

THE GRAND THEATRE AND OPERA HOUSE, LEEDS,  
UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF WILSON HENRY BARRETT,  
1876 TO 1895

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ABSTRACT

This thesis outlines the circumstances under which the Grand Theatre, Leeds, came into being — the background, the formation of the founding company, the raising of money, the planning and erection of the building — and then, after a description of the theatre, its equipping and furnishing, goes on to analyse and describe the seasonal programme for the seventeen years of Wilson Barrett's lesseeship. After the Introduction, therefore, each chapter is devoted to a single year, and proceeds from a discussion of the main concerns of finance and general management for that year to deal with the programme, attempting to show its nature by reference to press reviews, and, where appropriate, accounts, as well as by giving some indication of the origin and style of production of pieces. Where possible, the composition of companies is shown in the Notes, and more detailed information about shareholders, the cost of the building, the capacity and financial potential of the house, the profitability of the operation of the theatre, Wilson Barrett's audiences, and the make up of the stock of scenery is given in the Appendices.

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Note on Style

I have endeavoured to follow the precepts of the Modern Humanities Research Association in matters of style (as given in its 'Style Book' (1971) ). Notes are bound at the end of each chapter. Where a number of references have clearly been made to the same article, I have identified it only once.

Where possible I have given the full names of actors, and in these cases I have omitted Mr, Mrs, Miss. Frequently, however, I have found only their initials, and so have included the style. I have adhered to the spelling of my sources, preferring in some cases to follow inconsistencies rather than risk omitting individuals through over-systematising their names.

## INTRODUCTION

At a quarter to one in the early morning of Tuesday, 2 March 1876 the night watchman stepped out of the Amphitheatre, Leeds, on his way to the adjoining music hall. Both buildings belonged to Joseph Hobson who, nervous of the danger of fire since the Theatre Royal, Leeds, had been gutted nine months previously, had installed clocks in various parts of his theatres and employed a watchman to patrol them, rewinding the clocks as he went.

As he stepped out into the narrow lane that fronted the theatres the watchman noticed flames coming from the carpenter's shop of the Amphitheatre. He ran back into the theatre and dragged the stage hose into the workshop, trying to attack the seat of the fire, but the smoke drove him back.

The Amphitheatre and the Princess's Concert Hall had grown up by a process of alteration and enlargement from a large wooden building on the traditional site of itinerant circuses. They had developed into an untidy block that occupied the corner of King Charles' Croft and Lands Lane, and were surrounded by narrow streets densely packed by shops and dwellings.

In a short while the roof of the carpenter's shop collapsed, and flames leapt up into the sky, showering sparks onto the neighbouring buildings and illuminating

the city's centre. Alarm and excitement spread, and the fire brigades of the insurance companies and the Corporation quickly had a dozen hoses playing on the fire, while a strong contingent of police held back the crowd. The fire brigades, however, could only wage a battle of containment. They saved the part of the block that was the Princess's Concert Hall and prevented the fire spreading to the Leeds Church Institute on the south side of the Amphitheatre, but the theatre itself was entirely gutted within an hour.

Joseph Hobson had insured the Amphitheatre for five thousand pounds. The estimated cost of the damage was in the region of thirty thousand pounds.<sup>1</sup> The cost of damage to the Theatre Royal had been put at about the same,<sup>2</sup> and it, too, had been underinsured. John Coleman, the owner of the Theatre Royal, had just enough insurance to pay the mortgagees, and having almost entirely reconstructed the theatre in 1867, he was not able to bear the expense of rebuilding again. Hobson had been intending to remodel the Amphitheatre after the style of the Prince's Theatre in Manchester, and then to give up its management. Thus Leeds lost both of its theatres within nine months, and it might have seemed that the loss would be enduring.

The Amphitheatre, however, had been leased since September 1874 to a relatively young actor-manager,

Wilson Henry Barrett. He, with his wife, Caroline Heath, had enjoyed the respect and enthusiasm of the Leeds audience whenever they had come to the city on tour. Newspaper reviews of their performances often referred to this. The Yorkshire Post of Wednesday, 4 March 1874 might be typical: 'The Amphitheatre - Mr Wilson Barrett's carefully selected company is now so well known in Leeds, and Miss Heath is so popular a favourite, that their return is invariably looked forward to with interest, and they are always certain of a cordial welcome'. Wilson Barrett was no doubt aware of the esteem in which he, his wife, and his company were held, and when the opportunity of taking a lease of the Amphitheatre arose, he became its manager.

In this he met with immediate success. For the reviewer of the Yorkshire Post at least, Wilson Barrett seemed to bring with him a breath of London sophistication and style. His acting was basically melodramatic, but infused with a quiet intensesness that the reviewer identified with the contemporary trend, and his mounting of pieces seemed immaculately researched, elaborate, expensive, tasteful, and new.

He opened his management of the Amphitheatre with a performance of an established Adelphi Theatre drama, 'The Prayer in the Storm'. The reviewer noted<sup>3</sup> that the theatre had been cleaned and repainted, and a new cloak-room built. The audience was large and enthusiastic.

Wilson Barrett announced the following weeks' programme which was to include Barry Sullivan, Mrs John Wood ('a lady who had achieved popularity on both sides of the Atlantic'), and the Carl Rosa Opera Company. The reviewer then went on to stress the difficulty that the staging of this piece would normally present to the provincial manager, implying that it would only adequately be done in London, for it required that people should be incarcerated on an ice floe which steadily disintegrated, the pieces sinking until only one was left, which bore a child. Wilson Barrett's new broom, however, had swept marvels familiar to the metropolitan audience onto the Leeds stage, and to this the reviewer and the audience responded with acclamation.

Wilson Barrett was also prepared to try out new pieces at the Amphitheatre. In March 1874 he had brought the first production outside London of W.S. Gilbert's 'Charity' to Leeds. It drew praise from the reviewer, who forecast that it would be a success.<sup>4</sup> In March 1875 he tried out an entirely new play, W.G. Wills's 'Jane Shore', which was to provide an enduringly successful role for Caroline Heath for the remaining decade of her life.

The reviewer called this first night 'a literary event of great importance',<sup>5</sup> and pointed out that such an event would have seemed impossible at the Leeds Amphitheatre only a year or two before - that is, prior to Wilson Barrett's management. Without going into too

much detail he enthused over the play's literary merits, the performances of the actors — especially that of Caroline Heath — and the mounting of the piece. Wilson Barrett, he said, in the small part of Henry Shore played with 'intense fervour', giving a 'natural and most impressive performance' as he 'threw artistic intention into every line of the dialogue and every look and movement'. He cavilled at the division of the last act by a scene change, but conceded it necessary in view of the splendour of the two scenes that comprised the act. He also found that the 'painfully modern' decoration of one scene jarred with the generally laudable 'tone' of all of the rest, which on the whole he thought were comparable with what Irving might have done for the play at the Lyceum.

Here we can identify elements that characterise Wilson Barrett's management of the Amphitheatre: the bringing of new plays, or at least fresh London successes; staging them in an elaborate and costly way; and the quality of the acting of himself, his wife, and his company. It was the combination of these elements that made him a fresh and popular force in Leeds, and he was undoubtedly aware of his success. Coleman's takings for his 1874/5 pantomime — his eleventh at the Theatre Royal, but his first in opposition to Wilson Barrett's at the Amphitheatre — were down by a thousand pounds.

Wilson Barrett was enjoying a popular and successful season at the Amphitheatre, when the curtain came down at the end of the performance of 'The Two Orphans' at the Theatre Royal on 28 May 1875. Twenty minutes after the house was cleared the deputy stage manager rushed into the dress circle bar to tell Mr Chute, the manager, that the property room was on fire. It was not the property room that was ablaze, however. The theatre had suffered a series of accidents with the gas and limelights since the 1874/5 pantomime. As Mr Chute ran across the stage pieces of burning scenery rained down upon him from the flies. He mistakenly thought that someone was cutting the ropes to drop the burning pieces onto the stage (the accepted fire drill). In reality, however, this was simply an indication of the extent of the hold that the fire had taken after only twenty minutes. Within an hour the theatre was reduced to a blackened shell.

The fire illuminated the city centre and drew a big crowd of spectators who impeded the fire brigades, and went so far as to loot the till and drinks from the theatre's bars. It was even suggested that they slashed the hoses.<sup>6</sup>

Coleman lost all of his stock of scenery and wardrobe. A few of the properties were saved. The pantomime had not been a good one for him, and he had combined his Leeds, Lincoln, and York companies to stage 'The Two Orphans'

the run of which had been extended from two to three weeks before the fire brought the season to a peremptory close. Thus he had an accumulation of properties, costumes, and scenery destroyed. It was a disastrous fire for him.

However, the loss of a rival could do the Amphitheatre no harm. At the close of his pantomime season, Wilson Barrett staged 'Jane Shore', which he kept in his repertoire, reviving it after the 1876 pantomime too, before transferring it to London (to the Princess's Theatre) where it enjoyed a long run in 1876, and another in 1877. The destruction of the Theatre Royal came at a moment when Wilson Barrett's fortunes were burgeoning.

Indeed his prospects seemed so secure that during the run of the 1875/6 pantomime he attempted to buy the Amphitheatre from Joseph Hobson. He offered the latter twenty thousand pounds, but this was turned down, even though Hobson reputedly wished to end his connexion with the Amphitheatre. Perhaps Hobson thought that he could command a greater price. What is clear, however, is Wilson Barrett's desire to own a theatre in Leeds.

The Amphitheatre burnt down on 2 March 1876. Four days later Wilson Barrett inserted an advertisement in the Yorkshire Post announcing that a new theatre would be built in Leeds. It was to be in the centre of the town, he asserted, and he had commissioned C.J. Phipps,

an architect who had designed several theatres in London and ten in the provinces. The design was to be exhibited on the following Tuesday, which would seem to indicate that either the plans had been drawn up some time before the Amphitheatre fire, or the new theatre would be little different from the others that Phipps had designed. The advertisement ended with an invitation for presumably financial co-operation in the project.

On the fourteenth of March Wilson Barrett hired the Albert Hall in Cookridge Street, Leeds, for a benefit performance for his company which had lost all of its belongings in the Amphitheatre fire. (The company had been about to transfer to Wakefield and its baggage was waiting at the theatre to be moved with everything else.) After the performance - 'Much Ado About Nothing' followed by Caroline Heath reading the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' - he announced that the new theatre which he intended building was to be in New Briggate, that it was to cost fifty thousand pounds, and that a 'considerable' portion of the capital was already subscribed.<sup>7</sup>

Now New Briggate was to be the site of the new Theatre and Opera House, and fifty thousand pounds was its projected cost, but the architect was not C.J. Phipps, and Wilson Barrett only held five hundred pounds worth of shares in the company.

Two other advertisements appeared in the papers: a cryptic one which was inserted in the Yorkshire Post on

8 March 1876, and said merely 'New Theatre and Opera House — best site is New Briggate', and the other appeared as early as 31 May 1875 (three days after the Theatre Royal was destroyed). It read: 'Leeds Theatre and Opera Company Limited. Parties who have a suitable site to dispose of for the above purpose, not less than thirty yards by fifty yards (quantity in excess no object), will please communicate all particulars to J. James Cousins, Park Row, Leeds'.

The plot upon which the new theatre was eventually built measured forty yards by fifty-six yards, tapering to twenty-four yards at the rear, but corresponding quite well with the dimensions in the advertisement. J. James Cousins, however, was the managing director of the Exchange and Discount Bank in Leeds, and he held no shares in the company that built the new theatre, nor did that company have any dealings with the Exchange and Discount Bank.

It was said that there was a desire in Leeds for a new theatre after a remark by the Prince Consort at the opening of the Leeds Town Hall in 1858. He said that a respectable theatre was a great benefit to the culture and morals of a town, and that it 'raised the tone of the people'. Without being very specific, the Leeds Mercury of 19 November 1878, recalling this remark, said that efforts were made to build such a theatre, plans prepared, and a site chosen, but that it came to nothing.

There would seem, therefore, to have been a number of initiatives to build a new theatre, but we can be certain that Wilson Barrett was keen to have the management of a theatre in Leeds and that he was taking positive steps to this end in the spring of 1876. Whether or not it was at his instigation that J. James Cousins became involved in an initiative may be uncertain: conceivably there was a third company with an interest in the project. But we may confidently speculate that it was the destruction of the Amphitheatre that made the erection of a new theatre a viable proposition, and that Wilson Barrett was an early shareholder in the company that built it and was consulted in its design from the beginning of its planning is certain.

The Theatre and Opera House Company, Leeds, Limited was incorporated under the companies act on 12 May 1876. The first ten shareholders were all Yorkshiremen, most of them living in Leeds. Their professions give an indication of the source of the money that built the theatre: there were three merchants, a machine maker, a machinist and engineer, an ironmaster, a card, comb and pin manufacturer, a flax spinner, a maltster, and a surgeon. Sir Andrew Fairbairn, M.P., was chairman of the company, and James Kitson jnr his deputy.

Little time was lost after the fire at the Amphitheatre, and by 7 June 1876 the directors of the new company were

able to call a meeting to inspect an enlarged elevation and plans of the theatre,<sup>8</sup> to consider an agreement for their taking over of the site on which the theatre was to be built, to discuss canvassing for subscribers for shares, and to approve the design of the company seal.

In the same month a deputation of directors went to look over the Theatre Royal and the Prince's Theatre in Manchester, to the managers of which Wilson Barrett had given them a letter of introduction. By 20 June 1876 the company was canvassing in earnest for subscribers. The company secretary<sup>9</sup> wrote to a Mr C.E. Templer asking what commission he would take to canvass for them. Roughly eighteen thousand pounds was at that time subscribed. In the event £24,800 was raised in subscribed shares, and the remainder of the approximate sixty-two thousand pounds that was required was raised by mortgage, debentures, and personal loans.

By the end of June 1876 the company was being pressed to pay the purchase money for the land, and was considering tenders for the erection of hoardings round the site and the excavation of the foundations. At a board meeting on 27 June 1876 the directors decided to ask the contractors to subscribe for shares, which they did. In August the conveyance of the land was completed with an overdraft of £7,470 on the company's bank,<sup>10</sup> and in September the directors began allotting shares. Wilson Barrett sent his deposit from the Theatre Royal, Plymouth. By 1 November 1876 £16,900 worth of shares had

been allotted and the excavations were far enough under way for the issue of the first architect's certificate, and a payment on account of one thousand pounds to the major contractor, James Wood.

This then was how matters stood at the end of 1876. The Leeds theatres had been destroyed, but Wilson Barrett's career was prospering, and a new 'respectable' theatre was under way, most of its capital subscribed, and its foundations dug.

Notes

- 1 Leeds Mercury, 2 March 1876.
- 2 Leeds Mercury, 29 May 1875.
- 3 Yorkshire Post, 21 September 1874.
- 4 Yorkshire Post, 17 March 1874.
- 5 Yorkshire Post, 9 March 1875.
- 6 Leeds Mercury, 29 May 1875.
- 7 Yorkshire Post, 14 March 1876.
- 8 The architects were George Corson and James Robinson  
Watson, the principal and his chief assistant of a  
Leeds firm.
- 9 George Chadwick. The company's offices were at  
3, South Parade, Leeds.
- 10 Beckett and Company, Leeds.

CHAPTER I:1877

In February 1877 the company was promised roughly eighteen thousand pounds in share subscriptions, and the directors considered that a further seven thousand pounds was required before building could commence. A meeting of shareholders was called on the sixth of March, and a scheme was approved to 'slightly compress' the theatre in order to build Assembly Rooms over the shops which were planned for the New Briggate frontage. The shareholders were also asked to increase their subscriptions, and thirteen of them did so, promising between them a further £2,250. The subscription list then stood at £21,350. A circular was sent out soliciting more subscriptions which were slowly forthcoming, and by April £23,200 was promised.

By May £24,700 worth of shares had been applied for. In June the altered plans were completed, and the architects were receiving tenders for building. In August the plans of the theatre were submitted to the city magistrates.

At the end of this month the directors wrote to Wilson Barrett asking his views on a plan to offer a free pass to holders of over three hundred pounds worth of shares. They told him that they thought this might encourage further subscriptions, while it was unlikely.

that more than fifty people would qualify. In the event only twenty-three people bought the requisite six or more shares, but Wilson Barrett was resolutely opposed to such a measure. The directors made the first call on the shares - £12 10s. on each - payable on the first of October. After some delay the tenders were ready for examination at a board meeting on the ninth of this month, and this meeting also elected a committee to arrange the laying of a foundation stone.

J.R. Watson attended a sale of hydraulic machinery, scenery, and other items in Edinburgh on the sixth of November, and though he did report to a board meeting on the thirteenth of that month to tell the directors what he had bought, it was not hydraulic machinery for, as we shall see, the machinery eventually installed beneath the stage of the Grand Theatre worked on conventional mechanical principles, its only departure from tradition being that some of it was made of iron rather than of wood. At this board meeting the first builder's certificate was received, indicating the completion of an early stage of building, though the foundation stone was not to be laid until the fourteenth of December.

In December too the board began to consider raising a mortgage, and made a second call on the shares. Wilson Barrett sent a cheque for £125 from the Theatre Royal, Hull, in payment of the first call which had been due on the first of October. The directors at once reminded

him that he owed them £1 2s. 7d. in interest for his tardiness.

Eighteen seventy-seven, then, saw the raising of share capital, and the beginning of building. In passing, almost, decisions were made which would determine the shape and size of the theatre and its stage equipment, and I intend to devote the rest of this chapter to describing the building itself.

The Grand Theatre opened thirty-two months after the Amphitheatre burnt down, having taken thirteen months to build. The Amphitheatre itself was rebuilt as the New Theatre Royal in only six months. The old Theatre Royal in Hunslet Lane had been almost totally rebuilt in 1867. Clearly in this period theatres could be designed and built, or re-designed and re-built very quickly. This was possible because ideas as to what was required in a theatre both in front of and behind the curtain were very tightly defined. Accordingly it is possible to compare the Grand Theatre with the old Theatre Royal, the Amphitheatre and its replacement, the New Theatre Royal, and to find great similarity such as to make the differences interesting.

The old Theatre Royal<sup>1</sup> accommodated an audience of roughly two and a half thousand people in an auditorium that was divided into pit, orchestra stalls, dress circle,

boxes, and gallery. The pit had seating for about eleven hundred people, as had the gallery, while the dress circle and boxes had room for about three hundred. The proscenium opening was twenty-five feet wide and twenty-eight feet high, and the stage was fifty-five feet deep.

The Amphitheatre<sup>2</sup> had a slightly larger auditorium, but a smaller stage. In pit, orchestra stalls, dress circle, six private boxes, upper circle, and gallery it accommodated three to four thousand people. When it was rebuilt as the New Theatre Royal it accommodated four thousand people 'with ease' in a pit that had seating for one thousand, orchestra stalls, a dress circle which would accommodate six hundred, upper circle, and gallery. Its proscenium opening was thirty-three feet wide and thirty-four feet high, while the stage was forty feet deep with a total width behind the proscenium of seventy-eight feet, and a working depth below the stage of twenty feet.

The Grand Theatre comfortably accommodated two and a quarter thousand people, with room for an extra seven hundred and fifty people if required.<sup>3</sup> Ordinarily the pit could hold eight hundred and fifty, the orchestra stalls one hundred and thirty-two, the dress circle one hundred and eighty-three, the upper circle three hundred, the amphitheatre circle eighty, the gallery five hundred and fifty, and the twenty-eight boxes would accommodate

one hundred and forty-six people. When required two hundred and fifty extra places could be found in the pit, thirty in the orchestra stalls, fifty in the dress circle, one hundred in the upper circle, forty in the amphitheatre circle, and two hundred and fifty in the gallery. The proscenium opening was thirty-two feet six inches wide, and forty feet six inches high. The stage was seventy-two feet wide from wall to wall behind the proscenium arch, and roughly seventy feet from the footlights to the back wall. The grid was sixty-three feet above the stage, and there was a working depth of twenty-seven feet in the stage cellars.

In fact the area of the stage and the volume of space above it was greater than the area and volume of the auditorium. We have seen that after the initiation of the project the company decided to reduce the size of the theatre in order to incorporate Assembly Rooms. This may go some way to explaining why the net accommodation for the audience falls below that of the rebuilt New Theatre Royal. If the auditorium of the Grand Theatre had extended over the shops it would have been roughly sixty-five feet wider.

The dimensions of the stage, however, are clearly markedly greater than those of the other theatres, though the width of the proscenium openings remained reasonably constant (and their proportion was a little over square with the exception of the arch of the Grand Theatre which

was rather taller owing to Corson's predilection for the Romanesque).

There was a noticeable trend too for the proportion of accommodation in circles and boxes to increase. The Grand Theatre had a dress circle, an upper circle, an amphitheatre circle, and boxes which all together would accommodate seven hundred and nine people without using their extra capacity. The New Theatre Royal had a dress circle and an upper circle; the Amphitheatre had a dress circle, an upper circle, and six private boxes; while the old Theatre Royal had only a dress circle and boxes even after modification.

What did not change, however, was the practice of separating the pit and gallery entrances from those of the boxes and circles. The Amphitheatre/New Theatre Royal was somewhat circumscribed by narrow lanes which determined the theatre's planning and resulted in the entrance for the circle and boxes being at the front of the theatre, under an awning, while the pit and gallery entrances were at the side. The old Theatre Royal and the Grand Theatre had less constrained sites, and both were built with three arches in their main facades, those in the old Theatre Royal forming entrances for boxes and pit, and an exit for the gallery, while those in the Grand Theatre facade provided entrances for pit, boxes and circles, and amphitheatre circle and orchestra stalls, with a side entrance for the gallery. The old Theatre Royal had an awning over its front entrance, whereas the

Grand Theatre in its early days did not. It did, however, acquire one in 1894.

The three arches of the main entrance to the Grand Theatre were of Romanesque proportion, and were echoed in a row of arched shop windows and doorways that filled the whole frontage of the building. On the architect's elevation this row of arches seems clearly intended to have an 'Italian', colonnaded effect. Naturally enough in Victorian times the theatre's facade also bore Gothic turrets and had a flavour of the ecclesiastical in a rose window which was set in a large gable end.

The facade of the old Theatre Royal was also 'Italian' according to contemporary description,<sup>4</sup> though it was made in stucco, as was the facade of the Amphitheatre (the facade of the Grand Theatre was in brick and stone). The auditorium of the New Theatre Royal had a 'domed' ceiling and was richly decorated with coloured and gilded scroll work in carton-pierre (moulded plaster work). The Grand Theatre too was given a 'dome', and its auditorium was also decorated with carton-pierre work.

The Grand Theatre was built on a site of approximately three quarters of an acre in size to the north of the town centre. The plot had a frontage on the main thoroughfare of roughly fifty-six yards, and it was decided to exploit this by laying the axis of the auditorium parallel to the main street, and a little back

from it, so that a row of six shops could be incorporated in the frontage. The theatre required only its entrances to be on the public thoroughfare, and filling up the rest of the frontage with shops obviously increased the company's potential income from rent. As we have seen, the directors further developed their plan to include Assembly Rooms, and these had an attached 'supper room', which lay over the theatre's entrance with its kitchens vertically above again — behind the theatre's 'rose' window. A deep cellar was required beneath the stage for machinery, and as the site sloped steeply down and away from the main road, the stage was built two stories above street level. This in turn meant that there was a large amount of cellar space under the auditorium and its refreshment rooms, promenades, and passages, which it was also intended to let (it was advertised as being suitable for wine merchants and the like), and a separate entrance was made to it under one of the gallery staircases. Part of the cellarage was also let with the shops.

It was a complicated development, with shop cellars running underneath the theatre, and the theatre's limelight cellar<sup>5</sup> running under the shops' yards. The gallery queue formed in the alleyway that gave rear access to the shops by day, while the supper room of the Assembly Rooms lay over the theatre entrance. This dovetailed arrangement resulted from the desire to derive the greatest possible rent from the site — in fact, as we shall see later, the directors hoped to get nearly as much

rent from the shops and Assembly Rooms as they did from the theatre itself — but this L-shaped plan also had the virtue of allowing the major staircases to be in a separate unit from the auditorium, in the foot of the L; the refreshment rooms, promenades, passages and so on to be at the foot of the major axis; and the stage and workshops to be right at the other end — at the top of the L. This arrangement would give the audience the greatest security in the event of fire.

The main frontage, then, consisted of six shops with the theatre's entrance at their northern end. The shop windows and doorways were all arched, and the wall above them which formed the side of the auditorium of the Assembly Rooms was pierced by a number of large, arched, and stained glass windows. Otherwise the wall was a quite blank expanse of brick. The theatre entrance consisted of three arches: a large central arch that led directly into the dress circle and upper circle vestibule where a wooden kiosk was flanked by two steeply ascending flights of steps; to its left, the pit entrance opening onto a wide passage which led immediately into the promenade curving round the back of the auditorium; and to its right an entrance that led both directly to the orchestra stalls and also to a staircase that ascended to the amphitheatre circle. Between the arches were large figures on ornamented brackets, and above the central one was a bust of Shakespeare. A balustrade

fronted a narrow balcony over these arches, and behind it was a row of tall windows. Above these was an array of six turrets, eminently Gothic, which flanked a central gable — and which contained a rose window. The effect was Romanesque, yet also oddly ecclesiastical — the two wedded by a pervading Gothicness.

These three themes also characterise the auditorium. Three horse-shoe balconies, their fronts decorated with gilded scroll work, curved downward and flowed into an elaborately ornamented proscenium arch. Rows of raised bosses and plaster mouldings in deep relief gave the proscenium wall a thick encrustation of decoration. The arch itself was gilded in a manner suggesting a picture frame and the proscenium wall was joined to the side walls of the auditorium by clusters of long cylindrical mouldings which resembled organ pipes. The fronts of the proscenium boxes were extensions of the decoration of the proscenium wall. The wall and the box fronts bore six female statues — 'after the style of Canova'.<sup>6</sup> They were slightly larger than life size, and enhanced the three-dimensional quality of the arch and boxes, while their outstretched arms directed the eye to the centre of the stage.

The tops of the boxes reached up with fan-vaulting-like tracery to a ribbed, 'domed' ceiling. More of this vaulting reached out from the topmost balcony up to the

ceiling, so that the whole of the auditorium resembled the inside of a densely decorated egg-shell. The very deep relief of the plaster moulding, and the statues, gave a grotto-like air to the auditorium, while the proscenium arch, though rather tall and stark with a feeling of railway station architecture about it, was hung with long, heavy, voluptuously draped and swagged crimson curtains.

The lowest of the three balconies was the dress circle. It was very slightly above the level of the stage, so that its occupants' eyes were at the level of the actor's gaze, and enjoyed a cosy, secluded atmosphere with a feeling of proximity to the stage, and intimacy with the actors upon it. The great wash of the pit lapping at the footlights is hardly noticeable from it. Similarly there is little sense of the galleries above, which are stepped back as they go higher. The amphitheatre circle fronted the gallery proper, but was separated from it by a wooden barrier, so that the gallery was in fact outside the auditorium, perched on a shelf over the refreshment rooms. The first five rows of the pit were likewise fenced off to form orchestra stalls. As such they had a separate entrance from the pit, and a separate bar, though to get to it the occupants of the orchestra stalls had to share a passage with the pittites. The two groups were, however, segregated by a wrought iron railing.

