, and Shaw stormed out in a huff (*William Terriss and Richard Prince*, p. 54).

The theatre reopened on 27 December with the resumption of performances of *Secret Service*. Terriss' part of Captain Thorne was filled by Herbert Waring. While Bella Pateman reappeared in her role as Mrs. Varney, the part of her daughter Edith was played by May Whitty, who replaced Jessie Millward. J. D. Beveridge replaced Harry Nichols in the role of Brigadier-General Nelson Randolph.

At the end of January 1898, *Secret Service* took a respite. On 21 January, two plays were presented. The opener was *B. B.* by Montagu Williams and F. C. Burnand, followed by the drama *Charlotte Corday* by H. Kyrle Bellew, which had played previously at the Grand Theatre in Islington.

The second week of February brought a Wednesday performance of *The Lady of Lyons*. Although *B. B.* and *Charlotte Corday* returned for two more performances, they were replaced on the weekend by *The Lady of Lyons*. Reviews of the play and the performances of the leading actor and actress—Kyrle Bellew and Mrs. Brown Potter—were not enthusiastic.

In March, another play was added. A one-act farce, *Number 1 Round the Corner*, was staged before *The Lady of Lyons* evening performances. This pairing continued until the last performances on 17 March 1898.

April brought another American melodrama. *The Heart of Maryland* by David Belasco opened on Saturday, 9 April. It is another story of the American Civil War, replete with warlike conditions such as cannonading in the wings and unintelligible commands continually barked on stage. The play, like *Secret Service*, takes place in Maryland, with equal attention and favor given to adherents of the Northern and Southern forces.

Many of the ingredients so necessary to melodrama are present: a Northern officer in love with a Southern lady, spies, treachery and innumerable coincidences. A theatrical "trick" revived from an early nineteenth-century play is employed. The heroine, who cushions the clapper with her own body, silences a bell used to sound an alarm that would endanger the hero. The *Times* claimed that the author was so pleased with this "invention" that the rest of the plot suffered. The reviewer was not particularly impressed with the acting either, though he did say the play was well received by the Saturday night audience—largely composed of Americans (11 April 1898). The play continued until the end of June.

TC

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1898-1899

Ed. Thirza Cady

The fall season of 1898 began 31 August, with a presentation of *The Gypsy Earl*, by George Sims. It successfully followed the formula set up earlier by Henry Pettitt. Although comedy had changed in the late 1880s and 1890s, melodrama at the Adelphi remained much the same, to the apparent delight of its faithful audiences.

Sims did change the formula of the plot slightly. By the middle of the second act the hero, played by Fred Terry, has overcome his villainous brother, so the attention shifts to the heroine, who is implicated in the murder of the villain. The play revolves around the romantic life of a band of Gypsies. Both the hero and heroine have spent much of their lives in a Gypsy camp. Terry played the rightful heir to stately Framborough Hall, despite the fact that his younger brother is the current Lord Trevannion. The heroine, who was carried off in childhood by Gypsies, is in reality the daughter of a "worthy justice of the peace."

The Gypsy theme occupies much of the settings and scenes, such as a dance of the tribe in the wood and a cursing scene when the heroine is expelled from the group because she tries to warn the villain of his impending fate. The spectacular escape, in this case, had the hero climbing out on, and swinging from, the arms of a windmill in his dash for freedom.

The holiday season brought a pantomime to the Adelphi. The adventures of *Dick Whittington*, with music by Oscar Barrett and words by Horace Lennard, opened 26 December 1898. It was a lavish affair, complete with dancing, comedy and lively action. The play appealed to children with its straightforward adaption of the story, and to adults with its boisterous humor. The latter included some timely burlesque of current public figures (such as Lord Kitchener and Major Marchand). *Dick Whittington* played to appreciative audiences until 18 February 1899.

The Man in the Iron Mask, produced by Norman Forbes, opened on 3 March 1899. Norman Forbes played the dual role of the king and his twin. Critics agreed he performed the arduous task with considerable ability. The bishop, who manipulated the switches in the king and prisoner, was played by W. H. Vernon. The *Times* (13 March 1899) felt his excellent acting contributed to the success of the play. The play ran through the third week in May.