The promenade and refreshment rooms of the dress circle were the same size as those of the pit, though they would serve at the most two hundred and twenty people compared with the pit's one thousand. The wide curve of the dress circle promenade was decorated by leaded and stained glass windows in arched frames of carved woodwork. The walls of the pit and its promenade were covered up to half way with glazed tiles, and painted above.

The refreshment rooms of the upper circle were unusual in that they led directly off the back of the seating rather than from a promenade round the exterior of the horse-shoe. The gallery refreshment rooms lay off a narrow, curved passage beneath the amphitheatre of seating. The pit, dress circle, upper circle, and gallery all had refreshment rooms of the same plan, vertically above one another. The orchestra stalls and amphitheatre circle, both of them relatively small parts of the house, had smaller, separate bars near the main staircases in the foot of the L.

All but one of the staircases were contained in the entrance block, even though the gallery stair had a side entrance in its base. This gallery stair was at the internal right angle of the L, and was wide, with thick walls. Thus it could be used as an emergency exit from all sections of the auditorium.

Only the orchestra stalls had conventional seating: the dress circle and boxes had chairs, and all the other

parts of the house had benches of varying degrees of comfort ranging from upholstered in the upper circle to backless and plain wooden in the gallery.

Each different entrance had its own pay-box. These were kiosks for the circles, but for the pit and the gallery there were narrow slots in recesses in the walls through which people squeezed one by one. The pay-boxes, of which there were six, and a ticket office on the principal landing, all communicated with a central treasury located beneath the main stair by a private system of narrow circular staircases and passages. They were connected also by speaking tubes.

The entrances and staircases were designed to keep the various parts of the audience segregated, but there was one public staircase that connected them. It was called the transfer staircase, and ran from top to bottom of the building sandwiched between the gallery staircase and the circle landings. It had a pay-box at its base so that those members of the audience who were prepared to pay could move to a better part of the house.

Thus the auditorium embodied a structured microcosm of Victorian society, based on the segregation of classes, each of which was established in an environment suitable to it ranging from starkly, undamageably functional in the gallery to lavishly opulent in the dress circle. The audience, like society, was divided into categories, specialised functions, and roles. Though they were

contingent, and would be aware of it, nonetheless they would not interfere with each others' roles — save in an emergency, or unless they were prepared or able to pay.<sup>7</sup>

Behind the proscenium, however, was a much more egalitarian world. Dressing rooms, workshops, and the area of the stage itself were arranged strictly according to functional necessity. The stage was seventy-two feet wide, and its side walls were pierced by a series of arches which could be used as entrances so that the whole of that width might be used for scenery. The proscenium arch was less than half this width, and its height was forty feet six inches — though this was rather more for architectural effect than it was a scenic necessity as the usual height of scenery would be somewhat less than this. There was a second arch, parallel with the proscenium and roughly two feet narrower, forty-eight feet upstage from it. This arch was in a wall that formed the back of the stage in both the wings, but through it another twenty-two feet of stage depth could be used, making a total usable stage depth of roughly seventy feet. Over this rear twenty-two feet of 'inner stage' was the painting room floor. There were long traps at either side of it and through its centre, through which the wooden frames on which cloths were stretched could be lowered thereby allowing the painter to reach all of the cloth without climbing. The slot for the back frame was along the very back wall of the theatre, and the back wall of

the stage. For especially big scenes the back cloth was suspended through it. A gas lighting-batten was attached to the underside of the painting room floor in order to light this back cloth, and there were entrances on either side of the stage both at stage level, and one and two stories above, onto this rear portion of the stage.<sup>8</sup>

The stage was raked, and the gridiron, which covered the whole of the main seventy-two feet by forty-eight feet area, was an average sixty-three feet above it, so that it was possible to raise cloths roughly thirty feet in height out of sight. Some forty cradles were provided for ad hoc counterweighting of flown pieces, and three shafts and drums were installed above the grid for synchronous flying of borders, but flying was principally by the conventional sets of hemp ropes. There were three fly floors on each side of the stage, the principal one being the lowest on the O.P. (stage right) side. Approximately ninety wooden cleats were provided for 'top deads' on the fly rails, and pin rails beneath them were provided for tying off the ropes at their bottom deads. There was a bell and a speaking tube for communication with the prompt corner.

The stage had a permanent false proscenium, as well as a permanent (though adjustable) proscenium border, swagging house curtains, and an act drop - a view of the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds, painted by William Telbin.

There were six sets of grooves installed in the wings, having five, eleven, eleven, nine, eight, and six cuts in each respectively, working upstage from the proscenium. Only six cuts in the sets of eleven, and four cuts in the sets of nine, were used for flats to slide in. The others were reserved for gas-ladders - vertical arrangements of gaslights. There would be a set of grooves fixed to the stage floor, and another mounted vertically above it in which the top of the flat ran. The upper set would probably have been attached to the under side of the limelight gallery (a gallery that ran beneath the lowest fly floor on each side of the stage for the positioning of limelights), whilst extensions that ran out over the stage would be suspended on ropes or chains. These grooves were found to be too inflexible a system of creating wing scenery for the more ambitious and spectacular productions - for example pantomimes - and for such performances they were removable. In reality they were descended from the system of flat scenery of Georgian times, though in the latter part of the nineteenth century flats that pushed on and joined in the centre of the stage were less likely to be used than a back cloth lowered from the flys. Grooves would, however, still have been useful for flat wing pieces which could be conveniently stored in them and easily set from them.

Wing flats, back cloths, cut cloths, and borders belonged to a convention of flat scenery painted in perspective

illusion, the skill of the painter creating the belief of three dimensions when viewed from a distance through the aperture of the proscenium arch. It required relatively unsophisticated flat and even lighting from battens along the top, bottom, and sides of a cloth. For this footlights, battens lying across the stage concealed in cuts or ground rows, the wing-ladders already mentioned, suspended battens, and lights attached to the underside of bridges spanning between the fly floors were used.

Such bridges corresponded roughly with the sets of grooves, and spanned the stage at intervals of roughly four feet. Clearly, then, nothing greater than four feet across (measured up and down stage) could be flown. Thus the convention of using flat scenery tended to impose a structure upon the stage that in turn tended to preclude the use of anything but flat scenery. It was this limitation that led to the at first temporary removal of the grooves for pantomimes and like spectacles, and eventually their permanent abolition.

But the Grand Theatre was designed before the flat scene convention had run its course. So not only were there grooves in the wings, bridges between the fly floors, and shafts for parallel borders in the grid, but also the entire acting area of the stage (that is, an area a little wider than the proscenium opening and extending forty-eight feet up the stage behind it) was made to open up in long narrow slots that ran across the stage.

Through these flat scenery was winched up into view, forming the bottom of the picture of which the sides and top were made up by wings and borders. There were single and double scene slots (respectively nine and nineteen inches wide measured up and down stage) for one or two pieces of scenery — large ground rows, or perhaps full sized 'French' flats. There were twelve of these scene cuts, and, numbering up the stage, one, three, four, six, seven, nine, eleven, and twelve were single cuts, and two, five, eight, and ten were double. Their position in the stage roughly corresponded with the grooves. Between the scene cuts were wider traps — nearly three feet wide — which ran right across the stage also. When these traps slid open bridges could be winched up from below bearing actors and small properties. They were capable of rising twelve feet above the stage, and sank nine feet below it to the level of the first mezzanine floor. There were five of these bridges. Their traps slid in grooves cut in the stage joists which ran diagonally down under the wings.

The average depth below the stage in which this machinery worked was twenty-seven feet. There were two mezzanine floors: from the upper one the traps and their closing levers were worked, while winches were situated on the lower floor. Two long shafts running up and down stage, one at either side of the machinery, allowed any grouping of scene cuts to be linked together,

and as there were two shafts, two groups could be operated at the same time, one rising as the other sank.

When this machinery was in use there would be very little that remained of the stage floor proper, and certainly movement on the stage would have been very much hampered by the opened cuts. This machinery, therefore, was mainly used for transformation scenes, when the scenic spectacle was the most important thing, and actors little more than static, decorative accessories. Downstage there were five 'foot' or 'star' traps, and a 'grave' trap, fitted in the conventional positions.

The O.P. side of the theatre principally housed scene docks, the carpenter's workshop, and rehearsal rooms, while the prompt side was mainly occupied by dressing rooms. Altogether there were nineteen dressing rooms. Five of these were 'star' dressing rooms occupied by one actor; the rest were larger — some of them, the 'extras' and 'supernumeraries' dressing rooms considerably so. Most of them lined the corridors that flanked the prompt side wall of the stage, four of them being below the level of the stage, the rest above. They were connected by three staircases: one 'gentlemens'', one 'ladies'', and one androgynous, narrow, circular stair near the prompt corner. The manager's dressing room was next to his private room which lay immediately behind the prompt corner, but one floor above it. It was thus situated very

close to the internal right angle of the L-shaped plan of the building, and half way up it. From one corner of the room there were two private staircases: one running from top to bottom of the theatre, with doors on every landing so that the manager might emerge in any part of the front of the house or on any floor backstage (at the foot of this staircase was a door to the outside near the gallery entrance); the other led to the dress circle landing via the manager's private library. In the side of the room that formed part of the stage wall there was a door which led via a small observation gallery from which the manager could survey backstage, across a landing on the prompt side stage stair, into the centre proscenium box on that side of the theatre. Also in this room were the mouthpieces of twenty-two speaking tubes which ran all over the theatre.

In addition to the wardrobe and the sewing room the theatre had seven other workrooms or workshops: the property workroom, the modelling room, the carpenter's shop, the smith's shop, the plumber's shop, and an armoury. With the exception of the carpenter's shop all of these were on the prompt side of the theatre. The carpenter's shop was roughly twenty-two feet wide and fifty-one feet long. Below it, and of the same plan, were two scene docks both of which were roughly twenty-five feet high. One of these was at stage level, and

the other below it. All three communicated with each other and the stage by means of a tall hoist which had a cage roughly four feet wide, fifteen feet long, and twenty-two feet high. It was counterweighted, and operated like a dumb-waiter - by pulling on an 'endless' line.

The painting room was over the back part of the stage and contained four frames. Two of them were thirty-one feet high by forty-five feet wide, and two half-sized, thirty-one feet high by eighteen feet wide.

Though the theatre was provided with all the necessary workshops and storage space to make and keep scenery throughout the year, it was still considered necessary to equip it at the outset with stock scenery. It was a condition of the lease that the company should spend eight hundred pounds on its original provision, and a further one hundred pounds annually in supplementing it. In the event, after the first two years, Wilson Barrett preferred to have the one hundred pounds spent on new furnishing for the front of house or deducted from his rent. The initial eight hundred pounds worth of stock scenery was provided under the supervision of the architect, for it was regarded as part of the general equipping of the building.

Scenery was of course prey to modification and addition. An inventory was supposed to have been made at the beginning of Wilson Barrett's lease, but, apparently, was

not made until 1881 at the earliest. The extant list may therefore be of a stock which progressive erosion and substitution had considerably altered from its original state. However, there seem to have been in the stock roughly eleven scenes made up from cloths, cut cloths, borders, and wing flats, and four scenes that were 'box chambers' -- that is, made up from flats. In addition there were fourteen separate and individual cloths, eleven 'sundry' items, and a number of cloths and wing flats that awaited painting.

Of the sets made from cloths, borders, and wings, seven were of exteriors: a street, a forest, a garden, a cave scene, a winter wood, a rampart, and a rock scene; and four were interiors: a baronial hall, a chapel, the interior of a palace, and a 'picture scene' for 'The School for Scandal'. Of the sets built from flats, there was a 'light French chamber', a 'light pink chamber', a library interior with oak and gilt leather panels, and a 'black and gold scene' which had a frieze of figures. The cloths were either front cloths (hung downstage), or backcloths (hung at the back of the scene), and consisted mainly of landscapes, woods, a snowscape, and lake and coast scenes, as well as a scene dominated by a tower, and various streets and gardens. One individual cloth was of a 'tapestry chamber'. There were also four sets of borders: 'kitchen', 'straight chamber', 'arched sky', and 'straight sky' ('straight' and 'arched' referring to the shape of the border rather than the thing

depicted upon it). Sundries included several 'built out' (that is, three-dimensional) houses, pieces of wall, a church porch and a ruin, a fountain, and an oak tree that was fitted with cleats so that it could be climbed.<sup>9</sup>

At the time when the inventory was made there remained to be painted on nine full size cloths, four half-size cloths, and six wings - one of which had a practical door and window, and another had a bracket and a hinged roof.

It is unlikely that this would have provided much more than a supplementary stock since in 1878 principal companies toured with them much of their own scenery. Perhaps we should consider it to have suffered many subtractions and additions - to have become the discard pack. But it is significant that the directors should think that their theatre did require a quantity of stock scenery in 1878, and from the detail of the make up of that stock we may know something of the size and construction of scenes in those days.<sup>10</sup>

Notes

- 1 Leeds Mercury, 29 May 1875.
- 2 The Magnet, 7 October 1876.
- 3 It is possible that even more people could be crammed into the theatre – an undated estimate attached to a booking form of the period of Wilson Barrett's management was that three thousand, six hundred people had been admitted to one performance.
- 4 Leeds Mercury, 29 May 1875.
- 5 A cellar where the gases burnt in the limelights were produced.
- 6 Such is their description in the Inventory.
- 7 The narrowness of the transfer staircase, however, indicates that its use was expected to be limited, and the fact that the prices doubled as one climbed the social scale must have acted as a restricting factor.
- 8 These higher entrances were for use when the rear of the scene was built up with rostrums.
- 9 'Herne's Oak', possibly for the final scene of Nicolai's opera, 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'.
- 10 For further details of the composition of the stock scenery, see appendix F.

CHAPTER II:1878

At the beginning of 1878 building work was well under way, and it was tentatively hoped that the theatre might be open for the autumn season. Wilson Barrett was already contemplating how he should make up that opening season: what plays he should present, and what companies he should engage. The advent of the long run, the domination of the provincial scene by touring companies, and the increasingly elaborate and costly mounting of pieces would create pressure to plan well in advance.

Although it must have been tacitly assumed that Wilson Barrett was to have the management of the theatre when it was ready, at the beginning of 1878 there was still no contractual arrangement to that effect. Accordingly, Wilson Barrett wrote to the secretary of the board of directors in early February urging some action.<sup>1</sup>

His letter, couched in somewhat diffident terms, pointed out that expediency in drawing up a lease was in the interest of the theatre as well as its manager 'whoever he might be'. He could, he said, have made 'three splendid engagements' within that week, 'with stars', but they would probably go elsewhere.

No doubt the diffident 'whoever he might be' was a little disingenuous, but it had the desired effect, and

the board wrote back to him on the twelfth of the same month offering him a lease of the theatre and refreshment rooms for five years, with an option to terminate it at the end of three. The rent was to be one thousand, seven hundred pounds for the first year, increasing annually by a further one hundred pounds. The company was prepared to spend eight hundred pounds on providing stock scenery, which was to be done under the supervision of J.R. Watson (the junior of the two architects, though it was he who had been responsible for much of the detailed interior design of the theatre).

Wilson Barrett replied the following day agreeing to the other terms of the proposed lease, but stipulating that the company should spend a further one hundred pounds every year after the lease began on supplementing the stock scenery. This, he said, while helping him get up expensive pieces, would also add to the value of the theatre, and the extent of the stock scenery. The company agreed to this proposal, and their solicitors were instructed to draw up the lease.

The owners of the land on which the theatre was built were pressing for the completion of the purchase, and there was now, too, a continual inflow of certificated accounts from the contractors. Subscribed share capital amounted to twenty-four thousand, seven hundred pounds, and the projected final cost of building the theatre was in the region of fifty thousand pounds. The share capital

was 'called in' by stages (so far there had been two 'calls' of twelve pounds, ten shillings per fifty pound share), but some shareholders were dilatory in paying, and it was felt that twenty thousand pounds was required immediately in cash. Accordingly a mortgage was arranged with a Mr Stead for twenty-five thousand pounds. It was signed at a board meeting on the twenty-first of March, and the purchase of the land was completed at the same time. This meeting also debated making a third call on the shares.

Originally it had been intended only to ask for seventeen of the twenty-five thousand pounds mortgage to be advanced at this point, but in the event this was increased to twenty thousand pounds. This is perhaps indicative of the rate at which building was progressing, and possibly, also, of the fact that the escalation of the cost of building from the projected fifty thousand pounds to the eventual sixty-two thousand pounds was already being felt.

In April a board meeting was held to consider insuring the theatre, which James Kitson thought might be done at 'twenty-five shillings per cent, or little more', with the British and Mercantile company.<sup>2</sup> James Wood, the principal building contractor, was paid a further one and a half thousand pounds for brickwork and joinery, and Cooper and Dawson were paid three hundred pounds for concrete and beams. The meeting decided to make a further call payable on the first of June.

At the following month's meeting the secretary was instructed to write to those shareholders who had not paid the calls which were already due, and, as the draft lease had now been drawn up, a sub-committee of Messrs Kitson, Irwin, and Goodman, was appointed to negotiate with Wilson Barrett any alteration of it that he might require.

On the twenty-eighth of May a special board meeting was held to appoint Messrs Kitson, Harding, and Jackson to form a sub-committee to examine tenders for the heating of the theatre — since the fires at the other Leeds theatres this was a matter of some concern, and it was determined that there should be no open fires anywhere. A central heating system was eventually installed, though it proved to be a source of recurring complaint.

The same sub-committee was also to consider the proposal that the stage, or rather its stanchions and the machinery beneath it, should be made of iron — at least in part — rather than of wood. Kitson himself was an engineer, and so he would have been competent to consider this proposal, which was for a break with tradition. Conventionally bridge and sink mechanisms were made of wood, which was, after all, the stage carpenter's accustomed medium. The engineering properties of wood were thoroughly understood by the men who would have to use and maintain the machinery. Moreover, ropes, pulley blocks, and manpower — the technology of the sailing ship — were the traditional means of working stage illusion.

Thus scenery and its operation were generally conceived within the limitations that these means imposed, or to suit their capabilities.

But in fact the substitution of iron machinery was not as revolutionary as it could have been. The design and working principles of the stage machinery were not to be substantially altered. Quite simply, where theatres built previously had used a wooden framework, Kitson used an iron one, but where constant adjustment had to be made for different pieces of scenery (as in the siting of the box-sliders), the use of iron was limited to strengthening a basically wooden structure. The foot or star traps, and the grave trap, were made entirely of wood. Similarly, the long shafts used for raising and lowering borders and groundrows synchronously, and the large wheels which were used for working the rising bridges, were made of wood. Clearly, in the latter cases, for such large moving parts, wood provided by far the lighter material, and this would be important since three of the shafts and wheels had to be mounted in the grid, at the top of the fly tower, where iron might have put intolerable strains on the building's structure.

It is possible, however, to view this discrimination in the use of wood and iron work as a confrontation of the old technology with the new, with conservatism winning the day, and it is important therefore to note that the possibility of introducing the new technology was not

allowed to infringe the sovereignty of the conventional bridge and cut system, even though, in the 1880s, the tide of scenic revolution was clearly lapping at the theatre's feet.

Time was running out for the autumn opening, and in fact, even though the theatre's first season began with the machinery incomplete and the decoration of the auditorium unfinished, the actual date of opening had to be put back. The Assembly Rooms were not to be finished until the following year, though some of the shops were ready to be let by the end of 1878. It was intended to let the Assembly Rooms independently of the theatre, but in the event, Wilson Barrett became so concerned that they should not be managed in such a way as to be detrimental to his own interests in the theatre (he did not want them to acquire a bad or rowdy reputation, or to put on rival attractions) that he himself became their lessee.<sup>3</sup>

In September, a little over a month before the theatre was intended to open, the board met to consider tenders for the act drop and the main proscenium curtain. In the Victorian theatre these were of great importance: they were to dominate and control the presentation of the scene and the action to the audience. The structure and decoration of the auditorium were designed to throw the audience's attention onto the curtain, and the sudden

sweeping away of the latter to reveal the scene was a characterising and in itself dramatic aspect of Victorian theatre.

It might therefore seem surprising that one of the directors, Benjamin Goodman, could write from his club to question the necessity of a curtain at all, saying that the act drop was quite sufficient, and that the sixty or seventy pounds that the curtain would cost could be much better employed. He wrote to Sir Andrew Fairbairn,<sup>4</sup> who passed the suggestion along to Corson in a terse note — 'Dear Mr Corson, If possible do without curtain. A. Fairbairn.'

However, Watson supported the need for both act drop and curtain and his view prevailed. Telbin was commissioned to paint a view of the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds, at a cost of ninety-eight pounds, while the curtain and drapery were supplied by Messrs Pearson Brothers for £73 10s. 6d.

In October, with the opening pressing, Kitson, Harding, and Irwin formed another sub-committee to confer with the architects over the decoration of the theatre, and to obtain and accept tenders for it. As time ran out increasing reliance was put on the three man sub-committee led by Kitson to get things done. At the same meeting Corson was authorised to buy four statues by one Hofner after the style of Canova, and two other statues of dancers, all of which were to be set on pedestals on the

proscenium arch, and on the principal stage boxes. Their cost was not to exceed thirty-five pounds. The contractor who was responsible for the plumbing and glazing in the building, J. Lindley, tendered at this late date for the contract to provide fire fighting apparatus, and his tender of £122 was accepted.

With the exception of repairs and modifications that we shall meet later, this was the last tender, and the last task to be completed before the building could be opened for a preliminary private view which took place on the night of Saturday, 16 November. For this the theatre was lit as though for a performance, and Kitson and Watson addressed an invited audience, after which a party of glee singers sang 'Hail, smiling morn', and 'God save the Queen', which, with other pieces, were apparently given with a view to demonstrating to the press and to the public the excellence of the theatre's acoustics.

Urgent and necessary work continued, however, right up to the opening night. In fact Wilson Barrett had to announce to his first night's audience that his company had not been able to have a single rehearsal on the stage because of the pressure of work that had to be completed. (The difficulties that this might be assumed to have created must, however, be tempered by the fact that the play was a familiar one to the company, being part of its repertoire.)

The opening night itself was well attended. The Mayor, the Borough Engineer, the Deputy Town Clerk, and the Chief Constable were invited, and occupied one of the stage boxes (the Town Clerk and the Clerk to the Justices were also invited, but declined to attend). The directors had wished to be well represented – indeed, such was the demand for seats that failure to get one provoked one of the shareholders, Joshua Buckton, to write a letter to the board complaining that they had unfairly reserved all the seats to themselves. Sir Andrew Fairbairn, travelling from Paris specially for the occasion, entertained the architects and some of the directors to dinner at the Leeds Club prior to the performance, and they then occupied a proscenium box.

Wilson Barrett, addressing the audience before the performance began, welcomed them to 'one of the finest, if not the finest theatre in Europe',<sup>5</sup> before going on in a speech notable for the scrupulousness with which he praised everyone involved in the building of the theatre – from the workmen to the directors – for their hard work and enthusiasm, and for the earnestness with which he stressed the safety of the building from fire. Then, when introducing Sir Andrew Fairbairn, he upheld him as a demonstration of the respectability of the enterprise. And respectability was a theme he returned to after the performance when he made a second speech

in which he said that in the preceding ten to fifteen years he had seen the drama become accepted as more respectable than before 'when the stage in Leeds was regarded as bad, and its professors looked down upon'. He went on to say that the church, having previously condemned the theatre, was then beginning to recognise 'the vast amount of good which the representation of pure dramas must inevitably do', and he drew attention to the speeches of the Bishop of Manchester who was then active in promoting this view. He noted that the Rev. Mr Hargreaves had recognised from his (Leeds) pulpit the good that the stage was capable of doing, and added that the clergy were right to criticise what was wrong in the theatre, but that they should come to see what it was they were criticising first (a theme which Mrs Kendal echoed at poetry readings in Manchester and Hull in the same year).

He ended by saying that he was 'in the position of a child who wanted to be good. He wanted to conduct the Grand Theatre in such a way that no word spoken on the stage could cause a blush to the youngest girl who might enter the building. But the audience must help him to be good. When he brought a good honest play they must support him'.<sup>6</sup>

Such an emphasis on the respectability of the theatre, and the heed he paid to the approval of the church, were not merely attempts to attract fresh and larger audiences.

They sprang from two causes: firstly there was the highly moralistic climate of the time when things tended to be good to the extent that they were conducive to the public's moral excellence (and, of course, if they represented hard work, so much the better); and secondly, they represent traits of Wilson Barrett's character. In his speeches, his letters, his selection of plays for his repertoire, and the plays of which he was wholly or partly the author, he exhibited a fastidiousness and an earnestness of moral purpose — the 'child who wanted to do good' was an image that was perhaps unconsciously revealing — and these, together with his talent for genteel, melodramatic suffering, formed much of Wilson Barrett's public image.

Both Sir Andrew Fairbairn and the Mayor made brief speeches before the performance, and the tenor of these speeches supported the idea that an appeal to the good that the theatre would do for the public morals was its sufficient justification. Sir Andrew said that his father who had been Mayor of Leeds for two years 'had the greatest ambition or desire that there should be a good theatre in Leeds' and had been at the head of several (unsuccessful) attempts to get one. The Mayor, perhaps more cautious, claimed that

the national theatre had (since the commencement of civilisation) borne the moral impress of the times, and had invariably presented an exact indication, not only of the manners, but of the virtues and vices of the people... The drama had either been a great teacher of

and incentive to virtue, or it had been the minister of vice (this was greeted with cheers)... During the classical period of English History, in the days of Elizabeth, we had enforced in the writings of the immortal Shakespeare the noblest lessons of patriotism, virtue, and morality ever given to mankind, except in the volume of Holy Writ... And now we can say of the English stage that,... freed from the vices of the past, it has attained to a dignity, grandeur, and purity which in our national history has never been surpassed, and perhaps only once equalled.

The postponement of the opening of the theatre created a clash of bookings. Wilson Barrett wished to open with performances by his own company but in the event he had to share the week with Jarret and Palmer's Combination. Wilson Barrett's company presented 'Much Ado about Nothing', 'The School for Scandal', and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 'Money' on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday respectively. The rest of the week was given over to Jarrett and Palmer's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'.

It may seem an incongruous mixture, but when we realise that there was to be the Carl Rosa Opera Company the following week, the week after that J.L. Toole's company in H.J. Byron's 'A Fool and his Money', and then, for a fortnight before the Christmas pantomime, 'Diplomacy' - Saville and Bolton Rowe's adaptation of Victorien Sardou's 'Dora' - we may see that the Victorian taste saw nothing out of place in such a juxtaposition. There was nothing untypical about this short autumn season: in fact, despite its brevity, it could be regarded as characteristic. We may regard it as simply an unstructured hodge-podge,

or at best eclectic. But a Victorian might see it as representing catholicity, as representative of the wide range of dramatic fare that was available to the playgoer of the period.

Wilson Barrett's choice of plays make an interesting selection. He was born in 1846, and so at thirty-two years of age he was suited to playing young, romantic heroes. Benedick in 'Much Ado about Nothing', and Alfred Evelyn in 'Money' are both roles that are interpretable in this way. Both are large enough parts, and sufficiently dominate their respective plays, for them to be 'starring' roles (though it might be legitimate to say that the former piece would require some distortion to this end), but it is a little more difficult to see which role in 'The School for Scandal' would take a young, romantic interpretation. It would seem that Charles Surface and Maria should fulfil the requirement of hero and heroine. But can we really see them as central and important? Can they really be made very romantic? Maria clearly suffers an unrequited passion for a while, while Charles lives in wastrel obscurity. Surely the interest of the play lies in the villainous wit of Lady Sneerwell, Joseph, and the unreformed Lady Teazle, and the machinations of Sir Oliver Surface?

Perhaps I overstate the case: Charles is not a vicious libertine, and Maria's sad virtue is clearly demonstrated. But perhaps we should remember the Victorian taste for verbal point scoring - on occasion

rising to the plane of repartee, and celebrated with exuberant banality in the pun. Perhaps Sheridan's wit was a major attraction of the piece, just as that of Benedick and Beatrice must have been. However, this cannot dispel the suspicion that the play's purpose must have been substantially unfocused by the casting of Charles and Maria as the major characters.

Another factor which may have influenced the selection of these plays was the opportunity that they offered to the scenic artist. 'Much Ado about Nothing', set in Messina, demanded Italian scenery: piazzas, palaces, streets, perhaps a landscape or a wood, and with a mask scene and a temple scene in addition. These are scenes we shall become increasingly familiar with — several of them could have been taken from the stock.

However, whereas Shakespeare's plays offered endless opportunity for scenic illustration (since the play never depended upon the scenery, being written to be performed without it, the scenery could develop as extravagantly as its designer wished), Sheridan's 'The School for Scandal' did set some limitations. The scene oscillates between Lady Sneerwell's and Sir Peter Teazle's houses, with an excursion to a chamber, and then to a Picture Room in Charles's house. Eventually the plot is wound up in a library. The sense of location is an important contributor to the play, making a distinction in mood between the two principal houses, and determining the audience's

attitude to Charles long before it gets to know him. That a picture gallery and the mechanics of overhearing conversations in the 'Screen Scene' are essential is obvious.

But these considerations accepted, the play will still stand up on its own to a great degree. And just as the names Teazle, Sneerwell, Surface are representative of abstract concepts, and bear no personal relationship with their owners, so, too, there is a certain abstract quality in the scenes - a library, a chamber, the Picture Room.

It is this slightly abstract quality of the scenes that allowed them to exist in stock. In fact, if we look at the Grand Theatre's inventory of stock scenery, we can almost completely make up the scenes required for 'The School for Scandal'.

Perhaps this argument is a little tautological, but my aim is to identify the relation of the scenery to the play. The fact is that much of the scenery for 'The School for Scandal' could have remained in the theatre's stock, and some of the scenery for 'Much Ado about Nothing' might have been found there, but the scenery for 'Money' is so specific in its requirements, and so necessary to the working of the play that it would have substantially to be purpose built.

And in this it gave the scenic artist an opportunity to construct lavish and detailed domestic interiors. Lord Lytton was a novelist as well as a playwright, and

for him the scene could naturally contribute much to the atmosphere and meaning of the play. Thus the credibility, the 'reality' that the scenery gave to the actors would greatly assist otherwise thinly drawn and unsympathetic characters.

The second half of this first week was given to Jarrett and Palmer's Combination, and their production of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'. Harriet Beecher-Stowe's novel began serialisation in 1851, and was first published in full in 1852. It was at once a popular success, eminently suitable for adaptation to the theatre, and there were many versions written with surprising speed: one playwright, Edward Fitzball, produced three different versions for the Olympic, the Grecian, and Drury Lane theatres in the same year (1852).

The public, then, were quite familiar with 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' by 1878, but Jarrett and Palmer were not presenting a simple revival of one of the many versions of the play. They were to use the story as a framework for elaborate, not to say exotic, pictures of plantation life. The play was advertised as having 'the Original Jubilee Singers, Sable Quartette, Plantation Dancers, and a multitude of freed Negroes, Octoroons, Quadroons, and Mulattos'. The Yorkshire Post reviewer found that the plot was mawkish and incoherent, frequently almost completely disappearing, but that the singing and dancing were exciting.<sup>8</sup>

This is an interesting element in the working of the late Victorian theatre. Clearly the play was being used as a vehicle for both visual spectacle and a floor show. As yet there were few other outlets for such entertainments, and the theatre was a ready made medium through which to exhibit them.

The following week (beginning on Monday, 25 November) the Carl Rosa Opera Company gave six operas: 'Il Trovatore', 'The Lily of Kilarney', 'Les Huguenots', 'Maritana', 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', and 'The Bohemian Girl'. The Carl Rosa Opera Company was the only company to present opera on anything like the grand scale in Leeds. Other companies might have a quartet of principal singers, a small chorus, and two or three instrumentalists who played with the theatre's resident pit orchestra, but Carl Rosa had sufficient principal singers for the major roles, a large chorus, and a touring orchestra of thirty musicians. He was not content with pandering only to the provincial audience's taste for a narrow range of familiar operas (though to some extent he would be forced to do this simply for the sake of the company's financial survival) but regularly introduced new works to the public, and on this visit 'The Lily of Kilarney' (composed by Julius Benedict to an adaptation by a Mr Oxenford of Boucicault's 'The Colleen Bawn'), and Meyerbeer's 'Les Huguenots' were presented in Leeds for the first time.

The Yorkshire Post's reviews were fulsome,<sup>9</sup> and though often rather anecdotal, constantly reiterated the honour that Carl Rosa was doing Leeds in bringing opera to it, and, invariably, the splendour of its staging. Verdi's 'Il Trovatore', for example, exemplified this last quality in that it was mounted

with all the attention to detail and gorgeousness of scenery which we are already beginning to expect as a matter of course at the Grand Theatre. Most of the set scenes were real pictures, more especially that of the gipsy encampment in the second act. The tower scene ... was as effective as it was novel.

Later in the week, in a notice of 'Les Huguenots', the reviewer mentioned that the band of the First West Yorkshire Artillery<sup>Volunteers</sup> performed in the wedding procession; and of Otto Nicolai's 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' he said: 'The opera was magnificently mounted, the fairy scene being simply superb'. In these we have two elements that we shall notice recurring throughout the range of performances at the Grand Theatre, from Shakespeare to pantomime: firstly that the reviewer should pick out for special notice two scenes (the gipsy encampment, and the fairy scene) that were suffused with romance and mystery, and secondly, that a procession of any kind provided an opportunity to bring in auxiliary bands and groups of extras to produce something of the atmosphere of the pageant. No play was inviolate, and in pantomime it was

looked upon as a matter of course. Quite often, it seems, it must have held the whole performance up, but this offended only the more academic of critics, and its general acceptability to the public must be regarded as undoubted.

As to the operas themselves, 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' had been performed for the first time in Leeds in the previous year. Its libretto, originally by Mosenthal, had been translated into English by Henry Hersee. 'Les Huguenots', while not part of the conservative repertoire that was generally to the public taste (like 'Il Trovatore', 'Maritana', and 'The Bohemian Girl', which the reviewer had 'hoped he might be spared') was greeted with great enthusiasm by a packed house, and Wilson Barrett led Carl Rosa onto the stage to receive an ovation.

The third week of the season presented yet a further contrast, this time in the person of J.L. Toole and his comedy company. Toole's programme exemplified that of the older tradition, for in the course of his week he presented an assortment of three main plays, a curtain-raiser, and four afterpieces.

On the Monday night he began with 'Married Batchelor' (which may have been first performed at the Strand Theatre, London, in March 1855), followed it with the main piece of the evening, 'A Fool and His Money', written for him

by H.J. Byron (and first performed at the Globe Theatre, London, on 17 January 1878), and ended with a piece called 'The Spitalfields Weaver'. (In fact 'Ici On Parle Français' had been advertised as the afterpiece, but Toole was suffering from rheumatism in his hand, and so the substitution was made. It is perhaps indicative of the atmosphere of these performances, and of the relations between audience, performer, and manager, that Wilson Barrett himself announced the change in programme.)

Thus the programme remained for Tuesday and Wednesday, while on Thursday the main play was 'Uncle Dick's Darling' (also by H.J. Byron, and first performed at the Gaiety Theatre, London, on 13 December 1869), followed by 'Burlesque Lectures', and 'Toole's Spelling Bee' (which may have been written for him by F.C. Burnand, and first performed at the Gaiety Theatre on 16 February 1876).

Friday saw another change of programme: the main play was 'Artful Cards' by F.C. Burnand (first performed at the Gaiety Theatre on 24 February 1877), followed by 'A National Question' by Robert Reece (first performed at the Globe Theatre on 16 March 1878). Toole chose his two most recent pieces to make up the programme on Saturday, 'A Fool and His Money' and 'A National Question', which he followed with one act of a version of 'Oliver Twist'.<sup>10</sup>

'A Fool and His Money' concerned a foolish butler who through a mistake inherited his master's fortune and, putting on gentlemanly airs, went to live on his estate in

Wales, where he was persecuted by a ghostly bard. Eventually the true heir appeared, and matters were restored to their proper order. The central (humorous) theme of the play was that of servant aping master, and making himself ridiculous in the process.<sup>11</sup>

A similar lack of intellectual brilliance was central to 'Burlesque Lectures', and to 'Toole's Spelling Bee', but perhaps more notable in the afterpieces was the extent to which foreigners were made the butt of humour. In 'A National Question' Toole was advertised as 'assaying the Scotch, English, Irish, and Dutch Dialects'.<sup>12</sup> This interest in foreigners is emphasised by its coming so shortly after Jarrett and Palmer's use of them in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'.

Finally, it is interesting to note that though Toole's programme changed most nights, he was advertised as singing a number of songs consistently throughout. Though the plays that he performed were by well known authors whose names might almost be considered sufficient attraction in themselves, nevertheless Toole's programme revolved round himself as a personality, and he tailored the evening's performance accordingly.

The dominance of one starring personality is much less in evidence in the play that followed Toole on 9 December. This was 'Diplomacy', an adaptation of Sardou's 'Dora' by Saville and Bolton Rowe (Clement Scott and B.C. Stephenson). Running for a fortnight at the height of the Grand Theatre's

autumn season, it exemplified a trend in production.

'Diplomacy', was first performed at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, on 12 January 1878, and after a long run there, toured the provinces, preceding its appearance in Leeds by a week in Hull.

This English adaptation, as its name implied, dealt with diplomatic intrigue centering on the theft of the plans of the fortifications of Constantinople, which found their way by treacherous means into the hands of the Russians. (The Yorkshire Post reviewer found this a 'topical enough' adaptation of the original.<sup>13</sup>) Sardou's satire on Parisian personalities and politics was necessarily diminished, and the adaptation focused on the innocent suffering of the young and virtuous wife of an English diplomat. The latter's brother eventually unravelled the web of intrigue by clever detective work and the staging of a confrontation. Thus in translation the play lost sophistication and satire, but gained a certain moral earnestness in the dutiful relations of husband, wife, and brother, and dealt in the suffering of the innocent. But the play also became a detective story, and the reviewer made it clear that though this was done at the expense of the play's structure, producing something of a diversion of the main stream of the plot, it was nonetheless generally found acceptable.

'Diplomacy' concluded the autumn season, but such was the compression of the programme caused by the delay in

opening the theatre that the first night of the pantomime<sup>14</sup> had to follow immediately, and suffered from a consequent lack of rehearsal. As pantomimes were invariably original productions and greatly dependent upon spectacular visual and mechanical effects, and also as the pantomime was generally by far the longest running production in the theatrical year thereby providing the largest individual contribution to the manager's budget, this lack of rehearsal was potentially more disastrous than the lack of rehearsal of 'Much Ado about Nothing'.

The sheer size as well as the complexity of the scenes, scene changes and mechanical effects were a quite justifiable cause of anxiety, as the Yorkshire Post review<sup>15</sup> shows:

To such an extent has the desire to produce a magnificent, spectacular piece been carried, that the story occasionally runs some risk of being smothered by jewelled dresses and armour, beautiful Oriental landscapes, graceful nautch dances, and the whole elaborate paraphernalia employed. As the clever actors engaged get into their parts the story will doubtless come more to the front, and the spectators will be able to take a strong interest in the adventures of the Blue Beard.

Indeed, the priorities were made clear in an earlier piece from the same paper: 'The story is pretty closely followed, and is so arranged as to take in several elaborate set scenes'.<sup>16</sup>

This, then, was the nature of the pantomime:

some nursery legend or fairy story, embellished with beautiful scenery, made interesting to the ear by pretty

music, and pleasing to the eye by the production of glittering spectacles... We expect to see all that is grotesque, or pretty, or dramatic ... brought out by the aid of neatly-written and punning rhymed couplets.<sup>17</sup>

'Blue Beard' was constructed in eleven scenes, followed by a transformation scene. The first scene functioned as a prologue, to establish the struggle of the demon and the good fairy and their influence upon the characters of the drama. The pantomime's sub-title introduced a topicality which was clearly considered desirable. Thus the prologue scene could be set in a 'Hall of Inventions' which contained a phonograph, a telephone, 'the Whitehead torpedo', and a steam hammer.

A 'carpenter's scene' (a scene played in front of a downstage cloth so that the set behind could be changed) followed, beginning a strict alternation of front cloth scenes and 'full sets' that was maintained for the other ten scenes of the pantomime.

The first carpenter's scene was 'a wall of an eastern garden with misty blue hills in the distance', painted by Stafford Hall, the principal scenic artist of the theatre. At the end of the scene the cloth was raised to reveal 'Cabul Market Place', a full set large enough to allow the scene to begin with 'military manoeuvres' before Blue Beard's processional entrance.

Another carpenter's scene followed — this time a landscape. However the action here was not devoted to moving the plot along so much as to clowning as Flip and

Flop went through 'some very astonishing performances with their highly trained donkey'. Again, this scene allowed the preparation of a full set: the 'Grand Banqueting Hall' from which the banquet was made to disappear.

At the end of the banquet scene a front cloth painted as a corridor in Blue Beard's castle descended. Here Blue Beard received a message that British Troops were marching on the Khyber Pass (again, a topical allusion), which was the beginning of a spectacular diversion from the plot taking in two scenes in the Pass. In the first of these the armies were seen approaching, and in the second they clashed. Eventually the fort of Ali Musjid was captured.

It was common for managers to hire crowds of two or three hundred extras to stage such battles in their pantomimes, and animals, too: horses, camels, dogs, and even a small elephant.<sup>18</sup> The storming and sacking of the castle would not be an unusual effect; and here we can see a combination of purely mechanical effects — the sacking of the castle, with collapsing masonry, flames, and smoke — with processions and pageant — the troops marching past with their animals and equipment.

The remaining three scenes returned more closely to the Blue Beard theme, the first set in 'The Blue Chamber' where Fatima, the latest wife, discovered the headless bodies of her twenty-one predecessors; the next was set

in the palace gardens where 'sundry entertainments and ballets' celebrated Blue Beard's return, and during which he discovered the consequences of Fatima's curiosity which led to her incarceration in a tower to await execution; and the last consisted of her escape from this tower aided by her brothers.

Puns, anachronisms, topical allusion, popular songs, and pageant were the language of pantomime, grafted onto a fairy story or nursery rhyme. It is interesting to see the extent to which the topical Afghan theme, recounting the events of only the preceding summer, was allowed to divert the plot from its bed. This digression provided an opportunity for a major element in late Victorian pantomime: spectacle, in the setting in the Khyber Pass and the ensuing battle. It is also interesting to see that these scenes were based on a real and recent event, and that the scenery itself was intended to present a recognisable facsimile of its geographical location. These were conscious traits of late Victorian theatre, and it is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that these 'real' views satisfied a taste which the actuality of the cinema when it arrived continued to exploit.

But realism did not yet reign supreme, and after the plot had been wound up there was still one scene to come: the transformation scene. This was almost entirely a

mechanical creation, and presented pure fantasy. For this pantomime it had been painted by John Brunton, and was called 'A Dream of Wonderland'. Its climax brought an actual waterfall onto the stage. By means of the stage machinery the scenery was constantly changed, the changes masked by gauzes and lighting effects, to produce the equivalent of a series of lap-dissolves in the cinema, ending in a tableau of which the waterfall formed the centrepiece.

The transformation scene was a scene entirely to itself, and formed, together with an equally self-contained Harlequinade, an invariable coda to the pantomime. We shall deal with it more fully with subsequent years' pantomimes as the range of effects that it could employ become more familiar.

'Blue Beard' concluded the brief autumn season of the Grand Theatre's opening year, and ran on into 1879, to close eventually on Saturday, 22 February.

Meanwhile the theatre company had received a letter from the solicitors of A.R. and J.W. Harding accusing it of infringing Tobin's patented Ventilation System. Corson's views were sought, but he considered that 'Tobin might as well patent his own digesting apparatus it would be quite as reasonable as to patent this simple leading of air from the outside of a building to the interior of it'.<sup>19</sup> The company decided that the Messrs Harding should prove their case in court, and the matter was dropped.

The board met in December to consider how it should raise the capital to complete the contracts, though the solution to this problem was not to come until the following year. Wilson Barrett attended the meeting to discuss the terms of the letting of the refreshment rooms, and the removal of a counter from the foyer.

The central heating system had been proving inadequate, and the board had to consider what it might do to improve it. On their part the directors had noticed that the crimson rep coverings of the box and balcony ledges were becoming soiled and damaged, and decided to provide them with dust covers.

The shops were nearing completion, and were advertised in the local press. Only one inquiry was received in 1878, from Thomas Ainley, who was told that the shop nearest to the theatre's entrance connected below ground with the theatre's cellars and that they were to be let together. The rent which the company expected for the shop next to this, which was not thus connected, was one hundred and twenty pounds per annum. In fact it was to be some months before all the shops were let, and then it was at rather lower rents than the board had originally estimated.

Notes

- 1 Letter dated 8 February 1878, following up an earlier request.
- 2 Letter dated 9 April 1878.
- 3 Though Wilson Barrett was lessee of the Assembly Rooms, the directors appointed a manager for them whose role was principally that of a caretaker. The directors, too, (in August 1878) supervised the appointment of a Mr Rea to be manager of the theatre's refreshment rooms. In view of Wilson Barrett's frequently expressed concern for his patrons' comforts, it is perhaps surprising that he seems to have been prepared to leave this matter in the hands of the directors. However, Mr Rea had formerly been the manager of the Regent public house in Hull where Wilson Barrett was manager of the Theatre Royal, and it is possible that they were already acquainted. If this was the case then the directors' taking up of Mr Rea's reference with the Chief Constable of Hull would seem merely to be for their own reassurance.
- 4 Letter dated 10 September 1878, as was Fairbairn's response.
- 5 Yorkshire Post, 19 November 1878.
- 6 Yorkshire Post, 19 November 1878.
- 7 Yorkshire Post, 19 November 1878.
- 8 Yorkshire Post, 22 November 1878.

- 9 Yorkshire Post, 26, 27, 29, and 30 November 1878.
- 10 Perhaps an older piece – there were three versions of Dickens's novel made in 1855 alone.
- 11 The butler's folly follows from a sudden, arbitrary, and anonymous acquisition of money, and this, too, is a mainspring of Bulwer-Lytton's 'Money'. Perhaps it is only the passage of time that has made Bulwer-Lytton's hero and heroine look a good deal more silly than Byron's Chawles, but it is notable that the former were rescued by brilliance, intellectuality, and class – all of these attributes that Chawles could never hope to attain. These themes pervade many pieces of the period.
- 12 Yorkshire Post, 7 December 1878.
- 13 Yorkshire Post, 10 December 1878.
- 14 'Blue Beard the Grand; or, the Amorous Ameer of Afghanistan'.
- 15 Yorkshire Post, 26 December 1878.
- 16 Yorkshire Post, 24 December 1878.
- 17 Yorkshire Post, 26 December 1878.
- 18 The use of supernumeraries was not limited to pantomime: they were employed in Shakespeare, spectacular melodramas, and opera also.
- 19 Letter dated 22 November 1878.

CHAPTER III:1879

In January 1879 the company received a letter from its bankers which precipitated attempts by the directors to stabilise the company's finances. Beckett and company pointed out in their letter that the theatre company's account was overdrawn by one thousand, seven hundred pounds, and that they had received another cheque for four hundred and fifty pounds. Moreover they did not know what other cheques were to come in. Consequently they required that money to cover these amounts be paid into the bank by three o'clock the same day (20 January 1879), or they would refuse to honour the cheque.

This cheque for four hundred and fifty pounds was made out to Corson, whom no doubt the board could expect to be a little accommodating, and the company's solicitor, F.H. Barr, suggested that a board meeting be called urgently to discuss the matter.<sup>1</sup>

In fact the company's annual general meeting was to intervene between this board meeting and an agreement being reached with the bank. The AGM was held on 4 February 1879, and its major consideration was the fact that about twelve thousand pounds was required to finish the building and to pay off the contractors. It was decided that this was best raised by the issue of debentures. This being done, Kitson and Barr had a

discussion with W.B. Denison, M.P., a shareholder of the company who was also a banker, and they wrote to Beckett and company the same day (18 February) formally stating the company's financial position, and proposing that the overdraft be increased.

Four hundred and ninety-two shares in the company had been bought. As each share was of fifty pounds, this meant that share capital should amount to £24,600. Some shareholders were dilatory in payment, however, and there was still £1,880 of this sum owing. Twenty-five thousand pounds had been borrowed on mortgage.

Up to 31 December 1878, £48,685 6s. 6d. had been paid out. Principally this was for the purchase of the land, payments to contractors, and the architect's commission.

With regard to expected regular income and expenditure once the theatre was running (expected because the Assembly Rooms and the shops had not then been completed or let), this was the company's position: the average rent for the theatre over the following five years was to be £1,900 per annum, while the hoped for rent from the Assembly Rooms, shops, and wine cellar was £1,500. This made the company's expected total annual income £3,400.

Against this they would have to pay £1,250 interest on the mortgage, £199 17s. 6d. for insurance, and an estimated £200 2s. 6d. on scenery and repairs. (The theatre's lease obliged them to spend one hundred pounds annually on scenery, leaving £100 2s. 6d. for repairs.)

Outgoings, therefore, were expected to be roughly £1,650, which left a surplus income of £1,750. If all the debentures were taken up, the company would have to pay £720 interest on them yearly (the promised interest rate on the debentures was six per cent), and from the £1,750 income surplus, this would leave an estimated annual dividend of £1,030. Very approximately this would mean a dividend on the basic share capital of four per cent.

This statement was only a projection, and in fact matters turned out otherwise. As we shall see later, the company had to accept rents of about half the estimated value for the Assembly Rooms and shops, and not all the debentures were taken up. The statement was drawn up for the benefit of the bank, and it was accompanied by a request that the bank should increase the company's overdraft by three thousand pounds.

The bank, replying on the same day, refused to increase the overdraft. Kitson wrote again on the twenty-fifth of February to say that the directors themselves had decided to make a personal loan to the company in order that the outstanding accounts could be paid off, and requesting that the overdraft be allowed to stand at £1,200. This, apparently, the bank agreed to.

In December 1878 the company secretary had received one inquiry from a prospective tenant of the shops. In January 1879 he received three more: one from Messrs Squire and company, accountants, who inquired about shop

number three,<sup>2</sup> and were told that its rent must be one hundred and thirty pounds per annum and that they could have a three, five, or seven year lease; the next from W. Child, who inquired about shop number six, and was told that he could have a similar lease for a rent of one hundred and twenty-five pounds per annum; and the third from Thomas Ainley, who also inquired about shop number three.

Clearly the average rent for each shop was to be in the region of one hundred and twenty-five pounds per annum, and the total rent for them was therefore to be seven to seven hundred and fifty pounds per annum. (Shop number one, we remember, was to be let with the wine cellar, and its rent would therefore be greater than that of the others.) From the letter of the eighteenth of February we know that the estimated rent of the Assembly Rooms, shops, and wine cellar was £1,500, so we may imagine that the company hoped that it might command a rent for the Assembly Rooms of seven to eight hundred pounds. As yet, however, the Assembly Rooms were not approaching completion (in a letter dated 14 February 1879 drafting an advertisement for tenders for their lease, the completion date was set in early April).

Two other matters, both relating to Wilson Barrett's maintenance of the building, provoked resolutions at the board meetings on 24 January and 4 February. Firstly,

the dust covers which were to protect the box and balcony ledges (here described as 'velvet' ledges, though elsewhere they were said to be 'crimson rep') were not being used, and consequently the ledges were being damaged. And secondly, there had been a small fire at the theatre, doing damage worth an estimated fifteen pounds, which Wilson Barrett was asked to make good as it was allegedly due to his negligence. These are small matters in themselves, but in view of Wilson Barrett's repeated public assertions of his concern for the comfort and safety of his patrons, it is interesting to see the extent of his immediate control over the theatre's running.

It will be remembered, too, that there were £1,880 arrears on share subscriptions, and at the board meeting on the fourth of February it was resolved to take legal proceedings against recalcitrant shareholders (if the mere threat of this did not induce them to pay). In fact only one person was prosecuted, Robert Tenant, M.P., of Scarcroft, Leeds, and this may have been due both to the size of the sum that he owed the company (£475 12s. 1d.), and to the fact that his public example would be admonitory.

In February no more inquiries about the shops were forthcoming, and at a board meeting on the third of March their letting was put into the hands of estate agents, Messrs Wallis and Ramsden, who were to receive two per cent

of the rents as commission. At this same meeting the directors signed promissory notes for the one thousand pounds loan that each made to the company.

In April the company secretary continued to correspond with dilatory shareholders, and to issue debenture shares. The directors and shareholders had been exhorted to take up as many of these latter as they could, but the subscriptions had fallen so far short of the desired twelve thousand pounds by the ninth of April that an advertisement was placed in the press soliciting applications from the general public. The tone of the advertisement was, of course, optimistic and encouraging, and stressed the rate of interest (the payment of which had priority over the dividend on the paid up shares), the repayment date, which was 1 July 1884, and that 'a considerable portion' of these debentures had already been taken by the shareholders.<sup>3</sup> The closing date for applications was 30 April 1879. Later in the month Messrs Pitman and Lane, London solicitors, were instructed to institute proceedings against Robert Tenant. The rapidity and urgency of these dealings, along with the making of a personal loan by the directors, are, I think, an indication of the pressure that the company felt under in the raising of money for the theatre's completion.

The Assembly Rooms were not ready to be opened by the first of April, and in fact arrangements for their heating

and furnishing were not even discussed until a board meeting in the following month (on 13 May). At this meeting the directors also discussed the state of applications for debentures, architects' certificates for amounts due to contractors, and a schedule of scenery which had to be made under the terms of the lease.

Another meeting was held six days later<sup>4</sup> to hear the report of Wallis, the estate agent. He told the directors that he had made no progress in letting the shops, and that he thought that the rent should be reduced to forty pounds per annum for the smaller shops, and sixty pounds per annum for the shops which had a room above. These rents would be increased from year to year. Although this was only half what they had hoped for, the directors accepted it.