Sarah Bernhardt returned in June. She was well received as Tosca—"fresher and more wonderful in her mastery of her art" (*Times*, 9 June 1899). After this opening, the troupe presented a new version of *Hamlet*, translated into French by Eugene Morand and Marcel Schwob. According to the reviewer, despite translating into prose, they aimed at and achieved "remarkable fidelity to the original" (*Times*, 13 June 1899). Mme. Bernhardt's "pleasant, humorous, very gay prince" was well received. However, despite the fact that some passages were cut (e.g. Polonius' advice to Laertes), the play was not over until after midnight. "A wag in the gallery who whistled 'We won't go home till morning' during the last entr'acte was thought to have neatly expressed the feeling of the house" (*Times*, 13 June).

Mme. Bernhardt's season was followed by another French repertory troupe, that of M. Constant-Benoit Coquelin, who presented Molière's *Tartuffe* and *Les Précieuses Ridicules* as matinees, and an extremely successful revival of Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* in the evenings. (Coquelin had presented *Cyrano* the previous year at the Lyceum.)

Both Coquelin Snr. and his son, Jean, were consistently praised by reviewers, but one member of the company who was panned with some consistency was the unfortunate Mlle. Esquilar. The *Times* (28 June 1899) was less than flattering in describing her Roxanne in *Cyrano* or her other roles in *Mademoiselle de la Seiglière* and in the encore week's performance of *La Gendre de M. Poirier*.

After two weeks of matinee comedies and *Cyrano*, Coquelin presented a week of selections from his older repertoire. In addition to *Gendre de M. Poirier*, his company presented Molière's *La Mariage Forcé* and *La Joie Fait Peur*, finishing its run and ending the season on 15 July.

TC

Royal Adelphi Theatre Seasonal Digest 1899-1900

Ed. Thirza Cady

The 1899 season began on 19 August, with a production of *With Flying Colours*, by Seymour Hicks and Fred G. Latham. The play departed from the usual Adelphi formula of "a thrilling plot, sensational episodes and robust acting." In this case, the producers tried to emulate the elaborate "stage pictures" presented at Drury Lane Theatre. According to the *Times*, the plot was weak and the construction unskilled, but there were some excellent scenes that were very elaborate for the relatively restricted space of the theatre's stage (21 August, p. 11).

The play concerns the actions of an enlisted man who strikes an officer, an action punishable by imprisonment (shades of *Black-Eyed Susan*). Action provides some elaborate and spectacular settings, from a battleship, to Dartmoor prison, and a train station complete with departing train. The last act received most favorable mention, and Harry Nicolls was credited with the salvation of the first few acts by his comic interludes as a sham sailor. More praise went to Master Sefton in the part of Horatio Winter, a midshipman.

The piece was well received by the audience and continued through the first week of December. On December 11, an American production, *Children of the Ghetto*, opened. It was a four-act drama by Israel Zangwill based on his novel. It lasted only a week.

On Boxing Day, Charles Reade's *Drink* opened with a matinee performance. It was a seven-act "stirring moral drama" adapted from Zola's novel *L'Assommoir*. The play is a typical presentation of the author, with scenes true to life, *verisimilar* characters, and a tone as different as possible from most melodramas of the day. The *Times* felt that the play would successfully fill the gap left by the "unfortunate collapse of *Children of the Ghetto*" (27 December 1899).

Early in the new year, the Adelphi presented several short-run plays. *Drink* began on 1 January and ran for two weeks. *Two Little Vagabonds*, written by George R. Sims and Arthur Shirley, followed it. The latter play closed on 3 February 1900.

The Better Life opened on Monday, 5 February; it was written by Arthur Shirley and Sutton Vane and based on *In His Steps*, a tract story written by the Reverend Charles Sheldon. The *Times* of 6 February 1900 assured readers "those who can revel in the 'luxury of woe' ought to find the play greatly to their taste." The story has a badly-treated hero whose only respite from starvation was when he was in prison. Fuller Mellish worked to make the hero plausible, and Elsa Wylde played his wife "with a real touch of pathos." The reviewer felt that Mrs. Cecil Raleigh struck a note of gilded infamy, and Miss Kate Tyndall played the good woman in black and white.

On 10 March, *Bonnie Dundee*, written by Lawrence Irving, opened at the Adelphi. It was a historical play in five acts. The central figure of Claverhouse, from Macaulay's history, was played by the American actor Robert Taber. His performance and even his appearance were panned in the *Times* (March 12, 1900). He presented a clean-shaven look when expected to have "small mustachios of light brown." However, the reviewer put most of the criticism upon the head and pen of the author who had stripped the character of any depth or display of contradictory traits described in the historical narrative.