Wallis had also received an inquiry from a Miss Marshall, of Weetwood Hall, Leeds, who asked if she could hire the supper and cloak rooms of the Assembly Rooms between 16 and 21 June 1879 for an examination. Though the letting of the Assembly Rooms was really outside Wallis's brief, the directors instructed him to discover what Miss Marshall needed in the way of chairs and tables, and to let her have the room for what they considered a 'moderate' five pounds.

Since the advertising of the Assembly Rooms there had been no inquiry from a potential lessee, but as we have seen, Wilson Barrett had some interest in how they were

managed, and this concern manifested itself in action toward the end of May. Though as yet there was no certain completion date, Wilson Barrett was invited to attend a board meeting which was convened in the Assembly Rooms on 24 May 1879. Doubtless at this meeting he, and the directors, would have been able to make some assessment of the progress of the rooms, and Wilson Barrett's interest must have been guardedly declared, for, two days later, the company secretary wrote to him inviting him to a further board meeting (on 30 May) if he had anything further to say in the matter.

Wilson Barrett did not attend this meeting, but the directors did discuss his having the lease, and instructed the secretary to write to him offering a two years' lease at five hundred pounds per annum. The rooms would be ready in July, said the letter, so the lease could run from the first of August. If Wilson Barrett agreed to these terms the directors would like first to meet him in order to discuss generally the purposes for which he would let the rooms.

Before Wilson Barrett replied to this letter, the directors received an inquiry about the Assembly Rooms from one A.H. Hamilton, whose address was the Mechanics' Hall, Halifax. It seems likely that he would have been inquiring about holding a single function in the rooms rather than taking a permanent lease; at any rate, the secretary wrote back to him<sup>5</sup> saying that he would have

to wait for an answer as the directors were in the throws of negotiation and did not know at that time whether the Assembly Rooms would be let permanently to one person, or whether they would keep the management in their own hands.

Of course, we know that Wilson Barrett did become the Assembly Rooms' lessee, but while the directors were debating whether they should manage the rooms themselves (admittedly they may have been forced to it to some extent by Wilson Barrett's long drawn out negotiating tactics) a seed was sown which was later nurtured when Wilson Barrett tried to give up the lease of the Assembly Rooms and the board again considered becoming their managers, and blossomed when they decided that they would not renew Wilson Barrett's lease of the theatre, so that they could manage the theatre themselves.

Wilson Barrett agreed to take the Assembly Rooms on the above terms in a letter dated 7 June 1879. This letter was the second of three that expressed doubts over the rooms being ready for the first of August. Whether he was simply forgetful, or genuinely dubious, or hoped that there might be some delay in his having to take up the lease, it is difficult to say. But it is noticeable that what must have been his strongest expression of doubt was contained in a letter which accompanied his cheque for the rent of the theatre that was the first such instalment paid in arrears rather than on, or before, being due.

Again, this is maybe a small point, but it marks the beginning of an increasing backwardness in paying his rent that remained throughout Wilson Barrett's lesseeship of the Grand Theatre, and was the cause of a growing straining of relations between him and the board of directors. That the directors were sensitive to some implication in his doubts is clear from the assertive and formal tone of their reply which assured him that the rooms could be opened on 1 August, referred him to all his previous correspondence about the matter, and pointed out the consistency of their own replies.

By the middle of July applications for debentures had increased to roughly £7,450. This figure was included in a letter<sup>6</sup> to John Ellershaw, of Albion Place, Leeds, asking him if he would like to apply for some as he had previously expressed interest in the theatre company. Clearly the board still felt it necessary to solicit money; Ellershaw was told that three thousand pounds were needed.

In July, too, there was some movement in the letting of the shops. A Mr Blakey offered to take one of the shops on a three year lease for a rent of fifty-five pounds per annum; and a Mr Martin offered to take shop number one with about five hundred square yards of cellarage.

(Wallis was instructed to take Martin to discuss with Corson the possibility of partitioning off such a section of the theatre cellar.) Mr Blakey's offer was accepted.

The Assembly Rooms were ready by the promised date, and, in fact, opened on the fourth of August with a performance by a conjurer called Dr Lynn. An account of the opening, and a description of the auditorium were carried in the Yorkshire Post the following morning:

In designing the room the architect had to keep in view the probability of the room being required for such widely differing purposes as bazaars, concerts, public meetings, miscellaneous entertainments, and even, on occasions, dramatic performances. Since the closing of the Music Hall in Albion Street, the Town Hall and the Albert Hall have been the only rooms available for such purposes... There is an arched proscenium twenty-two feet in width and thirty-one feet in height, and a stage twenty-one deep. The stage is so arranged that it can be speedily removed, throwing the stage area into the room for the purpose of dancing. The ceiling of the hall is formed of wood, arranged into panels with arched and longitudinal moulded ribs, and is picked out in colour and gold. During the day the hall is lighted by four two-light tracery windows, and at night by pendants suspended from the roof. The front of the dress circle is elaborately furnished with quilted satin panels, and running carton-pierre ornaments, also picked out in gold and colours. The rich satin panels give the hall a very warm and cosy appearance, and the room promises to be particularly good in its acoustic properties. This was amply shown during Dr Lynn's performance last night.

On the fifth of August Wilson Barrett wrote to the company secretary inviting the directors to a performance of 'London Assurance' given by his company on Friday, 15 August. A month later, on the eighth of September, he wrote to the directors suggesting that there should be some lighting of the entrances and exterior of the Assembly Rooms. He also said that something should be done about draughts in the theatre, which his patrons had been complaining about during the previous season.

The board did not reply until they had had Corson inspect the theatre and report to them. It was Corson's view, they told Wilson Barrett in a letter dated 27 October 1879, that there were no perceptible draughts when the corridor doors were kept closed. It was necessary, however, that the doors be attended to. They made no reply with regard to the lighting of the exterior of the Assembly Rooms.

On the twenty-ninth of October the secretary acknowledged receipt of the quarter's rent, which had been due on the first of the month, and was, therefore, four weeks late. As yet the board showed no alarm at this.

The main staircase of the Assembly Rooms had not been properly constructed, and this was clear after only three months of use. Corson, therefore, was instructed at a board meeting on the eleventh of November to inspect its condition. The use of the Assembly Rooms up to then had also indicated the desirability of having an orchestra pit, and Corson was instructed to obtain estimates for the work involved, as well as for concreting the cellar floor and building a partition wall to isolate the area let with shop number one.

Watson, who had been supervising the completion of the stage machinery which had had to wait until the theatre closed for two weeks in the summer owing to the rush with which the theatre was opened, was commissioned at this same meeting to compile an inventory of the company's

property. Clearly, now that the theatre had been operating for nine months, there would have been a constant ebb and flow of scenery and properties, and there might be confusion over what was, and what was not, the company's stock. Watson promised to have this inventory ready for the January board meeting.

Though the management of the Assembly Rooms was primarily Wilson Barrett's concern, the board continued to receive inquiries about them, and two letters, both written by the secretary on the eleventh of December in answer to two such inquiries, indicate the attitude of the board in this respect. The first reply was to one Henry E. Hudson who had clearly asked about the possibility of using the Assembly Rooms for dancing. The secretary said that the directors were considering having the floor re-laid for dancing, but that engagements in the rooms prevented this work from being carried out before the following spring. The joists were, however, 'laid so as to allow of a spring for dancing and this is considered to be very effective and although the surface boards are laid across the room, they are evenly spaced and might if waxed answer the purpose of your Ball very fairly'. The tone of this letter is obviously explanatory and co-operative; but the tone of the other reply was quite dismissive.

Messrs G.H. Nelson and J.R. Ford had written on behalf of the 'committee for the promotion of the Leeds Classical Chamber concerts' asking if the board was willing to

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provide cushions for the front seats on the floor of the Assembly Rooms. The reply quite curtly stated that the Assembly Rooms were leased to Wilson Barrett, and that the board did not feel they should provide any extra cushions.

This disparity in tone is a curious one, and maybe it was provoked simply by the different commercial potential of the two inquiries. The letters do show, however, that the directors were kept in touch with the day to day management of the Assembly Rooms, and did not merely collect the rent. This interest in the management of theatre and Assembly Rooms was, I think, crucial to the formation of the company in the first place, and it must be remembered as a background to the directors' later attempts to deprive Wilson Barrett of his lease, and to take over the theatre's management themselves.

Another letter was written by the secretary on the eleventh of December, addressed to Mr C. Foster, a broker. The letter pointed out a technical irregularity in a transfer of shares which the company was asked to register. These shares were, in fact, Wilson Barrett's ten shares, and they were to be transferred to a Mr W.M. Nelson. The transaction was regularised, and registered on the nineteenth of December. Unfortunately there is no explanatory correspondence, though the arrangement was only temporary, for later the shares were transferred back to Wilson Barrett (on 17 June 1880).

On the nineteenth of December also, the secretary wrote to Kitson and another director, George Irwin, asking them to sign a letter of authorisation for Beckett and company to pay out the interest due on the debentures on 1 January 1880.

The secretary's last act of 1879 was to send Wilson Barrett a carefully worded reminder and statement of his rent account. Wilson Barrett had sent the rent for the last quarter of 1879 at the end of October, but had neglected the portion of the one hundred pounds per annum increase that should have come into effect on the anniversary of the signing of the lease (16 November). There was also some rent due for the Assembly Rooms. The secretary calculated that Wilson Barrett then owed the company £220 18s. 9d. He tactfully added a further £575 which would become due for rent of both the theatre and the Assembly Rooms on 1 January 1880. 'I thought I had better forward you this statement to save you trouble and prevent mistake,' he said, 'I trust you will find it correct.'<sup>8</sup>

The first full year's programme at the Grand Theatre was only divided into spring and autumn seasons because of the necessity to close the theatre for a fortnight in order to finish the installation of the stage machinery. Otherwise, as we shall see from Wilson Barrett's letter to the Yorkshire Post (11 July 1879), the theatre would not have closed at all for the summer.

Roughly sixteen and one half weeks of the year were taken up by performances by Wilson Barrett's company or derivatives of it, and nine and one half of these were pantomime. Eighteen other companies filled another twenty-four weeks with dramatic productions, while four and one half weeks were filled by four different companies presenting opera. The D'Oyly Carte company performed 'HMS Pinafore' for one week, and three and one half weeks were filled by opera-bouffe.

The pantomime, 'Blue Beard the Grand', ran uninterrupted from 24 December 1878 to 22 February 1879, and Wilson Barrett chose to open his spring season the following Monday with 'Jane Shore', a play which he had given its first performance four years previously at the Amphitheatre, Leeds, when it had opened the 1875 spring season.

'Jane Shore' was written by W.G. Wills, and had been a very successful vehicle for Caroline Heath. It had had two seasons at the Princess's Theatre, London, and had been toured extensively in the provinces. Nor did enthusiasm for it seem to be waning now, for it ran for twelve performances, was interrupted by three performances of 'East Lynne' (which had been in Caroline Heath's repertoire even longer than 'Jane Shore'), and was brought back to close Caroline Heath's season. Though she was well-known to the Leeds public, this was Caroline Heath's first appearance at her husband's new theatre.

The Yorkshire Post reviewer quickly reduced 'Jane Shore' to its essence when, attempting to identify the causes of its success, he said: 'The story of a suffering woman is always certain to enlist the sympathies of a British audience; no matter what a woman's sin may have been, the stern justice which tears her from her home and child will always rouse the feelings of the average playgoer'.<sup>9</sup> This central, suffering woman was of course Caroline Heath's role, and her tour de force was in the sensation scene when, outcast, starving, and in heavy snow in Old Cheapside, she cast herself on the ground, and clutched her accuser's knees.

She was eventually helped by John Grist, a baker, who gave her food and shelter even though he was forbidden on pain of death to do so, and the play closed with her returned to the arms of her husband, Henry Shore.

When the play was originally produced Wilson Barrett played the part of Henry Shore, though this was only a small role. For the London seasons and the touring of the play he had relinquished it to another member of his company. At this revival he took the rather more heroic role of John Grist. When he had produced the play at the Amphitheatre he had been only twenty-nine; now, as his experience and strength as an actor grew, he took a greater role — though it is still important to see that he was taking a secondary role to that of his wife.

As we have noted, this was Caroline Heath's first performance in the Grand Theatre, and it was perhaps due

to this that the reviewer observed: 'In her earlier scenes ... Miss Heath seemed scarcely to have caught the proper pitch of voice necessary for so large a theatre; but this slight defect passed away as the performance proceeded'.

Wilson Barrett gave a 'manly and vigorous' performance, while Mr Peach was a 'fair' Henry Shore. Mr Cardew played a villainous Duke of Gloucester 'ably'. Three other members of Wilson Barrett's company at this time warranted the reviewer's mention: Miss Marston Leigh was a 'dignified and effective' queen; and Mrs and Miss Ormsby played small parts.

The play was received with great enthusiasm by a large audience (Gloucester received 'the reward of his villainy in the hootings of the audience, and storms of cheers greeted the appearance of Miss Heath and Mr Barrett'). The audience does not seem to have been troubled by two critical problems that exercised the reviewer, and which I will give here because they are revealing both of the atmosphere at the play's performance, and of the critical ethos of the times:

Two striking blemishes ... may be referred to. Shore, who is otherwise the soul of honour, tells his wife a deliberate lie respecting the death of her child. This is quite uncalled for, and merely serves as a means of preparing a surprise for the audience when the child is brought on, alive and well, in the last act. The second matter is the half-hearted attempt ... to gloss over the character of the heroine. From all that can be gathered, it is utterly untrue to history for the dramatist to represent Jane Shore as having been dragged by force from the home of her

tradesman-husband and carried to the court at the instigation of the Duke of Gloucester, and this device detracts from rather than adds to the dramatic effect, for not only do we have the fact to get over that Jane stays on voluntarily at the court, but it follows that if she had really been taken away by force the reproaches of her husband when she returns to her home would lose much of their meaning... Mr Wills seems to have thought it necessary to make some concession to the tastes of the present day.

In the first criticism we see the reviewer quite conscious of the dramatist's desire to construct sensational events for his play, and no doubt he was substantially right in identifying Wills's motive. But a modern critic might be much more disposed to accept this kind of inconsistency, along with the inconsistencies mentioned in the reviewer's second criticism, as a profounder psychological realism. We shall become increasingly aware in this chapter of the amount of adaptation of foreign (principally French) works that was done in Victorian times, and the modifications that were made to them to make them acceptable to British tastes. I think it is therefore valid to point out here that the reviewer was closer in his concerns to the mechanics of plot construction and adaptation, the processes by which plays were actually made, than a modern critic might attempt to be. That is, even if we cannot agree with the interpretation of the play that the reviewer's remarks tend to promote, nonetheless, we may accept that he does indicate real concerns of the time.

On the Saturday night of her last complete week, and the Monday and Tuesday of her final half week, Caroline Heath

played Lady Isabel and Madame Vine in 'East Lynne', while Wilson Barrett played Archibald Carlyle. The play had been in Caroline Heath's repertoire for some time, but though she was well received in it ('being the recipient of the exceptional honour of a recall in the middle of an act'<sup>10</sup>), 'Jane Shore' had clearly supplanted it in popularity, for it was the latter that was presented for her final, benefit performance on the Wednesday night.

The rest of the week, and the first half of the following week, were devoted to opera. Mapleson's Italian Opera Company performed Bizet's 'Carmen' on Thursday, and as a matinee on Saturday, of its first week, and on Tuesday and Wednesday of its second week; Weber's 'Der Freischutz' (in place of Beethoven's 'Fidelio' which was withdrawn because of the star's illness) was given on Friday of the first week, with Gounod's 'Faust' on the Saturday evening; and Mozart's 'Le Nozze di Figaro' was presented on the Monday of the second week. All the operas were sung in Italian, and 'Carmen' was being performed for its first time in Leeds. It was well received, even though the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that 'all right minded people will agree with us in regarding the plot as of a very repulsive character'.<sup>11</sup> (Here he was referring solely to the moral import of the story: he otherwise greatly praised the music and the performance.)

Mapleson's Italian Opera Company ended its brief season on Wednesday, 19 March, and the remainder of the week,

and the week after, were taken up by 'Queen's Evidence', a play by George Conquest and Henry Petitt. Harry Jackson, who had played the principal role in London for some months, was brought in by Wilson Barrett to revive the play with a supporting cast drawn from Wilson Barrett's regular company.<sup>12</sup>

Though the play was considered 'modern', the characters were 'strongly defined' as in 'older melodramas, when vice was distinguished by means of black ringlets and burnt cork whiskers, and virtue was typified by a lady in white book-muslin'.<sup>13</sup> It concerned two railway ticket-clerks, one of whom was in league with a gang of coiners, and exchanged his virtuous colleague's cash for counterfeit money. The virtuous clerk, Gilbert Medland, was thereupon accused of the crime, but fled to Canada, and his wife was stricken with blindness. There was, however, a letter which could prove Medland's innocence, but it was dropped accidentally into an empty lock. Medland's child retrieved it, and gave it to her mother. With the letter, the blind Mrs Medland attempted to cross the lock bridge, but the chief villain opened the lock gates, the lock filled with water, and she fell in. However, in the meantime Gilbert Medland had come back from Canada, and he was just in time to rescue her. Though there were more sensational incidents to follow, this was the principal one, and clearly it relied more upon the elaborate reconstruction of reality upon the stage

than scenic illusion. The reviewer said: 'It is evident ... [that the authors] have thought less of polish of dialogue than of designing striking situations which are calculated to bring down loud applause from the audience', and he also recorded that they did indeed have that effect.

From this brief summary it may seem surprising that the star in fact played a 'vulgar and not over-scrupulous Jew' (elsewhere described as 'the villainous Jew') who was associated with the band of coiners. It was he who dropped the letter into the lock. But in the end his 'innate goodness of feeling prevailed over the bad instincts he had derived from his associates' (or, alternatively, 'his instinct of self-preservation' — the reviewer seemed in two minds) that drove him to turn Queen's evidence. Perhaps the xenophobia is less surprising than the seeming celebration of vice by making a villain the central character. In theory at least, however, the balance was redressed by making him reform at the end. It was precisely this kind of double-think that allowed Charles Reade to indulge a similar morbid curiosity in making the central character of his 'Drink' a drunkard — in the end the latter died quite horribly in delirium tremens.

The following week (beginning 31 March) saw an opera-bouffe, 'Les Cloches de Corneville' by Planquette, of which the libretto, originally by Clairville and Gabet,

had been translated into English by Messrs Reece and Farnie. First performed at the Folly and Globe Theatres in London, it was toured by J.C. Scanlan's company, and this was its third appearance in Leeds. Since its second visit, its cast had almost completely changed, though Wilson Barrett's brother, George Barrett, still played the comic role of the Baillie, a 'self-satisfied village official'.<sup>14</sup>

New scenery had been painted for this production by Lester Sutcliffe, one of the resident scenic artists at the Grand Theatre, and the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought it beautiful, singling out a coast scene at the opening of the first act (a distant view of the village of Corneville and the cliffs of Calvados) for particular praise.

'Les Cloches de Corneville' ran for one whole week, and for four nights of the next. The theatre was closed on the Friday night, but opened on Saturday, 12 April, for the first of thirteen nights of 'Proof; or, a Celebrated Case'.

'Proof' was adapted by F.C. Burnand from 'Une Cause Célèbre' by D'Ennery and Cormon, and was presented by a derivative of Wilson Barrett's company under the direction of Reginald Moore.<sup>15</sup> Wilson Barrett had the sole provincial rights of the play though, as can be seen from the following summary, it was something of a diversion from his usual choice of piece:

Pierre Lorance, a soldier in the French army, manages to leave the ranks to see his wife and child. Pierre leaves with her for safety some title deeds and jewels entrusted to him by the Count de Laval, who is forced to fly the country, and at the same time he gives her a very peculiar bracelet sent to her by a titled lady — her foster-sister. No sooner has Pierre left his wife than a villain named Lazare enters the room by the window and steals the title deeds and the jewels. The woman's shrieks arouse the child, who has been sleeping in an inner room, and the villain compels the mother to call out to the child, "I am with your father". Lazare murders the woman and escapes with his booty, and Pierre Lorance is tried for the murder of his wife, is convicted on the perfectly truthful evidence of his own child, and is condemned to the galleys for life... /There is a break of twelve years, then/ the villain Lazare ... assumes the title of the Count de Laval ... /and/ the daughter of the real Count is able to establish the innocence of Pierre Lorance by means of the bracelet which was stolen at the time the murder was committed.<sup>16</sup>

There was no 'powerful love interest', and, indeed, apart from a moderately gory murder, no real sensation scene. We do, however, begin to have the feeling that the play's interest lay in the complications of evidence that, eventually pieced together, finally brought the story to a just end. In his later career, in 'Claudian', and 'Clito', and 'The Silver King', plays in which he himself starred, Wilson Barrett was to steer away from such plots, and to concentrate more upon the emotional sufferings of the central character.

'The period of French history that the two authors had chosen lends itself admirably to the display of picturesque costumes and scenery', said the reviewer, reminding us of the essential visual spectacle with which Wilson Barrett always imbued his productions. The play,

he added, had an enthusiastic reception from a large audience.

'Proof' was followed on 28 April by 'Our Boys', a play written by H.J. Byron, and first performed in 1875. When it arrived at the Grand Theatre the play had only recently finished a run of 1326 performances at the Vaudeville Theatre, London. The play was presented in Leeds, however, by William Duck's touring company under the stage direction of E.W. Garden. Since the tour first came out there had been several changes in the cast, but only two since the company's previous appearance in Leeds.<sup>17</sup>

'Our Boys' played for six nights, and was succeeded on 5 May by Charles Wyndham's company in 'The Crisis'.<sup>18</sup> This was a relatively new play, written by J. Albery (in reality an adaptation of Emile Augier's 'Les Fourchambault') and first performed in 1878. The Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>19</sup> considered Albery a poor constructor of plots, and regretted that he needed to borrow from the French with all the 'offences against English good taste' that this necessarily brought. However, he did have ability as a 'writer of polished dialogue'. The play itself had a certain tender morality that, though many of the mechanics of the plot are familiar, contrasted with much that had so far been seen at the Grand Theatre:

'The Crisis' deals with a merchant who has in his youth cruelly wronged and deserted a woman, leaving her with an illegitimate son. The merchant afterwards marries an extravagant, selfish woman of the world, and, through various causes, his firm is on the verge of ruin. At this stage, the woman he has so cruelly wronged prompts the illegitimate son, who has prospered in business, to go to his own father's rescue. The young man in question is in love with a young American lady named Haidee Burnside, and his true nobility of character eventually triumphs over all the prejudices which can be raised against him, and he is blessed with a genuine, noble-minded girl for a wife.<sup>20</sup>

'The Crisis', then, was not inherently so melodramatic or sensational as 'Jane Shore', 'Proof', or 'Queen's Evidence', and was what a contemporary critic might have called 'more modern' in tone. The following week, however, saw a rather older tradition observed: Barry Sullivan, with his own company, performed four different plays ('Hamlet' on Monday and Thursday, 'Richelieu' on Tuesday, 'Richard III' on Wednesday and Saturday, and 'The Gamester' for his benefit on Friday).

In 'Hamlet' he 'kept to the traditional readings and stage business', giving a performance of consistent quality throughout, playing 'carefully and conscientiously' and evidencing 'power and careful study', said the reviewer.<sup>21</sup> 'He never surprised the audience into applause by tricks of style.'

He had chosen the role of Beverley in 'The Gamester' for his benefit night ('a melodramatic role in a gloomy play'<sup>22</sup>), presumably because he thought this was the role in which he would be most popular. However, he was not all that well attended. Even so, the reviewer thought

that his reception on this occasion might persuade him not to miss out Leeds from his tours as he had done for the previous four and one half years.

Barry Sullivan's week was followed on 19 May by Arthur Garner's company in 'Stolen Kisses'. This was a domestic drama, written by Paul Meritt,<sup>23</sup> and first performed in 1876. It had run in London for two hundred performances, and had been touring the provinces for two years before this visit to the Grand Theatre. Like other plays that had been toured for some while it did not merit much notice in the press, but the Yorkshire Post reviewer did think 'a pretty scene ... of a reach of the Thames' worthy of praise.<sup>24</sup>

'Stolen Kisses' was followed (on 26 May) by a return visit of 'Diplomacy', with which we dealt in the previous chapter.<sup>25</sup> As this company had visited the Grand Theatre so recently with the same play, the Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>26</sup> contented himself with comparing 'Diplomacy' with 'The Crisis'. Both plays, he thought, suffered the difficulty of having 'unpleasant suggestion' and 'improper motive' since they came from the French, but whereas the necessary excision of these vices had been carried out without any damage to the play's sense or structure in 'Diplomacy', in 'The Crisis', where the impropriety was central to the plot, it had left the play suffering from improbability.

'Valjean', John Coleman's adaptation of Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables', occupied the stage for most of the next fortnight. John Coleman had managed the Theatre Royal, Leeds, for over two decades before it burnt down in 1875, and he could expect some following amongst the Leeds public. He had been touring in 'Valjean' since its first performance earlier in the year, and the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that Jean Valjean, the central character, was typical of the roles that Coleman liked to play ('the hero of a romantic melodrama').<sup>27</sup> He compared it with Robert Landry in 'The Dead Heart', and Ethelwold in 'Katherine Howard', in both of which roles Coleman had been a success.

The play seems to have had an unusual structure (one to which the reviewer took exception). It was written in two prologues, an episode, and two acts. This was doubtless to convey the long intervals in Hugo's narrative, but it also revealed the Victorian adaptor's technique of selecting strongly (melo)dramatic incidents with a sensational flavour, and binding them together in a somewhat episodic narrative.

The play opens with the starving ex-galley slave, Valjean, vainly seeking food and shelter. He has money with him to purchase food, but he is a social outcast, and he meets with rough repulses wherever he may apply. Begging to be taken in at the gaol, he is told he must go and commit another crime before its doors can be opened to him to shield him from the pitiless snow. At this moment Fantine comes and leads him to a house which is always open to the poor and needy – the house of the good Bishop Myriel. Here the starving wretch is made welcome,

and to his intense surprise he is treated as an honoured guest. But this convict, who was first sent to prison because he stole a loaf to relieve the necessities of three starving children, and against whom society seems generally to have conspired, is yet unable to resist a strong temptation, and he repays the good Bishop's hospitality by stealing his lordship's plate. Captured by the watchful Jauvret, he is brought back in the custody of a file of gens d'armes, but the Bishop heaps coals of fire upon his head by forgiving him, and taking advantage of some casual words he used (implying that everything in the house was at his service) to procure Valjean's release.<sup>28</sup>

This constituted the first of the two prologues. The second was set some years later, in Montreuil:

After many years we see Valjean living honoured and respected as the kind-hearted and wealthy Mayor of Montreuil. Here his evil genius (the lynx-eyed police inspector, Jauvret) pursues him; and in the end, to save an innocent man in the dock, who is supposed to be Valjean, the Mayor performs an act of self-sacrifice, declares himself to be the real Valjean, and demands that the chains that hang upon the wrists of an innocent man shall be taken off and put upon his own.<sup>29</sup>

Next the story of Cosette was told in the Episode. There were what the reviewer called 'effective scenes' with a child, Fantine's daughter, before the Episode was terminated with an escape over a convent wall. Only then could the two acts of the play proper be begun, and these involved a continuation of Cosette's story, and the further adventures of Valjean, which ended with a scene of 'the destruction of the barricade'.<sup>30</sup>

'That the piece was admirably stage-managed goes without saying, for there are few managers who can arrange an elaborate spectacular drama for the stage with the same

ability as Mr Coleman', said the reviewer. The play was watched by a large audience.

Coleman took his benefit on the Friday when he presented Tom Taylor's 'Clancarty', which he had given its first provincial performance at the Theatre Royal, Leeds. In it Coleman played the part of 'the outlawed earl, who, married when a lad, has been torn from his girl-wife, and returns from his exile at St Germain to woo her'. On Saturday he appeared in another play which he had made the Leeds public familiar with, though it had not been performed in the town for nearly five years: 'Katherine Howard'.<sup>31</sup>

Coleman's fortnight was followed on 16 June by a fortnight of Emily Soldene's Opera Company.<sup>32</sup> For the first week she gave performances of 'Carmen' every night. On the Monday of the second week she sang Drogon in 'Geneviève de Brabant', on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday she played Mdlle Lange in 'La Fille de Madame Angot', and on Friday there was another performance of 'Carmen'.

Emily Soldene normally presented opera-bouffe, and her roles in 'Geneviève de Brabant' and 'La Fille de Madame Angot' were more typical of her than that in 'Carmen'.

Nonetheless, the reviewer thought 'it would be a pity if [this] should in any way militate against the success of the higher venture she has now made by producing Bizet's 'Carmen' ... [she was] thoroughly able to sing the difficult music'.<sup>33</sup>

He did, however, have some strictures about 'Geneviève de Brabant':

Any significance that the plot ... may originally have had has long since been evaporated, and the libretto may now be regarded simply as a peg on which to hang rattling choruses and topical allusions ... Last night a casual mention of the name of a local agitator evoked a shout of laughter... "Opera-bouffe" can hardly be seriously considered or criticised, but looking at 'Geneviève de Brabant' no one need deeply regret the decline and fall of this class of entertainment.<sup>34</sup>

The foundation of some of these reservations may well have been that in her role as the amorous pastrycook Emily Soldene had interpolated two songs, 'Marriage Bells', and 'My Love for Thee', in Offenbach's score.

Emily Soldene was succeeded on 30 June by Charles Sullivan and his company who gave Boucicault's 'The Shaughraun' throughout the week except for Mr and Mrs Sullivan's benefit performance on Friday when they presented Boucicault's earlier 'The Colleen Bawn'. ('The Shaughraun' was first performed in 1874, and 'The Colleen Bawn' was first performed in 1860.) 'The Colleen Bawn' was accompanied by Tyrone Power's 'Born to Good Luck', and on Saturday 'The Shaughraun' was accompanied by J. Pilgrim's 'The Limerick Boy' (which was first performed in 1865).

Clearly none of these were new plays, and the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that the Leeds public would be so familiar with them that comment was superfluous.<sup>35</sup> There was, however, a vogue for Irish dramas, largely created

and fed by Boucicault himself, no doubt, but this in itself seemingly adventitious recommendation weighed heavily enough with the reviewer for him to draw attention to the advertised fact that all the company were of Irish origin. Perhaps it would be simplistic to speculate that Ireland and the Irish formed some ready-made Romantic or Gothic image for the Victorians, but perhaps more significant is the fact that actual Irishmen were to play actual Irish parts, and that this could be read as a guarantee of 'realism'.

Lester Sutcliffe had painted new scenery for this production, and the reviewer thought that mechanical effects in the prison scene, and in the scene at St. Bridget's Abbey, were particularly effective.

The comedian James Taylor, Ada Alexander, and their company succeeded Charles Sullivan on Monday, 7 July. They gave two pieces: 'Simon', on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and 'Christine', a new piece written for them by F.W. Broughton and J.W. Jones, on Wednesday and Saturday.

'Christine' was a 'domestic drama', built on discrepancies in the marriage laws between various European states, and as it dealt with several themes that we have already noticed (continental mores, the Jew, money and gambling, the innocent child, the moral superiority of the humble), I shall briefly summarise the plot.

François Latour, a Frenchman, married Christine, a Dutch flower-girl, in Berlin. They moved to Paris where, for

some technical reason, the marriage was invalid. François became increasingly interested in gaming, and decreasingly interested in his wife and home. Henri, a rakish friend, pointed out to him the invalidity of his German marriage in France.

Meanwhile François's father, General Latour, returned from England with plans for his son to marry a rich English Lady, Alice Merton. (General Latour did not know of his son's German marriage.) Accordingly, François went to England, and there married Alice Merton.

In the second act we discover Christine living in the house of Mr Solomon, 'a Jew money lender with exalted sentiments and large ideas of charity'.<sup>36</sup> Solomon was the father of Martha who had been Christine's servant before François abandoned her. Christine by this time had a seven year old child.

François went to Solomon (in ignorance of these circumstances) for the purpose of getting a loan for gambling with. Consequently he met Christine, and his father, who had followed him to the house, thus discovered his 'treachery', and renounced him. Will Merton, Alice's cousin, who had become 'strangely attached' to Christine, discovered the circumstances of François's marriages, and resolved with Christine to go and tell all to Alice.

This they did in the third act, and Alice thereupon announced her intention of leaving François for ever. This meant complete disaster for him since his dissolute life was entirely dependent on Alice's money. To this

was added the knowledge that German marriages held good in England, and so there at least, his marriage to Alice was bigamous. This was all too much for François, who committed suicide.

The play was not melodramatic in the technical sense, though it might be going too far to say that it dealt with 'real' problems: the situation was too exaggerated and contrived. The character drawing, too, seems rather caricatured for this to be the case. However, to the reviewer, these characters appeared not to be grotesque or typical enough: 'Henri Randolph's deportment should have accorded more with "the polished, or semi-polished villain" in the last act, rather than with the character of a low-caste, skulking desperado,' he thought, and Solomon was 'scarcely so Jew-like as one would have expected to see'. I think it is clear, here, that he is measuring them against the archetypes of the melodrama, rather than complaining that they did not accord with nature, or 'realism', and that the play fell somewhere between the two stools of 'realism' and conventional melodrama.

'Christine' closed the week and the spring season. In fact the season had run on rather longer than such seasons had before in Leeds, when managers had normally accepted a summer recess as inevitable. Conceivably Wilson Barrett's

management of the new theatre had a novelty value that had maintained support through the summer; this at least was the picture he was careful to give when he wrote to the Yorkshire Post:

As this question has been rather freely discussed of late, may I be allowed (as the one person best qualified for that purpose) to reply, that the Grand Theatre has been beyond my most sanguine expectations a most emphatic success. For this I ought to, and do thank the Leeds public most sincerely. I have to acknowledge with pleasure the ungrudging support given to the theatre, and the great and kindly interest taken in its welfare. My original intention was to shut 'the Grand' for two months during the present summer, but so great has been the success that, were it possible, I should not suspend the performance for a single night. I find, however, that the extensive alterations and the complicated machinery required for the production of the next pantomime, render it absolutely necessary that I should close for a time. This period, however, through the ingenuity of the architects, Messrs Corson and Watson, has been reduced to a minimum, and I have been promised that by the judicious appointment of relays of workmen, the work shall be done in two weeks. I shall suspend the entertainments for one week from Monday next, the fourteenth inst. Mr Edward Terry, the popular comedian, will appear for six nights from the twenty-first, supported by his London company. During the week commencing July the twenty-eighth I shall again close the doors to reopen for the season on the fourth of August when Mrs Wilson Barrett will have the pleasure of appearing in Leeds (for twelve nights) previous to her London engagement.

I hope to have the pleasure during Mrs Barrett's stay of publicly giving a brief sketch of my future plans, and to explain how I intend to endeavour during the coming year to keep up the high reputation which, I am proud to say, the Grand Theatre has already earned, not only in Leeds but through the United Kingdom.<sup>37</sup>

One may suspect a certain disingenuousness in this letter in view of the amount of advertising that Wilson Barrett managed to include in it, as well as the fact that such

'free discussion' as there had been had not taken place in the columns of the Yorkshire Post, nor had there been any official note taken of it at the board meetings or in the correspondence of the theatre company. Further, much of what the letter described as 'extensive alterations and ... complicated machinery required for the production of the next pantomime' had been underway since the theatre opened, and was in fact, nothing more than the completion of its equipping with the conventional stage machinery of the time. Watson had been supervising this work, and since payments to him 'on account of stage work' had continued through the spring, but ceased at this time, it is reasonable to assume that he only needed two weeks of the theatre's being closed to finish it.

The next pantomime, with which we shall deal at the end of this chapter, does not seem to have been very much out of the ordinary (allowing a very spectacular 'ordinary' in this period). But the fact that the theatre did not close 'for two months', or at least the one month that had been usual at Leeds's other theatres, and became the norm at the Grand Theatre within a short number of years, must, I think, be accepted as an indication that the reception of Wilson Barrett's first full season at the Grand Theatre had been exceptional.

For a week, between the two weeks for which the theatre was closed, Edward Terry, and his London Burlesque Company

played in 'Jeames' by F.C. Burnand (it was founded on W.M. Thackeray's 'Jeames's Diaries', and first produced at the Gaiety Theatre, London), and H.J. Byron's 'Little Don Caesar de Bazan' for all of the week except Friday and Saturday when 'The Weak Woman', and 'Little Doctor Faustus', both also by H.J. Byron, constituted the programme.

In 'Jeames' Terry played the title role. The Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that the play was 'somewhat feebly constructed' and that it bore a striking resemblance to H.J. Byron's 'A Fool and His Money'.<sup>38</sup> The play was in four acts, corresponding to January, June, September, and December. In the first act Jeames appeared as a flunky 'in plush and gold', and in the service of Sir John Aldgate, a city banker. Sir John's daughter, Emily, had a maid, Mary Anne Hoggins, with whom Jeames fell in love.

Jeames speculated in a mining company, and acquired fifty thousand pounds. He forsook Mary Anne, donned the 'gay uniform of a Royal Welsher', was presented at Court, and sought to woo Lady Angelina Bareacres. (She, however, was already in love with a Captain in the Royal Navy, Captain Silverton.)

While Jeames was showing himself off as Mr de la Pluche in a 'select circle of well-bred ladies and gentlemen', a couple from Ealing, a dissipated old uncle, and a grandmother who took in washing, came to embarrass him.

In the third act Jeames gained access to the Bareacres' estate, but made himself ridiculous 'trying what he could

do with his gun'. He proposed to Lady Angelica, who promptly eloped with her sailor.

Jeames's fortune vanished with the failure of his bank, but Mary Anne (now in the service of Lady Angelica) saved him from being arrested for debt by giving him five hundred pounds. In the last act Jeames returned to Vale Cottage, Ealing, where he took up an 'honest if humble occupation ... assisting his grandmother in her work as a laundress'. Eventually he married Mary Anne, and they kept 'The Wheel of Fortune', living happily and contentedly.

The parallels with 'A Fool and His Money' are obvious, but we may notice that Burnand had introduced a 'love interest' and in the process given his subject a fuller character. Perhaps this is something that Toole in 'A Fool and His Money' compensated for by rather more boisterous clowning. However, the Yorkshire Post reviewer left little doubt that the role of Jeames required some clowning too: Terry made his mark, he said, as a 'grotesque actor of the first class.<sup>39</sup> His slender figure, capable of all kinds of contortions; his comic singing - in which he was repeatedly and vociferously encored - and his other clever eccentricities, so irresistibly mirth-provoking,' were all remarkable. He also noted, and this is not irrelevant in attempting to identify the nature of Terry's appeal, that the audience predominantly filled the pit and the gallery, leaving the boxes, and the dress, and

upper circles less well attended.

After 'Jeames' the theatre was again closed for a week, to open for the autumn season on 4 August with a fortnight of Caroline Heath, and the Wilson Barrett company. They performed six plays, all drawn from their established repertoire, which, I think, give some indication of the range and character of their repertoire at that time.

They began on Monday and Tuesday with the familiar 'Jane Shore'. Indeed, the Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>40</sup> explained this repetition as 'calculated to attract many of the people who might be drawn to Leeds by the Yorkshire Agricultural Show'. The 'Snow Scene' had 'lost none of its old effect,' and the scene of Old Cheapside 'made an admirable stage picture'. Caroline Heath and Wilson Barrett took their usual roles, though the rest of the cast had undergone some changes.

On Wednesday night they played in Charles Osborne's 'Dangerous' (which had first been performed in 1873). Although it had remained in Wilson Barrett's repertoire, it had not been seen in Leeds for six or seven years, perhaps because of the success of his 'more pathetic' plays. The reviewer thought it 'a very slight modern play'<sup>41</sup> in which thinness of plot was not counterbalanced by any special brilliance of dialogue. It was very 'talky', and the action dragged. The story had 'a tinge of the modern school of French plays - of Sardou and the younger

Dumas — but lacked their constructive ability and power of character drawing'.

The plot was indeed not very substantial, but it seems likely that its attraction to Wilson Barrett was that it allowed him, as Major Wetherby, and Caroline Heath, as Mrs Egerton Grant, opportunities for much worldly brilliance and repartee.

The story concerned a Lady Buckley, a young wife who had 'foolish and sentimental notions', and who fancied that her quite worthy husband did not treat her properly: 'He lacked the soul to appreciate her at her true worth,' she said. Consequently she formed a dangerous friendship with the 'blasé' Major Wetherby whom she visited at his 'batchelor's Box'. Here she narrowly escaped discovery by her husband.

The catastrophe was averted by the cleverness of the widow, Mrs Egerton Grant, who, experienced in such worldly matters, took the young wife under her wing. Under her aegis matters were righted, and the young wife escaped the possible consequences of her indiscretion.

'The plot gives rise to one or two comedy scenes,' said the reviewer, 'and some amusing badinage between Major Wetherby and Mrs Grant, but ... the action is slow, and only a thin layer of wit is spread over the three acts.' He thought that 'one or two of the smaller parts were played with a sad lack of animation', but generally found room to praise Wilson Barrett, Caroline Heath, Mr Peach

(although he was 'unnecessarily mild and inoffensive' as the injured husband), Mr Granger, who played a German, and Mr Clitherowe, who played a country squire.

Caroline Heath 'made the best' of her part, 'delivering the repartee and biting sarcasm which she was occasionally called upon to utter with admirable point and altogether without self-consciousness', though the part was not really worthy of her. Wilson Barrett played with 'much verve and well-directed energy, and had the audience with him throughout'.

'East Lynne', and 'Jane Shore' filled the rest of the week, but the following Monday and Tuesday were to see Caroline Heath and Wilson Barrett in 'As You Like It'. In fact they had hoped to open the theatre with a performance of this play, for which John Galt had painted some new scenery. Perhaps it was the latter's death that had prevented the scenery's completion (the reviewer called him 'the late' John Galt<sup>42</sup>) and caused the substitution of 'Much Ado about Nothing', or perhaps the latter play was easier to put on in view of the lack of preparation time and the generally unfinished state of the theatre. However, the reviewer did think the new scenery worthy of special mention, and Wilson Barrett was given a call at the performance to express the audience's satisfaction at the way the play had been mounted.

One scene particularly, a forest scene with a 'delicate and hazy distance' seemed to the reviewer 'especially

charming', and although he thought that no artist had adequately painted the forest of Arden, and that stage scenery rather destroyed 'the illusion' than helped it, he admitted that 'one or two of the forest sets ... formed a suitable background for the play'.

Caroline Heath played Rosalind 'with an amount of archness and abandon which would greatly surprise those who have only seen her in "melancholy" parts', and the scenes between her and Wilson Barrett as Orlando were 'admirable' and 'spirited'.<sup>43</sup>

'As You Like It' was followed on Wednesday and Thursday by W.S. Gilbert's 'Charity'. This play had first been performed at the Haymarket Theatre, London, in 1874, and Wilson Barrett had introduced it to the provinces at the Leeds Amphitheatre in March of that year.

The play revolved around a 'smug, self-satisfied hypocrite' (Mr Smailey, a country magistrate) who lived honoured and respected, having contrived to conceal the iniquities of his past, and because he was wealthy, (his one good trait was a devoted attachment to his son, Fred, who seemed nonetheless particularly despicable), and Mrs Van Brugh, a 'kind, charitable woman ... possessed of all the virtues ... and for ever thinking of the welfare of others'. Mrs Van Brugh, however, had committed 'the one sin society never forgives': she had not married Captain Van Brugh. Fred Smailey fell in love with Eve,

Mrs Van Brugh's daughter, but Mr Smailey exposed Mrs Van Brugh's past. In this, averred the reviewer, the author showed how 'the hypocrite holds up his head high in the world while the woman who has once fallen is shunned and deserted even by those who received her bounty'.<sup>44</sup> Eve was deserted by Fred.

In this play, the reviewer added, rather than introducing people in modern dress into a 'strange world of topsy-turvydom', Gilbert seemed 'almost savagely in earnest'.

Mrs Van Brugh 'suited Caroline Heath exactly ...: no other actress could deliver "scornful and withering lines" better, or could rise to a higher pitch of intensity'. Wilson Barrett excelled in his portrait of the 'smooth and oily-tongued villain' in what was 'an elaborate and well conceived study of character, always effective, and never overdone'. This was rather more of a character role than Wilson Barrett often assayed, and the reviewer thought him successful enough in it to wish that he would try more of them.

The first performance of H.A. Jones's 'Harmony Restored' was given as an afterpiece, which the reviewer thought would, 'with some slight compression ... make a pretty little domestic drama'. Its central character was Michael Kinsman (played by Henry C. Arnold), an old, blind organist, dismissed from his post because of his 'intemperate habits'. A young organist was brought in to

replace him, and the latter fell in love with Kinsman's daughter, Jenny. Kinsman himself greatly suffered from the loss of his post, and eventually a compromise was reached whereby the young organist resigned in favour of Kinsman in return for being allowed to marry Jenny.

On Friday, 15 August Wilson Barrett took his first benefit performance at the Grand Theatre, and for it he gave Boucicault's 'London Assurance' before an audience that included the theatre company's board of directors. After the play he addressed the audience, fulfilling his promise in his letter to the Yorkshire Post of the previous month. He had intended, he said, only to announce the future programme, but was tempted by the warmth of his reception to speak more generally: it was the audience's fault if he tried its patience.

He said that applause such as he had then just received was the one reward the actor could look for, for, unlike the writer or painter whose work survived them, his work was evanescent – he had 'to work in the glare of the footlights, and even as he worked his merits were discounted and his efforts condemned'.<sup>45</sup> This was at once the curse and the blessing of the actor's art.

It was the same for the manager: he might expend labour and capital on the production of pieces, but unless his work lived in the audience's memory he had no other monument. He had then had the management of the Grand Theatre for

nine months; Time had tried him; he hoped that the audience, who were the jury, would have a favourable verdict. (The audience responded with 'rounds of enthusiastic applause'.)

He alluded to the pleasant engagements that he had fulfilled with his wife who had been to him more than a partner; to whose judgement he owed so much; and who had been so great a comfort to him in all his cares and anxieties.

Then he went on to list the companies that had thus far visited the theatre, and he said that they were 'at least not lacking in variety'. He hoped that whatever might be the intrinsic merits, from an aesthetic or literary point of view, of those pieces, at least he had kept the promise made on the opening night - that amusement should be innocent, and the fun harmless. (This provoked more approving cheers.)

He thought that he might speak with a little pardonable pride of the manner in which he had placed those pieces on the stage. (Loud cheering.) It had been quite a common occurrence with London managers of travelling companies to say: 'Mr Barrett, you have put the piece on here for six nights as well as if it were running in London for six or twelve months'. (Again, loud cheers.) This, he pointed out, was a speculation that required much expense, time, and labour.

Finally, before going on to list the future programme, he wanted to say that people in London, who had never

been in Leeds, and who were 'on the outer circle of theatrical matters', had frequently said: 'I hear, Mr Barrett, you have the finest theatre in the world', and he was proud to reply, 'I have'. The theatre, he said, had gained a reputation far beyond Leeds, far beyond Yorkshire, and it was spoken of even in America.

He closed by reiterating his desire to see to the comforts of his patrons, and by thanking the directors for 'meeting him in all business matters as business and as gentlemen'. He also thanked the theatre staff for being the best staff a manager ever had, and the Mayor 'who had done so much to help forward the success of the theatre'.

Wilson Barrett's fortnight closed on Saturday night with a repeat performance of 'East Lynne', and was followed by a touring version of H.J. Byron's 'The Girls' which was at that time still running in its original production at the Vaudeville Theatre in London.<sup>46</sup>

It dealt with what the Yorkshire Post reviewer considered a familiar theme: the attempt to show 'the advantages of a marriage for love against a marriage for money'.<sup>47</sup> The girls of the title were the daughters of Mr and Mrs Clench, by previous marriages. They had somewhat opposite characters, a fact which was reflected in their choice of husbands for their respective daughters. Mr Clench was 'very practical', and his daughter married a 'wealthy

but intensely vulgar city man (Plantagenet Potter) ... a sordid brute, capable of no fine feelings, and steeped to the eyes in self-conceit'. Mrs Clench, however, was a romantic, and her daughter married Tony Judson, a 'young, bashful, unsophisticated sculptor, who has real good in his heart, is as sensitive as a woman and is as poor as the proverbial churchmouse'.

The rich man bullied his wife and made her life wretched, eventually driving her away, while Tony Judson was very happy with his affectionate wife, which was demonstrated in 'some pretty passages ... over their baby in the perambulator'.

Judson executed a large commission, but was not paid for it, while Plantagenet Potter was reduced to the verge of starvation. By a device that the reviewer did not think too improbable he went to Judson disguised as a German model. 'He had been completely changed by the misery through which he had passed, and every deep line on his face betokened suffering. His one hope was to be reunited with his wife... He was deeply repentant and very humble.'

This change aroused the sympathy of his wife with whom he was then reconciled, and in the last act ('Set in accordance with ... Byron's usual practice ... in a poor apartment,... the chief characters of his play ... in the last stage of impecuniosity', said the reviewer) Judson's commission was finally paid, and by a 'still

more transparent stage device', the repentant Potter again found himself wealthy.<sup>48</sup>

Here we have familiar ingredients of Victorian plays: wealth v. poverty, the vulgar financier v. the romantic figure of the artist, brutal bombast v. earnestness and purity, the wealthy, aristocratic eccentric who eventually remembered to pay a generous commission — all of them welded (in this case by dubious plot mechanics) into a happy ending. It is significant, perhaps, that while dealing fairly contemptuously with the plot and the rather shadowy figures of the daughters, the reviewer had particular praise for the characterisation of Potter and Judson: however improbable he found the psychology of the mechanics of the plot, he found in these two roles something that was true, and important. In their opposition (though the reviewer may have been unconscious of this) he had found the representation of a dilemma of his age.

The following week (beginning 25 August) saw Charles Dillon perform in four plays by Shakespeare, and in a version of 'Belphegor'.<sup>49</sup> On Monday and Thursday he played in 'Othello', on Monday taking the part of Othello, but on Thursday playing Iago. On Tuesday he presented 'Belphegor'; on Wednesday, 'King Lear'; on Friday, 'The Merchant of Venice' with 'Don Caesar de Bazan' as an afterpiece; and on Saturday, 'Macbeth'.

Charles Dillon was a mature actor, and doubtless his performances would have been quite familiar to the public.

This could explain the rather cursory review that he received in the Yorkshire Post, which, however, took a friendly, proprietorial, almost historical interest in his career.<sup>50</sup>

He had, said the reviewer, 'been connected with the stage for over thirty years: he had done "yeoman service"'. He had long been associated with 'Othello' which he played with 'repose and dignity', though the reviewer thought that his usual 'power to portray grief and passion' was a little attenuated at this performance. 'Mr Dillon,' he said, 'is one of the last of the old school of tragedians, and even now, in spite of the defects for which Time alone must be held responsible, he remains the best representative of parts requiring dignity and pathos, such as King Lear and Coriolanus'. (In Monday's 'Othello' Bella Mortimer made a 'graceful' Desdemona, Mr G.F. Leicester played a 'natural and unstagy' Iago, and Dillon was frequently applauded and called before the curtain.)

On Tuesday Dillon was to play in 'Belphegor' which the reviewer thought would be 'of interest to old playgoers, for Dillon was to appear in the title role ... for the last time in Leeds, and this was a role in which he appeared twenty-seven years before in Thorne's old wooden theatre in King Charles's Croft, Leeds, when his success was so great that a run of some weeks was secured, and the building was nightly crowded to excess by eager and sympathetic audiences, moved to tears by the actor's pathos'.

Despite the nostalgia that the reviewer thought

'Belphegor' might generate, Dillon gave 'The Merchant of Venice' for his benefit performance.

J.K. Emmet, 'the world renowned Dutch character comedian' had been advertised to appear the following week in 'The New Fritz'. However, he was taken ill during an engagement at the Princess's Theatre, Edinburgh, and was unable to perform at Leeds. The Grand Theatre remained closed for this week.

The theatre reopened on Monday, 8 September for a week of opera given by the Blanche Cole Opera Company. This company was singular among the companies presenting opera in not raising the admission prices despite the fact that it advertised the largest band and chorus that had ever appeared in Leeds. On Monday it presented Gounod's 'Faust', on Tuesday 'The Lily of Kilarney', on Wednesday 'Le Nozze di Figaro', on Thursday 'Maritana', on Friday 'Crown Diamonds', and on Saturday 'La Sonnambula'.<sup>51</sup>

Blanche Cole's Opera Company was succeeded on 15 September by Mr and Mrs Kendal, Mr Hare, and the Royal Court Theatre Company in 'The Queen's Shilling' which, with 'A Quiet Rubber' as an afterpiece, was given all the week except Friday, when 'A Scrap of Paper' was presented.

'The Queen's Shilling' was an adaptation by G.W. Godfrey of 'Le Fils de Famille' and had been given matinee

performances at the Royal Court Theatre, London, toured through the provinces, and was to be presented at the St James's Theatre the following month when the Kendals took over the management of that theatre.

The plot was ingenious, if a little frivolous because of the character of its main protagonist, and it exemplified the kind of situation which, once set up, allowed star actors who habitually played against each other to generate an electricity and a tension between them that kept the audience fascinated regardless of improbabilities, or even rank silliness, in the plot.

Frank Maitland, 'a young gentleman of family',<sup>52</sup> enlisted in a reckless moment as a private in the Nineteenth Lancers. His regiment was quartered in the country, and there he met in an inn an old artist friend, Jack Gambler. The latter was a guest at the home of the Grevilles, and Maitland, desiring a taste of his former fashionable life, induced Gambler to get him an invitation for the evening.

At the inn Maitland also encountered Kate Greville who was dressed in the clothing of a maid servant since she had been caught in the rain. Not guessing her identity, Maitland engaged her in flirtatious banter, and became so engrossed that he disregarded the bugle-call for parade. He was promptly arrested for this neglect of duty.