It was a sentimental melodrama, with typical misadventures and misunderstandings. The lack of character development gave no opportunity for Lena Ashwell to give an emotional performance; all

she could deliver was a "pathetic attitude." The scenery was admired, as was the staging of the fight at Killiecrankie.

The theatre was dark through the rest of April. On Tuesday, 1 May, Robert Taber again opened in a starring role in *Quo Vadis*, written by Stanislaus Stange. The play was adapted from the novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz. Despite the *Times*' reviewer's feeling that the presentation was "deplorable, very silly, very vulgar," the play was received by the audience with unbounded enthusiasm. It combined crude sensationalism and quasi-religious sentiment. There was also low humor in G. W. Anson's presentation of Nero as a buffoon. *Quo Vadis* closed on Friday, 1 June 1900.

Extensive renovations took place during the break. The *Builder* reported on September 7, 1901:

The stage of the old "Adelphi" is left practically intact, but the auditorium, approaches, etc. have been rearranged...A subway now leads from the main entrance and crush room to both prompt and OP sides of this part of the house...The private boxes are on the stalls and dress circle level only, eight in all. On the upper circle, in lieu of boxes, the seats have been continued around to the proscenium opening in the stalls. There are upwards of 200 seats. The pit is one of the largest in London; it has a refreshment saloon and emergency exits. The prevailing scheme of decoration is ivory white, yellow, old gold, and electric blue, developed in silk, velvet, and mural coverings and paintings (p. 217).

The second half of the century had been as successful as the first. The theatre's success in producing melodramas in the grand style had given birth to the term "Adelphi drama." However, stage melodrama suffered a mortal blow with the murder of William Terriss in 1897. There was no substitute for Breezy Bill. Fortunately, romantic melodrama found a new home—it was ideally suited to the new art of moving pictures.

Stefano Gatti began letting the house to outside managers, and when the theatre opened for the first season of the Twentieth Century, it was renamed The Century. The opening piece was *The Whirl of the Town*, a "musical absurdity" in two acts that lasted only thirty-five performances. The new name survived somewhat longer—three years when the familiar name was restored. Its future lay in musical comedy, so the house Scott built returned to its musical roots. It prospered as the Edwardian musical play became all the rage. Not in their wildest dreams could John Scott and his talented daughter, Jane, have imagined their little theatre in the Strand, with its bicentenary behind it, would be flourishing and entering its third century.

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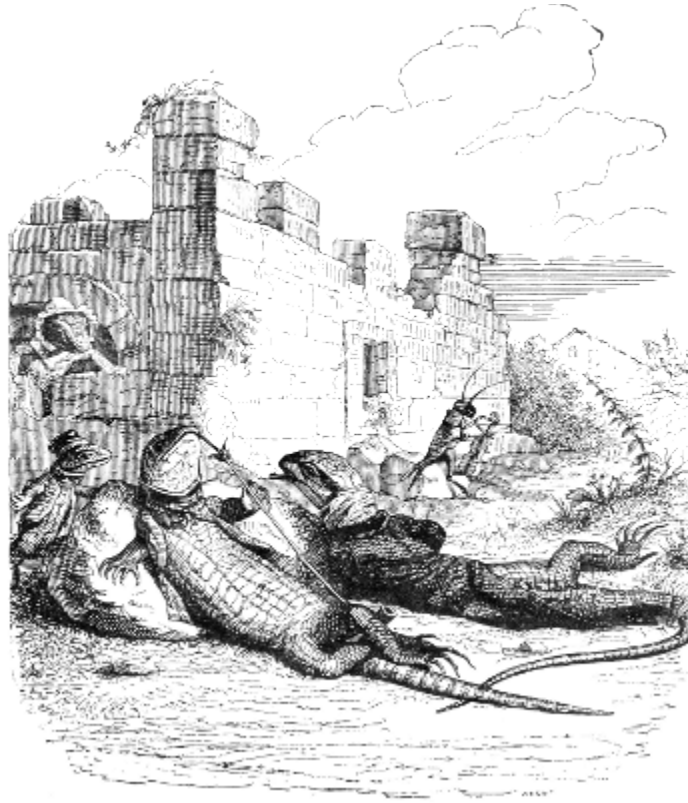




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