However, he was not to be deprived of his visit to the Grevilles' mansion, and he escaped from the guard room. He borrowed a dress suit from Gambler, and made his way to

the house. Here he was introduced to Miss Greville with consequent awkwardness and embarrassment on both sides. His problems multiplied when the colonel of his regiment, Colonel Daunt, arrived. The Colonel, who did not recognise Maitland, admired Miss Greville, and Maitland, having gone this far, decided he might as well go the whole hog and 'cut the Colonel out'. He challenged Daunt to sing, thereby creating some amusement, and openly flirted with Kate Greville until he drove the Colonel into a violent passion and they duelled with swords in the picture gallery. Maitland's arm was wounded, but the Colonel received only a scratch on his wrist.

Back in the barracks the following morning, Maitland was brought before the Colonel to answer the charge of being absent from parade. He feigned drunkenness in the hope of avoiding recognition, but the Colonel saw through this device, and gripped his wounded arm. Maitland was only saved by the fact that his friends had in the meantime bought him out, and his discharge was dated prior to his escape from the guard room.

'Mrs Kendal, though the part did not bring out all her resources,' said the reviewer, 'played Kate Greville with a rare, womanly charm', and created 'the picture of a gentle and sympathetic woman ... by subtle touches and gentle gradations'. Mr Kendal 'made the most of splendid opportunities', singing 'The Queen's Shilling' with spirit,

while Mr Hare 'created a careful and skilful portrait of Colonel Daunt, making the audience forget the actor for the impersonation of the brave military man, short tempered but generous, and always a gentleman'. The rest of the parts were 'well filled by a well balanced company' among whom Mrs Gaston Murray gave a fine sketch of the Colonel's martinet sister, 'brought up amongst military men, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of discipline', and Mr Mackintosh 'showed that a "low-comedy" part might be ... thoroughly humorous, yet keep in tone with the rest of the picture'.<sup>53</sup>

Mr Wenman, who played a small part in 'The Queen's Shilling', also acted, with Mr Hare, in 'A Quiet Rubber' (by C. Coghlan, and first performed in 1876). The part of Lord Kilclare in this play was one of Mr Hare's 'celebrated characters', said the reviewer, in which his performance was 'firm in outline ... and finished with delicacy'.

On Friday Mr Kendal played Colonel Blake, and Mrs Kendal Susan Hartly in 'A Scrap of Paper' which had been adapted from Sardou's 'Les Pattes de Mouche' by J. Palgrave Simpson some years previously (it was first performed in 1861). There had been some small changes made, however, for the play's then recent production at the Royal Court Theatre.

The scrap of paper of the title was a letter written by a lady with a very jealous and suspicious husband to

Colonel Blake, and the play was constructed around attempts to retrieve it. The reviewer pointed out that Simpson somewhat weakened this motive by making the wife write the letter before her marriage, which robbed it of much of its compromising character.

Susan Hartly took up the wife's cause, and determined to get the letter back from Colonel Blake: thus 'a clever woman was matched against a clever man' (even though 'in matters of instinct and intrigue the woman is naturally the cleverer of the two'), said the reviewer. Eventually she made Blake set fire to the letter, but, when only half burnt, it escaped through the window and was pursued through various adventures until finally recovered. In the process Colonel Blake and Susan Hartly discovered a mutual affection.

'Sardou is a perfect master of construction,' said the reviewer, 'and as Mr Simpson ... has closely followed the original ... the result is a bright, amusing, and thoroughly ingenious piece'.

Again, the plot was not over heavy, and it was the characterisation of the two main protagonists and the evolution of their relationship that were the real interest of the performance, and in this the Kendals' acting was 'admirable ... their points ... always made effectively and without apparent effort'.

In his notice of 'A Scrap of Paper' the reviewer went on to make some further remarks about 'A Quiet Rubber' which help to identify the style and character of the acting of the company:

'A Quiet Rubber' was adapted from a French original ... and was one of those slight sketches which rely for success not so much upon plot or dialogue as upon the elaboration of one particular part and the introduction of special "business"... The way in which Mr Hare has contrived to fill out the sketch of the poor, proud old Irish nobleman, Lord Kilclare, till it has become a portrait finished with Meissonnier-like care, is really marvellous. Among other matters the falling asleep under the effects of chloroform, and the subsequent waking, with the convulsive turn of the body, will show to the experienced observer that Mr Hare must have had some experiences of the effects of anaesthetics.<sup>54</sup>

That is, the naturalistic convulsion was something of note, standing out from the general style of acting, and quite fascinating in itself.

'The Queen's Shilling' was followed for a week by a return visit of J.C. Scanlan's company in 'Les Cloches de Corneville'. The Yorkshire Post reviewer noted that the opera's popularity was still waxing rather than waning, and that there had been some cast changes since it had last been in Leeds: Pattie Laverne now played Serpolette, and was 'obtrusive and extravagant almost to the point of impertinence' though he thought that she would do better if she toned this down, as she sang well; Annie Poole played Germaine with 'freshness and ingenuousness'; John Howson, who had been the original Gaspard in the provinces, was back in the role, which he played with 'dramatic power and good taste' (the part had been played by a Mr Fernandez in Howson's absence, whom the reviewer thought inferior); George Barrett remained the Baillie.<sup>55</sup>

'Les Cloches de Corneville' was to return for a further

week, making its fourth in the year, after a week in which the D'Oyly Carte company performed 'HMS Pinafore'.<sup>56</sup>

The press advertisement for 'HMS Pinafore' claimed: 'Now being played at two theatres in London ... It caused such a furore in America that over one hundred companies have been playing it through the states' (though the reviewer seemed to think that it was playing at three London theatres<sup>57</sup>). This was the first visit by the 'HMS Pinafore' company to Leeds.

The return visit of 'Les Cloches de Corneville' was followed by Messrs Strathmore and Paget's company in 'Peril'. This play was an adaptation by Saville and Bolton Rowe of Sardou's 'Nos Intimes'. It had had a long run at the Bancrofts' theatre the previous year, and this was to be its 115th night in the provinces.

Saville and Bolton Rowe had transferred the locale of the play to an English country house, and made the characters English too. And this made the plot improbable, incongruous, and even repulsive to the reviewer:

The British public had seen as much of M. Sardou's unwholesome story as they desired, and the writers might well have sought some healthier subject for the display of their talents... It is repugnant to our notions to believe that a guest in an English house can so far forget his own honour, and so far break, even in thought, the sacred laws of hospitality as to entertain a guilty love for the wife of his host.<sup>58</sup>

'The idea was unpleasant enough in the original,' he said,

and remained so despite the 'skill and delicacy' with which the adaptors treated it.

Mr Paget played Dr Thornton; Mr Proctor, Sir Woodbine Grafton ('the old Anglo-Indian'); Mr Stuart, Crossley Beck; and G. Strathmore, Captain Bradford. Clearly the names of these 'unpleasant' characters grated harshly upon the reviewer's Yorkshire ear, and he went on: 'With a vicious and vulgar melodrama at one theatre [The New Babylon] at the Theatre Royal and a comedy carefully arranged — and, it must be admitted, very well written — from a questionable French original at the other, Leeds playgoers have no chance of obtaining healthy dramatic fare during the present week'.

The following week (beginning 20 October) presented the Leeds playgoers with a mixed programme. Preliminary advertising had suggested that the tenor Sims Reeves was to appear with Mr P. Wyatt's Opera Company, but in the event opera was only given on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights, and Sims Reeves was not well enough to appear on the Monday. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday nights Mr W. Calder, an American actor, appeared in one of the many play versions of 'Rip Van Winkle'.

As Sims Reeves was too ill to appear on the Monday night, J.W. Turner (who had recently been seen at the Grand Theatre as Blanche Cole's principal singer) took the major roles in 'The Jolly Young Waterman' by Charles Dibdin, and an

operetta, 'A Gay Cavalier' (composed by A.W. Nicholson, with a libretto by Ernest Cuthbert). The evening began with a short concert, and though the tower scene from 'Il Trovatore' had been advertised, the main feature of the concert according to the reviewer, turned out to be George Fox's singing of 'The Village Blacksmith'.<sup>59</sup>

On Tuesday William Calder made his debut in Leeds, and though 'handicapped by being sandwiched between entertainments of a totally different character', as the reviewer observed, he managed to make a favourable impression, having 'completely mastered the Anglo-Dutch dialect', and having also a 'full command of the necessary pathos and humour'. His acting was 'impressive, picturesque, and pathetic', and he 'made all his points very quietly' and 'never strained after effect'.<sup>60</sup>

On Wednesday Sims Reeves did appear, in 'The Beggar's Opera' which was preceded by 'A Gay Cavalier'. Reeves was in his fifty-ninth year, and the reviewer felt that he still sang with feeling, 'if with less power than formerly'. He received the 'warmest approbation from a house crowded from floor to ceiling'.<sup>61</sup>

On Friday Reeves sang in 'Guy Mannering', but did not meet with a very favourable reception: he was not in good voice, and Wyatt made an apology for him.

Sims Reeves was followed on 27 October by a return visit of J.L. Toole who was making what promised to be his last visit to Leeds for two years, for he was shortly to open

the Folly Theatre in London. On Monday he played in 'A Fool and His Money', with 'Birthplace of Podgers' (by J. Hollingshead, and first performed in 1858), and on Tuesday 'Artful Cards' was followed by 'Ici On Parle Français'.

On Friday, for his benefit performance, he played Caleb Plummer in Boucicault's 'Dot' (which had first been performed in 1859), with 'The Steeple Chase; or, Toole in the Pigskin' (possibly by J.M. Morton, and first performed in 1865), and 'The Weavers'. Saturday night's performance was the same, except that 'Birthplace of Podgers' replaced 'The Weavers'.

Toole was followed by F. Maccabe and his company<sup>62</sup> in Boucicault's 'Arrah-na-pogue' (which had first been performed in 1864). Maccabe had been an entertainer rather than an actor, but, having successfully introduced an Irish impersonation into his act, he had branched out into the theatre. The Yorkshire Post reviewer did not think that this transfer was altogether successful; Maccabe failed to make Shaun the Post anything but a comic stage Irishman, he thought, and he lacked Boucicault's 'suppressed passion' when singing 'The Wearing of the Green'.<sup>63</sup>

Lester Sutcliffe, who had painted new scenery for the play 'warranted hearty commendation': the piece had been mounted as well as could have been desired for a long

London run - the 'Ivy Tower' set, and the sensation scene being singled out for praise.

'Arrah-na-pogue' ran for two weeks, and Maccabe took his benefit on the second Friday, when the play was preceded by 'The Fairy Circle' (possibly by H.P. Grattan, and first performed in 1857), in which he played Con O'Carolan.

Maccabe's 'Arrah-na-pogue' was succeeded by a new play to Leeds, 'Drink' which was an adaptation by Charles Reade of Zola's 'L'Assomoir'. It was first performed in 1879, and at the time of this visit to the Grand Theatre it had had 116 performances at the Princess's Theatre in London. Harry Jackson who first produced it there directed this touring company.<sup>64</sup>

The play was advertised as 'The celebrated Moral Play', and dealt with the progressive decline and eventual death of a drunkard, Coupeau. That his addiction was acquired accidentally, and that Coupeau should come to an unhappy end were not lost on the Yorkshire Post reviewer, who clearly felt that the play needed some justification on moral grounds.<sup>65</sup> The play 'taught the lesson of temperance', and, he thought, owed some of its success to the fact that temperance reform was a fashionable movement at that time. Zola's novel, however, was 'vivid but often repulsive', and in noticing that many other drunkards in

the play suffer no just end, the reviewer showed himself sensitive to the fact that moral teaching was not all that made the play interesting to its audience.

Coupeau was a Parisian plumber, and 'a woman's jealousy and hatred' of him led to a conspiracy in which boards of a high scaffolding that Coupeau was working on were left loose. He fell to the ground, was knocked unconscious, and was permanently crippled.

Coupeau was taken to hospital where his slow recovery was aided by freely administered brandy. He became addicted to it, and it 'ruined him, body and soul', causing him ultimately to die a horrible death in a fit of delirium.

Another character in the play, Gouget, formed a contrast to Coupeau: he was 'a frightfully good teetotaller', and frequently delivered temperance homilies which were loudly applauded by the audience. The reviewer's final summation was that 'Drink' was 'a series of tableaux descriptive of working life in Paris, illustrated with striking scenery... The fight in the wash-house, the wedding party in the Parisian public garden, the fall from the scaffold, the dram shop, the horrible death from delirium tremens, the Paris street where Gervaise is starving in the snow ... [were] perfectly safe effects for securing applause and ... remarkably well put on'.

Clearly, the play contained many of the ingredients that we are becoming familiar with, not simply at the mechanical level (where it might seem that starvation in the snow is obligatory), but in a somewhat morbid fascination with

X degradation and squalor leavened with irrepressible sentimentality, a dramatic consummation created through (albeit distorted) naturalism, and the setting of the action of the piece in a milieu ('working life') only a few steps removed from the audience's experience, we have elements that we have met in other plays, and shall meet again.

'Drink' opened on 17 November, and ran for a fortnight. It was reviewed on the Wednesday of its first week rather than the Tuesday (as was the usual practice) so that some account of speeches made to mark the theatre's anniversary could be included. In fact mention was restricted to three presentations: the stage staff presented Henry Hastings, the stage manager, with a dressing case; the orchestra gave D. Cribbin, the musical director, a 'handsomely mounted baton'; and the front of house staff presented Lee Anderson, the acting manager, with a watch. 'The speeches showed the thorough good feeling which prevails between the various employees and heads of department,' said the reviewer.

'Drink' was followed by another play of conscious morality, Wilkie Collins's 'The New Magdalen' (first performed in 1873). It was given by 'Davenport's company', but seemed to merit no mention in the press, perhaps because of its age and consequent familiarity to the public. The advertising for the play carried the information: 'The

stage sermon of this play can be had at the theatre'.

'The New Magdalen' ran for a week, and was followed by a return visit of W. Duck's company in 'Our Boys'. There had been some cast changes since the company's previous visit to Leeds, in April of the same year. Principally, E.W. Garden who played Talbot Champneys had gone to join J.L. Toole at the Folly Theatre where he was taking Toole's parts during the latter's illness.<sup>66</sup>

'Our Boys' was performed for nine nights, and on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of its second week the company gave 'Uncle', also written by H.J. Byron, and first performed in 1878. This was the last play of the 1879 season, and it was followed on the Wednesday of the next week by the pantomime.

The pantomime, 'Whittington and His Cat', was Wilson Barrett's second at the Grand Theatre, and, he claimed, it had been ten months in preparation.<sup>67</sup> The author, who was anonymous, had previously written two other pantomimes for Leeds theatres - 'Bo Peep', and 'The Babes in the Wood' - and though the reviewer thought that 'specialities from various sources of general amusement [were] dovetailed into it or hung about the original text often to such an extent that [it] became a weak attenuated straw' as a general rule in pantomimes, in this case the author had written 'a good, clear book (which the managers had embellished with illustrations of the highest order), and

the story was never lost sight of'.<sup>68</sup> There was a 'smartness and point about some of the couplets, and though the pantomime could not yet safely dare to be aesthetically delicate the author had not descended into grossness or vulgarity'.

Scenic spectacle was, however, the element of the pantomime that most exercised the reviewer, and he quickly got down to a description of the scenes. He glossed over the prologue, and said only of the second scene that 'The Kitchen Scene, with its uproarious, boisterous fun, at once put the audience in a good humour' before going on:

The third scene, 'Highgate Hill', is the first which strongly appeals to the sympathies of the audience. It is a pretty, far stretching flat landscape, running away over pool and field to where, in the distance, rises the dome of St Paul's.

The fourth scene, 'London Docks in Olden Times', makes a very effective stage setting. Before the large ship took up its place at the side, we felt that the scene was artistically, as a matter of composition, incomplete, but when the full-rigged vessel broke up the centre water scene, and with shipping on each side and the Tower of London in the distance, the whole stood out with very strong effect, heightened the moment the boat, crowded with singing voyagers, took a turn for departure. The ballet introduced here in a semi-marine costume was most felicitous, and well carried out.

The sixth scene, 'The Storm and the Wreck', in spite of the announcement in the programme, came upon us with surprise. It is so full of vigour and motion — the sea lashing against a spurning rock as the ship, with wonderful fidelity to marine motion, rocks to and fro and gradually sinks amid increasing thunder and lightning... This scene is followed by one of those delicate, airy scenes in which, though delicate and airy in form, the very foliage and rocks partake of the richness of tone of the sky and sea.

From the Courtyard of the Palace – in itself a gorgeous work on the flat – we are taken to the palace itself, where, the Oriental richness ... of idea attains the highest point. It is a large reception room, with column and arch receding until broad steps lead up to an eminence, where a fountain plays, the water dancing under variegated lights, looking like air made visible, and murmuring away. But it was even then only partly complete. It awaited the elaborate suite of the Emperor. The first instalment was in the form of blacks blacker than black, dressed in costumes as white as white could be; and the sudden intrusion of these two extremes into the Oriental scene of colour had a most striking effect. The palace, however, was gradually given its native glow again, as numerous attendants, arrayed in various costumes of great diversity and richness, took up their places... This numerous company ... marched to a catching chorus, with the glitter and glare of costume and scene, intensified by powerful limelights.

[There followed] another change from grandeur to prettiness in 'Fitzwarren's Back Garden', [which in turn was succeeded by] a retrospective peep into early England – 'Old Cheapside on Lord Mayor's Day (1398)', more practically showing than any plate could that the people of 1398 knew how to make up street pictures. The broken and irregular streets, which lent effects quite their own, may have been accident, but the broken up roofs and windows, with their quaint eaves and bows, were design. There is a touch about this pretty scene ... [which] proves that the past relives in the present when we do but allow it to breath... [Here] the Lord Mayor's procession is introduced, including representatives of various nationalities, the applause greeting each representative indicating the varied feeling in the house.

In this scenario we can see very clearly the conscious way in which the scene and the actor were treated as parts of an evolving pictorial whole. Tonal balance and harmony in the colouring of the scene, and aesthetic proportion and composition were adhered to, and there was also an evident care taken in the way the picture changed as characters and objects were added and taken away.

We notice, too, that the reviewer was quite conscious of the degree of the audience's emotional participation

in what the scenes represented. The sense of 'the past reliving in the present' in the scene of Old Cheapside was not simply an adventitious indulgence in nostalgia. The audience was given a carefully created opportunity to peer into the past: clearly nostalgia cannot be avoided when looking into the past (nor would there have been any attempt to avoid it), but the scene also functioned as a means of historical self-examination. This kind of scene satisfied a curiosity, surely, and did not only provide a cue to sentimental feelings. It is also interesting to see how in the Lord Mayor's procession the audience were given an opportunity (or, at least, took it) to give public expression to their varied feelings about different nationals. The possible xenophobia or racism does not concern us here, so much as the fact that this scene was the cue that brought forth peoples' feelings. These two instances give some indication of the audience's participation in a quite real and personal sense in the subject represented on the stage.

To keep our perspective, however, we should also notice the heady excitement of the storm and shipwreck, clearly designed to thrill the emotions, and the violent humour of the slapstick scene in the kitchen.

'Whittington and His Cat' opened on 24 December 1879, and ran until 28 February 1880.

Notes

- 1 It took place on 24 January 1879.
- 2 The third shop, that is, from the theatre entrance.
- 3 In fact a list was prepared for a board meeting held on 30 May 1879 which seems to indicate that even then only £4,700 worth of debentures had been taken.
- 4 On 19 May 1879.
- 5 On 3 June 1879.
- 6 Letter dated 17 July 1879.
- 7 Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1879, p. 5.
- 8 Letter dated 24 December 1879.
- 9 Yorkshire Post, 25 February 1879, p. 4.
- 10 Yorkshire Post, 10 March 1879, p. 1.
- 11 Yorkshire Post, 14 March 1879, p. 3.
- 12 'Queen's Evidence' was first performed in 1876. In this revival Harry Jackson played Isaacs, the Jew, and Miss Marston Leigh and Emmeline Ormsby probably played the mother and child respectively.
- 13 Yorkshire Post, 21 March 1879, p. 3.
- 14 Yorkshire Post, 1 April 1879, p. 4.
- 15 The company included Reginald Moore, Walter Speakman, Mrs Hudson Kirby, Elise Maisey, Mr J.S. Haydon, Mr Peach, Georgy White, and Florence Clarke.
- 16 Yorkshire Post, 15 April 1879, p. 5.
- 17 E.S. Willard and Emily Walters had come into the company to play Charles Middlewick and Mary Melrose in place of Mr Boleyn and Fanny Brough. The company further included Mr J.F. Young, and Mr E.W. Garden.

- 18 The company included David Fisher, Mrs Howard Paul, Edith Stuart, Maude Taylor, Joseph Carne, Mr R.S. Boleyn, and Miss Brough.
- 19 Yorkshire Post, 6 May 1879, p. 4.
- 20 Yorkshire Post, 6 May 1879, p. 4.
- 21 Yorkshire Post, 13 May 1879, p. 5.
- 22 Yorkshire Post, 17 May 1879, p. 4.
- 23 The company included Wyke Moore (who directed it), Fred Gould, Mr T. Biton, and Miss Dalby.
- 24 Yorkshire Post, 20 May 1879, p. 4.
- 25 On this return visit the company included Miss Carlisle, Mr J.D. Beveridge, Mr G.H. Leonard, Albert Bernard, and Elinor Aickin. These last three were new to the company.
- 26 Yorkshire Post, 27 May 1879, p. 4.
- 27 Yorkshire Post, 3 June 1879, p. 4.
- 28 Yorkshire Post, 3 June 1879, p. 4.
- 29 Yorkshire Post, 3 June 1879, p. 4.
- 30 John Coleman's company included Mr Aveling, Mr E.S. Gofton, Katie Adams, Maria Jones, and Marguerite Benison.
- 31 Yorkshire Post, 14 June 1879, p. 4.
- 32 The company included Rose Stella, Signor Leli, Edward Farley, Mr E. Marshall, Mr J.B. Rae, Mr Nordblum, and Lottie Graham.
- 33 Yorkshire Post, 19 June 1879, p. 4.
- 34 Yorkshire Post, 24 June 1879, p. 4.
- 35 Yorkshire Post, 1 July 1879, p. 4.
- 36 Yorkshire Post, 9 July 1879, p. 4.
- 37 Yorkshire Post, 11 July 1879, p. 4.

- 38 Yorkshire Post, 24 July 1879, p. 5.
- 39 Yorkshire Post, 24 July 1879, p. 5.
- 40 Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1879, p. 4.
- 41 Yorkshire Post, 7 August 1879, p. 4.
- 42 Yorkshire Post, 12 August 1879, p. 4.
- 43 The company further included Denis Coyne, Cissy Graham, Lilian Lancaster, Henry C. Arnold, Miss Emery, Mr E. Butler, Mr Clitherowe, Mr Peach, Mr Grainger, and Mr Hastings.
- 44 Yorkshire Post, 14 August 1879, p. 4.
- 45 Yorkshire Post, 16 August 1879, p. 4.
- 46 This touring company was managed by Messrs James and Thorne, and included Mr J.C. Cowper, Mr H.M. Pitt, Mr J.A. Howell, Caroline Elton, Clara Cowper, and Kate Aubrey.
- 47 Yorkshire Post, 19 August 1879, p. 5.
- 48 Yorkshire Post, 19 August 1879, p. 5.
- 49 His company included Bella Mortimer, and Mr G.F. Leicester.
- 50 Yorkshire Post, 26 August 1879, p. 5.
- 51 The company included Mr J.W. Turner, Mr Traverna, Mr J. Lynde, Mr J. Tempest, Mr T. Goodwin, Mr Ludwig, Lucy Franklein, Lucy Millais, Mrs Tempest, Madame Cave Ashton, Christine Corandi, Mr F.H. Celli, Marie Temple, Mr W. Hillier, and Mr Muller. The conductor was Frederick Archer, the principal dancers the Elliott sisters, and the stage manager T.H. Friend.
- 52 Yorkshire Post, 16 September 1879, p. 4.

- 53 The company further included Kate Phillips, and Mr W. Terris.
- 54 Yorkshire Post, 20 September 1879, p. 8.
- 55 Yorkshire Post, 23 September 1879, p. 5.
- 56 The company included Ellinor Loveday, Henry Walsham, Mr Penley, Mr J.H. Rogers, Alice Barnett, Clive Hersee, and Miss Cummins.
- 57 Yorkshire Post, 30 September 1879, p. 4.
- 58 Yorkshire Post, 16 October 1879, p. 4.
- 59 Yorkshire Post, 21 October 1879, p. 5.
- 60 Yorkshire Post, 22 October 1879, p. 4.
- 61 Yorkshire Post, 23 October 1879, p. 4.
- The company included Emma Howson, Lucy Franklein, Miss Villiers, Mrs Longmore, Mrs Aynsley Cooke, George Fox, Edwin Keene, and E.M. Hobson. Choral parts were sung by the Leeds Harmonic Union 'assisted by other well known vocalists of the town'. The conductor was Sidney Naylor.
- 62 The company included Mary Griffiths, and H.S. Haynes.
- 63 Yorkshire Post, 6 November 1879, p. 4.
- 64 The company included James Buchanan, Arthur Estcourt, Arthur Lyle, Maud Milton, Ada Neilson, and Rose Behrend.
- 65 Yorkshire Post, 19 November 1879, p. 4.
- 66 The company further included F. Hugh Herbert, Mr T.A. Palmer, Mr E.S. Willard, Emily Waters, Mr J.F. Young, Laura Lindon, Mrs E.B. Egan, and Miss Vernon.

67 The company included Maud Beverly, Millie Vere, Celia Dwight, Gale St John, George Barrett, Alfred Hemmings, Mr G. Walton, John Walton, William Walton, George Andrews, Reita Walton, Mdlle Carina, and Messrs Canfield and Booker. The performance was concluded with a Harlequinade given by the Walton family with George Andrews. Henry Hastings was stage manager; Mr Pearce the property master; Mrs Varley wardrobe mistress; and Nelly Vincent arranged the ballets.

68 Yorkshire Post, 26 December 1879, p. 4.

CHAPTER IV:1880

On 15 January 1880 the secretary of the Grand Theatre company wrote to Wilson Barrett asking him to arrange a date on which he could accompany the directors on an inspection of the theatre and the theatre company's property. This was preparatory to the annual general meeting of the company, and was probably only a formality, for, with the exception of some alterations to the Assembly Rooms, the company's business had now settled down to a routine. Clearly, now that building had finished, there was little for the company to do but to collect its rents.

In fact, only three shareholders other than the directors attended the annual general meeting. Sir Andrew Fairbairn was present, but Kitson, the deputy chairman, was not. The company secretary wrote to Kitson on 20 February 1880 to acquaint him with what had happened at the AGM, and he said: 'The meeting passed very quietly and formally which shows some confidence'. The only item of real information that he thought worthy of passing on was that the company had a credit of £1,300 at the bank.

For the Grand Theatre company the year was to pass quietly: in March the secretary wrote only two letters on behalf of the board; one to Messrs Charles Smith & Sons, Temple Street, Birmingham, thanking them for a present of two bronze handles for the theatre entrance; and one

to J.J. Boswell, who had become the tenant of shop number one (the shop that connected with the theatre cellars). Boswell had asked for a rebate of two pounds from his rent as he could not use part of the cellar until 6 December 1880. The company offered him half that amount, to be deducted from his next quarter's rent.

The most important matter with which the company had to deal in 1880 was an alteration to the Assembly Rooms. It had been admitted in November 1879 that the staircase and entrance to the Assembly Rooms were not satisfactory, and when Wilson Barrett sent his rent for the second quarter of 1880 (on 12 April) he accompanied it with a letter that clearly stimulated some action. The pattern of events can be deduced from the company secretary's letters to Wilson Barrett on 14 April, 29 April, 10 June, and 16 June. Wilson Barrett must have written on 12 April asking to be allowed to give up his lease of the Assembly Rooms. He must also have inquired about the alterations, and suggested that the foyer of the theatre needed better furnishing. On 14 April the secretary merely acknowledged the receipt of Wilson Barrett's letter, but on 29 April he wrote to say that: 'The board have under consideration a scheme for improving the entrance and staircase of the Assembly Rooms] ... They have entered into a contract for the relaying of the floor, and they also requested me to ask you your permission as lessee for them to carry out the works which would occupy probably two months,

also to ask when would be a convenient time to you to have this done'. The letter also invited Wilson Barrett to inspect the plans if he was in Leeds before 11 May, and told him that the board was not prepared to spend any money on the foyer at that time. There appears to be no mention of what might seem the most important item in Wilson Barrett's letter - the termination of his lease. Indeed, he had to wait until 16 June before the secretary formally wrote to him of the board's decision, although it was probably made on 27 April.

It seems safe to speculate that the management of the Assembly Rooms was an unprofitable nuisance to Wilson Barrett (although in later years he was to use it for pantomime rehearsals). The board's attitude over the question must be reasonably clear when we remember that its sole income was in rent - and it was having to accept rather less rent than had been estimated - so that when the board refused to allow him to give up the lease, the directors must have borne in mind the fact that there had been no spate of applications for a permanent tenancy when they had advertised the Assembly Rooms in 1879, and that if they allowed Wilson Barrett to give up his lease there was a danger that they might have to do without rent from the Assembly Rooms for some time.

That the directors were conscious of the precariousness of their income is shown in a letter that they wrote to Messrs John Routh, Kirk, & Co., their auditors. Routh, Kirk, & Co. had sent a bill for £4 4s., but the secretary

was told to write to ask them to accept £3 3s., 'having regard to the state of the income account'.

On 10 June the secretary again wrote to Wilson Barrett reminding him that he had not indicated when the alterations could be done, and sending him a copy of a resolution of the board which said that it had approved plans for the alterations, and that it would only charge Wilson Barrett half the usual rent of the Assembly Rooms during the two months that the work was expected to take.

Wilson Barrett replied: 'As to the alterations I believe they can be commenced at any time most convenient to the board and the contractor' in a letter which must have raised the question of his lease again, for on 16 June the secretary wrote to him to say, in an unusually formal note:

Your letter to me of 12 April last was considered by my board at the meeting on 27 April and a reply was sent to you on 29 April. The board did not entertain your request to be relieved from your lease of the Assembly Rooms.

I assume from your silence that you accept the offer of the board to bear half the loss of rent during the alteration in the staircase.

It is interesting that Wilson Barrett had not replied either to the offer of a halving of the rent, or to a request for a date when the work could begin, for he had not previously shown himself to be so uninterested or lackadaisical in business negotiations. Now it was up to Lee Anderson, his acting manager, to arrange specific dates for the work, but this lack of response may also

have been due to the fact that Wilson Barrett was more preoccupied with the idea of giving up the management of the Assembly Rooms altogether, than with making arrangements for their future.

Lee Anderson did, in fact, write to the secretary on 14 June to say that the alterations could begin a week later, so clearly he was au fait with the matter. The board, too, must have known that Lee Anderson was the man to make arrangements with, for they dealt with him in April over the erection of an advertising hoarding. Lee Anderson wrote on 19 April that it was desirable to have an 'advertising station' near the theatre, and he had discussed the matter with Watson at the board's suggestion. (By a resolution of the board dated 27 April, Watson was to have the general supervision of the theatre and its contents on the board's behalf.) They agreed on a site on the theatre building itself, and the board formally approved the erection of the hoarding, though including in the resolution the proviso that it was all to be paid for by Wilson Barrett.

From the tone and content of their letters, and from their insistence on writing to Wilson Barrett rather than Lee Anderson, I think the directors showed themselves to be conscious of being involved in a struggle to keep Wilson Barrett in his lesseeship of the Assembly Rooms, and thereby safeguard their rent. The assumption that Wilson Barrett's 'smallest rent that they would accept' was the best they could hope for at that time clearly

underlies their decision. It is also obvious that Wilson Barrett did not think the lease of the Assembly Rooms worth keeping.

Though Lee Anderson had said that work could begin on 21 June, the alterations were not started until 9 July, and they were not finished until 9 October.<sup>1</sup> The secretary sent Wilson Barrett a note indicating when the reduction in rent would begin, and another note dated 27 July reminding him that a total of seven hundred pounds rent had become due at the beginning of that month.

While Wilson Barrett was in Leeds in the summer of 1880 he proposed to Frederick Barr that the one hundred pounds that the company was obliged to spend on new stock scenery be spent instead on the furnishing of the theatre foyer. (This he had first brought up in April.) In early August a tender of eighty-three pounds for this work had been received from a firm called Pearsons, and the board formally approved the arrangement.

In October Barr wrote on behalf of the board to Lee Anderson asking him to get Wilson Barrett to sign application forms for the theatre's licence as a matter of urgency. Clearly when expediency rather than principle was involved the board was prepared to deal with Lee Anderson. In fact we shall become aware that Lee Anderson was taking increasing responsibility for the day to day running of the theatre, due no doubt to Wilson Barrett's preoccupation with the running of the Royal Court Theatre in London,

which he had taken the lease of in September 1879. When the secretary wrote in October to say that the alterations to the Assembly Rooms were completed, he addressed his letter to 'W.H. Barrett or Mr Anderson'.

Though Lee Anderson was to take increasing responsibility for the day to day management of the theatre, it was still Wilson Barrett's obligation to pay the theatre's rent. As we have seen, his payments in 1879 were regularly made in arrears, and the secretary sent a reminder for the last quarter's rent (of 1880), which was due at the beginning of October, on the twenty-seventh of that month. He acknowledged receipt of Wilson Barrett's cheque on 3 November — one month over-due.

Wilson Barrett took over the lease of the Royal Court Theatre in London in September 1879. Consequently the centre of his operations had moved away from Leeds for the 1880 seasons, and this influenced the make up of the year's programme both in the fact that he himself only performed at the Grand Theatre for one week in 1880, when he had performed in four and one half weeks of productions in 1879, and more subtly in the fact that many of the plays that were performed at the Grand Theatre in 1880 had been produced at the Royal Court Theatre first. Thus though Wilson Barrett's removal to London might seem likely to have reduced his influence on the Grand Theatre's programme, in fact more of the productions that were seen there had been specifically chosen for presentation by Wilson Barrett.

The process by which Wilson Barrett chose and produced plays at the Royal Court Theatre and then transferred them to the provinces is illustrated by the production with which he followed the 1879/80 pantomime at the Grand Theatre.

The play was an adaptation of Bronson Howard's 'The Banker's Daughter'. Bronson Howard was an American, and the play was first produced in America where it was very successful. Wilson Barrett introduced it at the Royal Court Theatre under the title 'The Old Love and the New', when it had been 'Anglicised and touched up generally' by James Albery.<sup>2</sup> It was 'maintaining the fortunes of the Court Theatre' in March when Wilson Barrett formed a touring cast from his company and presented it for the first time in the provinces at the Grand Theatre on 1 March 1880. Lester Sutcliffe had painted new scenery for this production at Leeds. The play ran for a fortnight, and returned for two further weeks in the summer and autumn of 1880. 'For Life', an adaptation of an Italian original by Charles F. Coghlan, and H.J. Byron's 'Courtship' were similarly toured to the Grand Theatre by a derivative company after an initial performance at the Royal Court Theatre, while 'The Galley Slave', by another American, Bartley Campbell, was brought to the Grand Theatre by Wilson Barrett's Hull company in December. 'Adrienne Lecouvreur', and an adaptation of 'La Dame aux Camélias' under the title 'Heartsease' were brought to

the Grand Theatre along with a production of 'Romeo and Juliet', from the Royal Court Theatre by Wilson Barrett himself, for he was supporting Helena Modjeska in these plays. (He introduced Helena Modjeska to the English stage at the Royal Court Theatre in 1880, and in his supporting of an established actress we may see a parallel to his earlier successes at the Amphitheatre, Leeds, when he adopted similarly subordinate roles to Caroline Heath in such plays as 'Jane Shore' and 'East Lynne'.)

The spring season, then, began on 1 March 1880 with a production of 'The Old Love and the New' performed by a cast drawn from Wilson Barrett's company.<sup>3</sup> Though the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that it was 'a "society play"' with a 'romantic' story, its theme — 'the conflict between love and duty, and the sacrifice made by a daughter to save her father's credit and honour' — was worked out in solidly melodramatic terms. We shall see that Wilson Barrett brought a number of American plays to the English stage, and that generally they had a tendency to the heavier kinds of melodrama. Usually they were adapted — 'Anglicised', as the reviewer put it — and it is notable that one American play, 'The Galley Slave', which was performed unaltered, drew severe criticism from the reviewer. This, taken with the fact that Wilson Barrett made several tours to America in later years, helps to characterise Wilson Barrett's middle-of-the-road

melodramatic taste, and I think it will be helpful to deal with these plays at greater length.

In 'The Old Love and the New' the central characters were John Stratton, 'a wealthy banker, and an upright and honourable gentleman', and Lilian Westbrook, the daughter of a 'well-meaning, but weak-minded merchant' who was on the verge of ruin. Stratton was deeply in love with Lilian, but she loved Harold Kenyon, a rather sketchy, but nonetheless heroic character. Stratton made Westbrook a loan, and Westbrook, 'naturally anxious to have Stratton for a son-in-law ... tells his daughter that Stratton has placed the sum of forty thousand pounds to his credit, and the price is to be her hand'. Lilian and Kenyon had just been reconciled after a lovers' quarrel, and now 'the poor girl is put to a fearful ordeal ... She has to choose between the lover who is waiting in another room eager to clasp her to sic his arms, and the wealthy man who saved her father'. After a moment's soul-searching she sent a message to her lover that she could not see him, and agreed to marry John Stratton.

In the next act, set in Paris, Lilian and Stratton had been married for four years, and had a child. Harold Kenyon turned up after a desperate campaign in India where he had won the Victoria Cross. But 'a cool, cunning libertine,... the Comte de Carojac', had designs upon Lilian, and the action of the villain brought about the

'tragic crisis' of the play. 'In a pathetic scene ... Kenyon learns ... that [Lilian] sold herself to save her father's credit. In the excitement of the moment he forgets himself so far as to repeat some words of passionate love, and these are overheard by the wily French Count. The Count sees the situation now at a glance - sees the cause of her sadness, of the love which was ruthlessly crushed. "I thought it could not be for the husband," says the Count, with the brutal philosophy of the Frenchman.'

The Count was an accomplished duellist and provoked Kenyon to a duel on a terrace of the Count's chateau. (The setting was of particular relevance: 'The house has been battered and knocked almost to pieces by the German shells, and it presents a wonderfully picturesque appearance in the snow by moonlight,' said the reviewer, 'Mr Sutcliffe ... well merited the call which he received'.)

Here, then, in a scene full of the most intense emotion, and swift and vivid in its dramatic action, Harold Kenyon and the French Count fight with swords... It may be said that no duel scene - not even the celebrated scene in 'The Corsican Brothers' - was ever more striking in its conception and execution. Harold Kenyon, the lover whose hard fate has roused the fullest sympathy of the audience, receives his death wound; and this leads to a very strong situation. John Stratton and Lilian appear upon the scene, and Lilian, as soon as she sees her old lover wounded, gives a shriek and falls upon his prostrate body. The husband demands to know the cause of the quarrel; for answer the Comte de Carojac points to the wife, whose anguish on seeing her lover wounded is intense. "I did it to protect your wife's honour" says the Count, in effect. "It's a lie!" responds the husband; "my wife's honour needs no defender". The act drop falls on what is altogether one of the most dramatic and picturesque situations to be found in any modern play.

Lilian had made her father promise to tell Stratton at the time of the marriage that she could not love him, 'and that her heart was given to another', but Westbrook had not done so. Now Stratton discovered that his wife was 'sold' to him, and that he was her 'owner'. He 'feels this blow terribly, and he agrees that it is best that they should part. The parting is wonderfully pathetic'. But in the last act the two were brought together 'through the artless and innocent agency of their own child'.

The mechanics of this reconciliation, the reviewer thought, creaked a little, and one can speculate that this was because the emotional tension of an act devoted to reconciliation was less strong than that of the previous acts, and insufficient to mask improbabilities. 'The device of a child, by its very artlessness and simplicity, reconciling its parents after a quarrel ... is very old on the French stage,' said the reviewer, 'but all the rest is pure human nature'.

It is interesting to note that though the reviewer wished to apply the terms 'social', and 'human nature' to the play - in short to ascribe to it domesticity and 'reality' - the motives of the characters are high flown and impassioned, and the climax of the story was a 'vividly dramatic' duel scene in which the heroine 'shrieks and falls upon the prostrate body of her lover'. The scene led naturally to a tableau upon which the act drop might fall. And surely these are traits of the melodrama,

which 'realism' was trying to escape? Surely, too, the villainous character of the Count was wholly melodramatic?

'The Old Love and the New' ran for a fortnight on this, its first appearance at the Grand Theatre, and on Friday of the second week Lee Anderson took his benefit under the patronage of the ex-mayor, Alderman Addyman, and Major Kaye and the officers of the Twenty-first Hussars. For this the Leeds Harmonic Union, the Leeds Vocal Quartette, and the Amateurs of the Brunswick Society performed after the play, and a special late train to Wakefield was arranged.

The following week (beginning 15 March 1880) also had a trans-Atlantic flavour, for, 'those Celebrated American Artistes, Mr and Mrs Knight' were advertised to appear in 'their comedy drama, 'Otto, a German' (written by F. Marsden and first performed in 1879), into which they introduced their 'various specialities, as performed by them through the United States'. The introduction of specialities might suggest that the drama did not maintain much integrity, and perhaps this explains why it received no notice in the press. (However, two pieces which were new, and would therefore normally have warranted a notice however mediocre, were played at the Theatre Royal, Leeds, that week ('Not Proven' by Henry Petitt, and 'Brum', an 'extravaganza' by Frank Desprez), but these received no mention either. Perhaps the reporting of the General Election put so much pressure on space that theatrical

notices had to be omitted, and we should not necessarily, therefore, take this omission as a silent critical comment.)

The Knights were followed by comic opera: Offenbach's 'Madame Favart' which at that time was playing at the Strand Theatre in London. Mdlle D'Anka took the title role in the company which toured to Leeds.<sup>4</sup> It was then the most recent of Offenbach's works to be performed in England, 'La Fille du Tambour Major' having yet to cross the Channel. In 'Madame Favart' the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that Offenbach 'repeated himself out of other works' and that the music was 'not particularly striking'.<sup>5</sup> The plot was one of intrigue, and because in its theme and treatment it helps establish a subject of enduring self-conscious fascination for late Victorian dramatists and composers, I will give the reviewer's brief resumé here:

The story deals with the persecution of Madame Favart, the celebrated actress, by an old roué of a Marquis, she having already suffered imprisonment by order of Marshal Saxe. By her cleverness in disguise and her fertility of resource, in which she is seconded by her husband, the manager of a troupe of comedians, Madame Favart not only escapes from the traps laid for her, but in the end contrives to completely turn the tables on the ridiculous old fop.

In the event, Mdlle D'Anka was unable to appear, and Adelaide Newton took the title role, while Beerbohm Tree 'presented a most elaborate portrait of the amorous and servile Marquis'.

'Madame Favart' ran for a fortnight, and was followed on 5 April 1880 by Alfred Hemmings and the Walton family (who had recently appeared at the Grand Theatre in the pantomime) in 'Crutch and Toothpick' by G.R. Sims (it was first performed at the Royalty Theatre in London in 1879), and a 'new screaming burlesque', 'Cruel Carmen; or, the Demented Dragoon and the Terrible Torreador' by J.W. Jones.<sup>6</sup>

'Crutch and Toothpick' was a further variation on the theme of the conflict between men of business, and the aristocratic 'butterflies of fashion':

A "swell", Mr Guy Devereux, has married the daughter of a worthy, hard-working city magnate, Alderman Jones; and another exquisite, named Cecil Leighton, is a candidate for the hand of the Alderman's second daughter. The man of business is forever reading these fashionable young gentlemen lessons as to the necessity for "Business", and the folly and wickedness of an idle life. Differences arise on this subject, and events threaten to part Guy and his young wife and wreck the happiness of the two lives. Stung by the Alderman's taunts, Guy Devereux goes in for "business" with a vengeance. He becomes a commission agent for everything under the sun. He appears in a suit of the "loudest" pattern; he worries the Alderman's friends by touting for orders; he invades the drawing room laden with samples of every description. The situation is broadly farcical, and though it is difficult entirely to fathom the young gentleman's motive for acting in such a manner, the laughter is long and loud at the absurdity of the situation. In the end the Alderman recognises that it is useless to endeavour to make birth and breeding assimilate with business, and he gives way; all differences are adjusted, and after a couple of hours' mirth this merry farce ends.<sup>7</sup>

'Cruel Carmen' was an afterpiece which the reviewer thought formed 'a suitable vehicle for the splendid singing of Alice Cook ... and for the talented Walton family to introduce their grotesque humour and clever dancing'.

'Crutch and Toothpick' was succeeded by a week of opera given by Blanche Cole's Opera Company (this was the usual name of the company, though it was sometimes referred to as the Frederick Archer Opera Company, Frederick Archer being its conductor). The company was advertised as giving opera at popular prices. On Monday 12 April 1880 Blanche Cole, Marie Temple, Lucy Franklein, and Messrs J.W. Turner, Ludwig, Muller, and Aynsley Cook, all of whom would be familiar to the Grand Theatre's audience through previous appearances with this and other companies, gave Gounod's 'Faust'. On Tuesday they gave Wallace's 'Maritana', and on Wednesday Gounod's 'grand romantic opera, 'Irène'', which they were performing for its first time in Leeds. On Thursday they performed Auber's 'Fra Diavolo', on Friday Bellini's 'La Sonnambula', and on Saturday Benedict's 'The Lily of Kilarney'.

Like the company, most of these operas were familiar to the Leeds public, and the Yorkshire Post reviewer contented himself with writing about the new piece, 'Irène'.<sup>8</sup> This opera demanded two spectacular scenes: the first was in the second act, in the 'Casting Scene', when a sabotaged mould split as molten iron was being poured into it, with catastrophic results. 'When properly managed,' said the reviewer, 'the effect of this scene ... beggars all description, being a truly marvellous spectacle'. The second was a transformation scene at the end of the opera when Irène entered a woodland glade 'to find her loved one Mr Muriel, the Master-builder<sup>7</sup> dead, and over his corpse

sings a passionate éloge... Suddenly the scene changes to the realms of Fire, and Muriel again lives in his home immortal and ascends his throne of dazzling light, and the curtain descends amid the triumphal chorus of the Spirits of Fire who hail him as a "True Son of Flame".

The Casting Scene disaster and the final apotheosis were essential to the plot of the opera, and would clearly require adequate spectacular staging. It is therefore interesting to note the reviewer's opening remarks in his notice of 15 April 1880:

What the effect of 'Irène' would be upon an audience if produced on a scale of surpassing grandeur, such as its author evidently intended it should be, we cannot, of course pretend to say... [In this production at the Grand Theatre] there were some rather serious hitches ... for instance, the complete failure of the ballet, through want, no doubt, of proper rehearsal [one ballet scene was omitted after the preceding scene had ended in a "fiasco"] ... and the weakness of the chorus was strikingly felt at times."

But the 'hitches' must have been more human than technical, for he went on to say:

The gorgeousness of the scenery must not pass unrecorded. We scarcely know which struck us the most, the procession in the first act, or the "Casting Scene" of the second... The "Vale of Sweet Waters" where the handmaidens of Suleiman and Irène may be seen gossiping about the royal marriage, was very pretty and effective. When we add that the dresses were not only in good taste, but really handsome and elegant, we have probably said enough.

We have established that the Grand Theatre generally mounted productions in splendid style, or at least this

was the frequently reiterated opinion of the reviewer, so that when we read his almost conventional praise of the scenery for this opera, we must infer that his criticisms were principally directed at the company, and here, I think, we begin to see the limitations of 'opera at popular prices'.

Two further items from the reviewer's notices during this week are interesting in this context: in writing of 'La Sonnambula' he said 'Madame Blanche Cole ... cannot be said to "look" the village Swiss maiden, or wholly retain the old power and fullness of voice';<sup>10</sup> and, apropos 'Maritana', 'The gentleman who attempted to sing "Hear me, gentle Maritana" ... was greeted with much ironical cheering'.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, Blanche Cole was growing old, which was adversely affecting her performance, and the company contained some incompetents. From the notices it is also evident that audiences were not as large as they could have been, though the public favoured the tried, 'hackneyed' operas like 'Maritana' to the new.

Blanche Cole's week of opera was followed by three weeks of returning productions. 'HMS Pinafore' was the first of these, playing for the week beginning 19 April 1880. As was his habit with returning companies, the reviewer's notice was brief, but he did, interestingly, remark:

When the opera was first produced in Leeds, it was only moderately well played, and owing to the listless manner in which one or two of the principals went through their

parts, it fell somewhat flat. Last night the cast was changed in every particular, and in most instances the changes were very much for the better.<sup>12</sup>

'HMS Pinafore' was followed in the week beginning 26 April 1880 by W. Calder and J. Wainwright's company in 'Rip Van Winkle' for which Lester Sutcliffe painted new scenery. This production had been seen at the Grand Theatre in the previous October when the play was sandwiched between three nights of opera. However, Calder had obviously made sufficient impression to be brought back, and was favourably received by a large audience.

'Rip Van Winkle' was followed by the returning 'Les Cloches de Corneville'. This company was now managed by Charles Bernard and had undergone some changes since its three visits to the Grand Theatre in 1879. The reviewer<sup>13</sup> thought that these changes were generally for the worse, Lithgow James, (whom we have seen had transferred to the 'HMS Pinafore' company), Florence St John, and Kathleen Corri had been replaced by inferior artistes. George Barrett and John Howson were still in the company, but the reviewer gave the impression that the company was running down, though we shall see that the opera continued to be popular for some years to come.

'Les Cloches de Corneville' was succeeded by a week in which D. Harkins (advertised as 'the celebrated American tragedian') appeared in four of Shakespeare's plays -

'Hamlet' on Monday and Thursday, 'Othello' on Tuesday, 'The Merchant of Venice' on Wednesday, 'Richard III' on Saturday – and in 'Richelieu' (possibly by Bulwer-Lytton, and first performed in 1839) for his benefit performance on Friday. A fifth Shakespearian play had been advertised for Thursday ('Macbeth'), but a second performance of 'Hamlet' was substituted for it in the light of its success on the Monday night.

That Harkins was an American was perhaps a novelty, and this was his first appearance in Leeds, but otherwise he was following a traditional path in touring in a number of Shakespearian roles in plays with which the audience were likely to be familiar, and the reviewer's notes on his performance in 'Hamlet' help to identify this tradition, as well as throwing light on Harkins's personal skills.

'Mr Harkins,' he said:

had a handsome and dignified presence, a good voice, and an excellent delivery, and is evidently an actor of great intelligence. Mr Harkins is but little known in England... In the colloquial scenes he was easy and natural, and in the more impassioned passages he did not commit the mistake of tearing a passion to tatters. Our Hamlets are so constantly in the habit of forgetting their own advice to the players, and Mr Harkins is to be commended on this ground at least. Occasionally a slight American accent was perceptible, but it sounded rather musical than otherwise, and was never unpleasant... Mr Harkins disappointed us most in the soliloquies, which suffered on account of the too deliberate emphasis placed upon unimportant syllables, and the chopping up of the lines into two or three parts... The audience took very kindly to the new actor, and warmly called him before the curtain many times. One advantage which tended greatly to the smoothness of the performance was that the company last night accompanied the star, and had been in the habit of playing together, the result being a fair level performance. Some ladies and gentlemen of great experience were included in the cast.<sup>14</sup>

This passage clearly implied that such touring stars as Harkins generally formed ad hoc supporting companies wherever they played, which, together with the fact that the piece would almost certainly have been played in stock scenery, would have made the actor stand very much in isolation, and this would tend to emphasise an element of formal ritual in star actors' performances of Shakespeare, a formality which is quite clearly seen in the reviewer's treatment of these performances in his notices.

Harkins's week was followed by a fourth returning production: Charles Sullivan's company in 'The Shaughraun', which played for the first half of the week, and 'Arrah-na-pogue' which filled the second half of the week. The reviewer thought that in choosing these productions for the week beginning 18 May 1880 'Wilson Barrett has shown his appreciation of the tastes of a holiday audience'.<sup>15</sup> 'The Shaughraun' was advertised as having new scenery and effects, and the reviewer noted that the revolving tower scene 'was done in a manner calculated to maintain the reputation of the Grand Theatre in the matter of careful stage management and attention to scenic effect'.

The reviewer had a keen eye for minutiae of business, and doubtless with the ad hoc and little rehearsed companies that Harkins's recent appearance had brought into his mind, he remarked:

These artistes, most of whom come direct from the Emerald Isle, and therefore are specially fitted for depicting the

characteristics of Mr Boucicault's Irish dramas ... have been playing together for so long a period that little touches of business, which go far to help the situation, are introduced with great advantage to the general effect of the drama.

Two points emerge from this review which help identify significant elements in the production of what must have been a familiar play: firstly the 'natural' accuracy and truth to realism that was obtained by the Irish cast playing Irish characters, and doing so for so long that their performance had grown in realistic detail, and secondly the importance that was attached to the revolving tower scene, which was a feature of the original production of the play, and remained a climactic, visual spectacle.

Charles Sullivan's company was followed on 24 May 1880 by Emily Soldene's opera company<sup>16</sup> who performed a new comic opera, 'Naval Cadets', from Monday to Thursday, and finished the week with 'Carmen'. 'Naval Cadets' had music by Richard Genée and an English libretto by H.B. Farnie. This was the opera's first visit to Leeds, and it was not well known in England since it had been tried in London in what the Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>17</sup> called 'a mutilated form' and not found favour, but it was popular in Germany and America.

The plot again concerned a French actress, and seems to have been somewhat farcical. The reviewer thought that the music was unoriginal, and the libretto inadequate. He summed up the performance briefly:

The plot is a Spanish story of intrigue, full of bustle and animation, and replete with escapes, disguises, and situations of humorous imbroglio... The heroine is Cerisette, a French actress, whose lover, Don Fiorio, has deserted her, and is now the favourite of the Portuguese Queen. Cerisette follows her lover to the Portuguese court, and afterwards disguises herself as a naval cadet, and from this occurrence all the farcical situations spring... The humour of the story receives only occasional aid from the dialogue. Mr H.B. Farnie is responsible for the English adaptation, and so far as the lyrics are concerned the word responsible may be used in its strictest sense.

It would perhaps be invidious to compare 'Naval Cadets' with 'Madame Favart', but taken in conjunction with the plays 'Adrienne Lecouvreur', and 'La Dame aux Camélias' which were to be performed in September, there can be no doubt that, in an age when adaptations from the French were a commonplace, the role of the French actress exercised an enduring fascination.

The company remained substantially unchanged, though the reviewer thought that the chorus was not as 'strong' as it had been at the previous appearance of this company in Leeds, when 'Carmen' had been their principal production.

Emily Soldene's opera company was followed on 31 May 1880 by Charles Wyndham's company from the Criterion Theatre, London, in 'Brighton'. The play was written by Bronson Howard, and was originally called 'Saratoga'. It had been adapted for performance in England by F.W. Broughton, who had also written 'Withered Leaves' which was performed with it as a curtain-raiser.

'Withered Leaves' was a domestic drama which dealt with a reconciliation between 'a stern father and a scapegrace

son, brought about in a natural way by the father's young wife'.<sup>18</sup> The Yorkshire Post reviewer seemed to prefer it to the major work of the evening, finding in it 'a dash of healthy sentiment, and a touch almost of melodrama in one of the situations. The dialogue was bright, fresh, and fanciful throughout,' he went on, 'and the little work brims over with high spirits, judiciously tempered here and there by touches of grace and poetry', whereas 'Brighton', he thought, was simply a four-act farce, and

but for the constant bustle of the action, it would not be difficult to see that the farce is thin, and that the characters are mere slight sketches lacking altogether in individuality... Plot, properly speaking, there is none; but the constant difficulties in which the amorous and forgetful Bob Sackett finds himself placed provoke unceasing merriment... To see Bob Sackett making love to various ladies in succession, swearing eternal devotion to each, and meaning at the time every word he is saying, is to ensure perhaps not very intellectual but certainly very hearty amusement.

Though 'Brighton' was clearly broad farce, it is interesting to note that 'realism' found a place in the design of the scenery: the first act was set in the central hall of the Brighton Aquarium.

'Brighton' was followed on 7 June 1880 by another comic opera: 'The Sultan of Mocha'. This was a new comic opera, but it exemplified familiar themes. 'The subject naturally affords the composer (Alfred Cellier) opportunities of writing English music of a nautical character, and of

giving plenty of Eastern colour to his scenes in the last two acts', said the Yorkshire Post reviewer.

The story deals with a pretty lass of Greenwich who is in love with a sailor named Peter. The sailor lad returning home after an English victory – probably the battle of the Nile – finds that Dolly's grasping and remorseless old uncle, Captain Flint, is about to bestow her hand upon a wealthy marine-store dealer named Sneak... Dolly is faithful and will not have Sneak on any terms. Peter, too, aided by his friends, the one-legged Greenwich pensioners, completely overthrows this ... plan. The idea then occurs to Flint that he will carry Dolly aboard his little schooner, and take Sneak with him, so that the pair can be married at the first port they touch at. Peter resolves to give chase in another ship, and the pensioners resolve to man the vessel for him... In the second act we find that after a storm both vessels have been wrecked, and the respective crews are cast on the shores of Mocha. Sneak's wealth having gone down in the vessel, Flint now tries ... selling Dolly to the Sultan, who is much struck by her charms... All comes well in the end, and Dolly and Peter are united.

The libretto was written by J. Wilton Jones, and, characteristically, abounded in 'outrageous puns', and 'gags'.<sup>19</sup>

'The Sultan of Mocha' was followed by a week in which the Vokes family played in three comedies, supported by a company<sup>20</sup> which performed four comediettas which constituted curtain-raisers and afterpieces. On Monday and Tuesday, 14 and 15 June, the main play was 'The Belles of the Kitchen', and was accompanied by 'Perfection', and 'Laughing Hyena'. On Wednesday and Thursday the main play was 'A Bunch of Cherries' (this was its first performance in Leeds), and 'Charles II' accompanied it.

On Friday and Saturday 'Laughing Hyena' and 'Rough Diamond' accompanied 'Fun in a Fog'. The reviewer<sup>21</sup> characterised 'The Belles of the Kitchen' as 'a singular but amusing mixture of farce and pantomime'. It was first performed in 1869, and the reviewer thought that, along with the other plays performed during this week, it was 'so well known that description or criticism would be superfluous'. ('Fun in a Fog', for example, had first been performed in 1871.)

The Vokes family were succeeded on 21 June 1880 by a revival of 'Never Too Late to Mend' which was written by Charles Reade, and had first been performed at the old Theatre Royal in Leeds under the management of John Coleman. Charles Reade had 'personally superintended' this first production which was done 'in a very elaborate style, the scenery and effects being on a scale of completeness then unusual in the provinces'. Since its first performance the play had had a successful run at the Princess's Theatre in London, where it had been produced by Harry Jackson. Charles Reade and Harry Jackson had organised a touring company, and it was this company that now presented 'Never Too Late to Mend' at the Grand Theatre.

Lester Sutcliffe and W. Fox had painted new scenery for the presentation of the play at the Grand Theatre, and it is clear that it was mounted with great attention to 'realism':

Last night the audience were presented with a farmyard scene which would have delighted the soul of that stickler for stage realism, Vincent Crummies. The "real tubs" were there, with real water, into which one of the farm servants was unceremoniously pitched. But the realism, in accordance with modern notions, went beyond this, and we were presented with a view of real live poultry and animals, real doves in the cote, and, in short, real everything.<sup>22</sup>

But this is not to say that the mounting of the play lacked spectacle, and the reviewer found 'the scene of the gulch, with water pouring over the rocks was ... very picturesque'.

The play was not without its melodramatic elements, however, and it is interesting to see the reviewer's criticism of the acting of Arthur Lyle (as George Fielding), when he complained that Lyle could not make the scene in which he had to be taken for dead at one moment, and then rise and declare himself "never better in his life" the next believable. This, said the reviewer, was a consequence of Lyle's 'quiet and natural style'. In other words Lyle did not have the melodramatic power to sustain such a big reversal, to make it credible by sheer force of conviction.

Elsewhere in his notice, the reviewer praised Cyril Searle's Tom Robinson in that he was 'sufficiently light-hearted in the earlier scenes and sufficiently dramatic when the situation required greater power', and in another place, he said that 'the more susceptible of the audience wept in sympathy over the death of the poor boy Josephs', so it is clear that though the play was set naturalistically, the plot required melodramatic acting.

It is also interesting to note that the latter part of

the play was set in the Australian gold fields. The finding of wealth in the colonies was a plot device which we meet frequently in late Victorian plays, and we shall encounter it with even a symbolic force in 'The Silver King'. In this instance, however, it served only mechanically, though it did provide the opportunity to introduce the spectacular waterfall scene which we have already mentioned, and also an aboriginal character, Jackey, whose role was principally that of a clown.

The reviewer closed his notice with the observation that 'judging from appearances last night the play maintains as strong an influence as ever over the susceptibilities of a modern audience'. It ran for a fortnight, and after the notice appeared in the Yorkshire Post, the advertisements for the play carried the addition: 'See the farmyard with real livestock; see the cataract of real water'.

'Never Too Late to Mend' was followed on 5 July 1880 by an adaptation of Sardou's 'Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy'. The English version, by James Albery, was called 'Duty', and it was first performed in 1879. It was presented at the Grand Theatre on this occasion by F.M. Paget's company.<sup>23</sup>

The basis of the plot was fairly simple:

Sir Geoffrey Deene is an English Baronet engaged to marry a young lady named Mabel Holme. The young people are much in love, there is no barrier to their union, and the marriage promises to be a perfectly happy one. Then comes upon the scene a woman who has been the mistress of

Sir Geoffrey's father, and the young man, having learnt the secret, is naturally desirous of keeping the shameful story from his mother. This is, however, impossible, and the son thereupon tells a lie and takes his father's sin upon himself — of course losing his sweetheart by his confession. In the last act Lady Deene learns the secret, and — considering all the fuss the son has made — takes it with comparative coolness, and the curtain falls upon a scene of explanation and reconciliation.<sup>24</sup>

The reviewer thought that this motive was 'altogether out of harmony with English ideas... The strong idea of parental duty, insisted upon under such circumstances as are here presented, appear to English eyes to be altogether false, and even culpable'. This made the plot difficult to accept, and he went on: 'Where a French audience would applaud to the echo the situation of a son sacrificing his happiness to save his mother's suffering — and the changes are rung on this theme on the modern French stage over and over again — the English audience would respect him the more if he told the absolute truth and did not harrow up the feelings of his sweetheart by the lie'.

The reviewer thought that Albery had done his work in adapting the play admirably, 'supplying much terse and telling dialogue', but Sardou's construction of his play came under some criticism:

Mr Sardou, as is usual with him, occupied his first two acts in merely laying down the lines of his story, introducing a good deal of clever though irrelevant conversation, and sketching some amusing provincial types. In adapting the work for the English stage ... Mr James Albery has naturally had to sacrifice much of this preliminary matter, and to get to the main action as quickly as possible: though, even now, there is far too much leading up to the story to please the general body

of the English public. The first two acts of 'Duty' are all talk; everybody fires off repartee in turn, and the audience not unnaturally wonder when the story is really going to begin.

He does admit, however, that:

The action, when the third act is reached, is certainly swift and vigorous, and the keynote of interest, when once struck, is fairly maintained through the fourth act.

These may be valid objections to Sardou's structural method, but the reviewer was not yet finished. After describing the story as 'painful', he went on to say:

Several of the characters, who have really nothing whatever to do with the action of the piece, are very amusing and well-designed types. The witty sallies raise frequent laughter and applause, but the dramatist, despite his skill, has not been able to transform a thoroughly French story into an English one.

The reviewer seems to be making a distinction here between rapid, dramatic action, which was the 'English' taste, and preferable, and repartee and the exploitation of character which infused the French original. In this context it is interesting to observe his earlier comment on Sardou's approach to the writing of this play:

It was stated that before writing his play, M. Sardou had drawn out a plan of the provincial town of Pont-Arcy with as much care as if he had been a surveyor designing an actual town.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly this was an assertion of painstaking organisation, and seems at variance with 'characters who have nothing to do with the action of the piece', and everybody 'firing off repartee in turn' while the audience wondered when the story was going to begin. But it also betokens some interest in detailed realism, and I think it is interesting to note, too, that the play was concerned with close domestic relations (especially in the reviewer's interpretation of the English adaptation), albeit of an exaggerated kind.

'Duty' was followed by another adaptation from the French, this time of MM. Hennequin and de Najac's 'Bébé' by F.C. Burnand which was produced at the Criterion Theatre, London, and then toured under the name 'Betsy'.<sup>26</sup>

The play was a three-act farce, but, said the Yorkshire Post reviewer:

At times the action is so fast and furious, and the game of hide and seek through doors and into cupboards is carried on with such vigour, that, despite the fact that the people on the stage wear the costumes of every-day life, we are insensibly reminded of the harlequinade of a pantomime, and a little "rally" music from the orchestra ... completes the idea.<sup>27</sup>

He went on to amplify this, again bringing in the notion of 'realism':

So long as one does not look too closely into the causes of the laughter, these coat-and-waistcoat extravaganzas — for they are so unlike anything that can possibly be imagined in real life that no other term will describe them — are certain to fulfil their mission, which, we apprehend, is simply to keep an audience amused.

And he characterised harlequinade humour when he said:

The audience laugh consumedly ... at the outrageous humour of the situations, just as they laugh when the clown steals a baby or the Pantaloon writhes under the agony of the red-hot poker.

Clearly, in the English adaptation at least, there was little intellectual pretension, but, from the reviewer's brief indication of the basis of the plot, we may feel that the play was coarsened in translation, for the subject matter was a little more erudite than red-hot poker humour:

Given Dolly, a spoiled boy who is supposed to be a very pattern of virtue, but who has in reality "fast" proclivities; Mr Samuel Dawson, a tutor who is specially charged to look after the morals of this pupil, but is really an old reprobate; and Betsy, the cute servant girl to whom Dolly has foolishly promised marriage, and we have the foundation on which the superstructure of fun is built. But Captain McManus, an Irishman, who is married, has an intrigue with a music-mistress, and eventually his wife is somehow involved, and everybody gets mixed up in the most absurd manner.

In one scene the tutor, Dolly, and another student, Dick Talbot, are caught in the act of singing a comic song called "Says Aaron to Moses" when supposedly hard at academic study. Doubtless the college setting of the piece was a basis for the conventional jokes against teachers and academics, but in the reviewer's repeated insistence on the pantomimic, rough and tumble quality of the humour of the piece, I think we may identify a deliberately sought-after trait of English farces and of adaptations in the same genre.

The following week the theatre was closed from Monday to Friday, but opened on Saturday, 24 July with a return visit of Wilson Barrett's company in 'The Old Love and the New'. It ran for the following week, and the reviewer having written about the play so recently, contented himself with repeating the gist of his earlier comments.<sup>28</sup> However, he did enlarge on the performances of some of the actors, and I think two of his comments are interesting for the light they shed on the level of his criticism of acting style, and also upon the late Victorian acting style itself. Of Ellsie Maisey's performance as Lilian Westbrook he said she had

strong dramatic instinct and a very pathetic voice ... /She was/ an actress of a very high order /but/ she was less successful in the lighter portions, and would have to overcome a certain angularity of the attitude and a tendency to express mental agony by contortions of the face which seem to suggest that she is suffering actual physical pain, before her performance can be considered complete.

Clearly her acting was melodramatic, verging on 'ham', and we shall be able later to compare the reviewer's comments on these facial contortions with his comments on Helena Modjeska's subtle expression in her eyes. In these comments we can see a conflict between restrained naturalism, which in Modjeska's case he said was excellent but made the important proviso that he suspected it was wasted on everybody other than the first few rows of stalls, and more demonstrative, melodramatic acting which in other places

he frequently called for, claiming that some actors lacked 'power' (Cyril Searle's failure to carry a scene in 'Never Too Late to Mend' was a recent case in point).

In this second notice of 'The Old Love and the New' the reviewer further complained that Charles Vandehoff as John Stratton was impressive 'but his performance was open to the charge of monotony of voice, particularly in the fourth act'. We have noticed before that the reviewer took a detailed interest in the mechanics of performance, and this is another example. Possibly such a close interest in specific instances left him unaware of such larger problems as how much variation of tone was to be created in a part that he himself had earlier admitted was a monotonous one, and of how this effect was to be achieved without exaggeration or affectation. It is not my concern to argue here that he demanded impossible contradictions — doubtless there was a median path that was frequently followed. The main thing to notice is what the reviewer's demands of the actors were, irrespective of whether they were conflicting or not, for in this he represented the tastes of his age. That there was a conflict between traditional and evolved dramatic style, and an ever increasing demand for 'realism' seems unmistakable, and we shall meet further instances of it.

This return visit of 'The Old Love and the New' was followed (on 24 August) by another comic opera, 'La Fille du Tambour Major'.<sup>29</sup> This was the first provincial

performance of an opera which was at that time running in London 'though,' said the Yorkshire Post reviewer, 'looking at the representation last night, it is somewhat difficult to account for this fact, and unless more "go" can be put into the work it is not difficult to prophesy that it may not hit the tastes of provincial audiences'.<sup>30</sup>

He thought that the story was 'attractive, and, to some extent, even romantic', dealing with the adventures of a drum-major who set out to find his wife and daughter whom he had not seen for many years. The wife had in fact married an 'eccentric Duke', believing her husband to be dead, and when this was discovered the daughter elected to follow her father in the guise of a 'vivandière'. The plot had a good subject, he thought, but it was let down by dialogue that was 'the dullest that ever did duty even for the libretto of a comic opera'. 'The lyrics,' he said, 'were little more than a series of inane and halting rhymes' and the music was 'a collection of trivial airs' which were faintly reminiscent of Offenbach's old manner, 'and now and then,' he admitted, 'a chorus was heard which set ... hands beating time and feet jigging; but for originality, prettiness, grace and sweetness, we look in vain'.

More properly, I think, it was the reviewer who looked for these things in vain: he had already identified in the 'choruses which set hands beating and feet jigging' a factor that made comic operas popular. And their popularity is undeniable when we realise that the Grand

Theatre had only four and one half weeks of comic opera in 1879, but in 1880 there were ten weeks of it. Further, comic opera prospered at the expense both of classical opera and of drama in terms of weeks of bookings.

The reviewer did identify another area in which he thought the production might be a success:

Being a military subject, the piece allows of the introduction of many bright costumes and many pleasing stage pictures,<sup>31</sup> and it may be said that last night the dresses were very rich, tasteful, and pretty, and that the stage was constantly full of brightness and colour.

One other topic in the reviewer's notice is of interest in that it amplifies previous indications of the conditions and extent of rehearsal prevalent in late Victorian times:

Last night the 'Tambour Major' suffered from the hitches and misunderstandings which must necessarily occur when a large number of people play together for the first time after not over elaborate rehearsals, but in future no doubt it will play much more smoothly.

The reviewer was keenly aware of under-rehearsal, and mentioned it so frequently that we must accept it as one of the exigencies of the Victorian theatre.

'La Fille du Tambour Major' was succeeded on 9 August 1880 by the Royal Court company in 'The Happy Pair' (probably written by S.T. Smith, and first performed in 1868. It was given here as a curtain-raiser), with 'For Life'.

'For Life' was an adaptation by Charles F. Coghlan of 'La Morte Civile' by Signor Salvini.<sup>32</sup>

The production made a very strong impression on the Yorkshire Post reviewer,<sup>33</sup> and he began his notice by saying that:

on a hot night in August ... [it] kept the attention of a critical audience enchained until the unusually late hour at which the curtain fell... The tension became almost painful, every action and every word being waited for with bated breath... The audience were so carried away by the power of the situations ... that the notion of being in a theatre was altogether lost.

Later he said:

The effect upon the audience ... was such that even involuntary bursts of applause were checked in order that not a word or an action might be lost, and in order that the illusion of the scene might not be dispelled by the stereotyped applause of the theatre. This is surely the highest tribute to a drama which could possibly be paid.

He closed his notice by saying:

It is seldom we see such admirable acting on the Leeds stage. It is also seldom that we get such a powerful play of the strongly-emotional class.

The performance had clearly made a strong impression, and it is interesting to look at a play which managed both to be commended as 'strongly-emotional', and at the same time draw praise because it created an illusion so great that 'the notion of being in a theatre was altogether lost' and the audience held back its normal 'stereotyped' reactions so as not to dispel that illusion.

In fact the plot tells all; it seems quite strongly melodramatic, and at the same time it contrives to be intensely domestic, the characters and their motives being banal in the extreme were it not for the play's tragic denouement. If the reviewer was a barometer of the public taste, then this play enshrined the ideal combination of 'powerful' acting and domestic realism.

The play was set in Calabria, and the first act took place in Dr Palmieri's cottage, where he ('a generous and honourable man'), a young girl and her governess, Rosalia, and a housekeeper were living. 'That the young and pretty governess ... has a secret, and that her past life has been unhappy, the audience soon learn; but at present there is no clue given as to the nature of the disaster which has wrecked her young life'.

The village Abbé was suspicious of the relationship between Dr Palmieri and Rosalia, and of the parenthood of the child. 'He is bent on hounding Rosalia out of the village, and he sets his spies to work to see if his suspicions ... can be verified by facts.'

The second act was set in the Abbé's house where Corrado, a fugitive, was brought in craving shelter. Corrado was 'in the garb of a Sicilian peasant, with hollow cheeks, bright eyes, a weary air, and dragging feet, which seem as though they had borne a convict's chains'. It transpired that Corrado had a wife and daughter (Rosalia and Lisa) 'to whom he was attached with all the fervour of his warm southern nature'. But his brother-in-law 'sought to tear

the child away from him', and in a fit of uncontrollable passion Corrado stabbed his brother-in-law to the heart. He was arrested and sentenced to the galleys for life. 'For thirteen years he has borne his life — loaded with chains and tortured by doubts as to the whereabouts of his wife and child'. He had escaped and come looking for them.

All this was drawn out of Corrado in a long interview with the Abbé, and the latter then told Corrado where Rosalia was living, and of his suspicions about her, Palmieri, and the parentage of the child.

This was all little more than preparation, and in the third act 'the real business' of the drama commenced. Corrado confronted Rosalia 'in a very striking dramatic situation', and she told him that his daughter was dead. 'Scenes of a very emotional and powerful character followed... The wife had loved her husband — but how can she take back to her heart the man who took her brother's life? She begs him to leave her, and all his old passion returns as he refuses. He demands to know the whereabouts of his child. Rosalia again returns the answer that the child is dead. But the wretched felon, hungry for love, has seen the little girl in Palmieri's house, and, though thirteen years have elapsed, he sees something that induces him to believe that this is his own Lisa'.

Rosalia refused to join his fugitive existence, and Corrado resolved to take the child with him.

Here the feelings of the mother are so highly wrought at the thought of the child's disgrace in recognising and living with her father — a murderer and a fugitive — that she offers herself to go with him, and the poor wretch who has been met at every turn with hate where he looked for love, clasps his wife in his arms again after his long separation.

In the last act Palmieri explained to Corrado that the child in his house was indeed Lisa, and that he had come across her and her mother 'wretched and destitute' thirteen years previously, when Corrado had been sent to the galleys. Palmieri's own daughter had died just before he found Rosalia and he had offered her and her daughter a home. They had agreed that Lisa should be brought up as his daughter.

Corrado, whose heart had been softened by his wife's tortured acceptance of him, was able to see that Palmieri was in love with Rosalia. He asked her if she would marry Palmieri if the latter were to ask her, and he, Corrado, was dead. Reluctantly she agreed that she would. Then:

Corrado's mind is made up. He is the only obstacle to their happiness, and he will give his own worthless life to promote their union, so that the child may know that Rosalia is her mother. He therefore takes some poison which he has had concealed about him, and dies, and on this scene the curtain finally falls.

I have tried to indicate the main elements of the plot using the reviewer's own language, because I think that this shows with some accuracy the response that the audience was likely to have to the play. Obviously the success of

the piece hung very much upon the acceptability to the audience of the intense emotionality of the story. If the emotion expressed in the play failed to hit exactly the right pitch, then there would be very little else in the play to keep the audience until 'the unusually late hour' at which the performance ended. Clearly, also, Corrado's sudden decision to take the poison which he had 'concealed about him' would be risible if the emotional context did not motivate and justify it. Yet this is the climax of the play: the success of the play gambled on the credibility of this one moment. The gesture seems melodramatic in its suddenness and exaggeration, but I think it represented a refinement of the melodramatic method in that it was kept in check by (admittedly intensified) domestic feelings – and these feelings would come within the range that was susceptible to the test of 'realism'.

This was undoubtedly an 'emotional' drama, and I think it will be interesting later to compare it with the undisguised bathos of 'Jo', which was to be performed in November, and the rather more intellectual emotionality of a similar dénouement in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur', which was to be performed in September.

'For Life' was followed by a return visit of Edward Terry in H.J. Byron's 'Weak Woman'. It was accompanied as an afterpiece by 'Robbing Roy', F.C. Burnand's burlesque on Sir Walter Scott's novel.<sup>34</sup>

Edward Terry had presented 'Weak Woman' to the Leeds

audience in July 1879, and the reviewer consequently dispensed with detailed notice. He did, however, comment in some detail about the acting of the piece, and I think this is revealing both generally of the style of performance of late Victorian comedy, and more specifically of Terry's comic persona:

The acting in 'Weak Woman' is only fair... There is a lack of crisp unity in the whole and a finish in the individual parts. There is a strong tendency to follow the fluent author too easily, to deliver the lines without harmonious action. It is no uncommon sight to see the characters, after preliminary walks round, all of them of a kindred pattern, approach the footlights and deliver, face to face with the audience, something they are, or ought to be, either addressing to someone else or to themselves and the furniture... The half sentences, where repartee is invariably lurking, do not glide into each other as perfectly spontaneous utterances, but stand apart for a while, and they are dovetailed in a very artificial manner... Mr Edward Terry, as Captain Ginger, plays cleverly in a certain range, but there is a decided incongruity about so grotesque a setting in what presumes to be a comedy. His ginger is a little too hot... The costumes in 'Weak Woman' are very elaborate, though even the dressmakers and drapers are rather extravagantly represented.<sup>35</sup>

That the 'grotesqueness' and the 'extravagance' were carried over from Terry's performance into the design of the costumes seems to indicate that there was a deliberate intention to play at this level, or at least, this was Terry's style. Whether or not this style of production would justify or explain the suspended delivery of the repartee and the 'kindred pattern' of the characters' walking round, is, perhaps, a little more difficult to say. To the Yorkshire Post reviewer, at least, it was not acceptable, and perhaps it is possible again to see this as a

definition of the boundary between the extravagance of the past, and the new 'realism'.

'Weak Woman' and 'Robbing Roy' were performed from Monday to Thursday, but for Friday and Saturday Boucicault's 'Kerry' (alternatively 'Night and Morning', and first performed in 1871), and 'Don Caesar de Bazan' were given.

Edward Terry's week was followed on 23 August 1880 by Messrs Baker and Farron, two American comedians who appeared in a new comedy, 'Conrad and Lizette'. This was the play's first performance in Leeds, and Baker and Farron's first appearance at the Grand Theatre, but the play received no mention in the Yorkshire Post. Advertising for 'Conrad and Lizette' carried the announcement that in it Baker and Farron would introduce 'their celebrated specialities, as given by them over the civilised world' which possibly indicated that the comedy maintained too little integrity to merit the reviewer's attention.

'Conrad and Lizette' was succeeded on 30 August 1880 by a week in which Ellen Terry, supported by her husband, Charles Kelly, and a 'specially engaged company',<sup>36</sup> played in 'The Merchant of Venice',<sup>37</sup> 'New Men and Old Acres', and 'Much Ado about Nothing'. 'The Merchant of Venice', in which Ellen Terry had just finished a successful run at the Lyceum Theatre, London, was given on Monday, Wednesday,

and Saturday; 'New Men and Old Acres' was given on Tuesday and Thursday; and 'Much Ado about Nothing' was given on Friday. This week in Leeds was the first of ten weeks which Ellen Terry was giving in the provinces.

It is interesting to see the extent to which Shakespeare's plays suffered distortion at the hands of late Victorian 'stars', and the reviewer's opening remarks in his notice of 31 August 1880 shed some light here.<sup>38</sup> 'Portia,' he said,

is not a favourite character with actresses who desire to "star"; the play is supposed to be altogether in the hands of Shylock, and we imagine that few instances could be found of an actress selecting Portia of her own free will as the role in which to appeal to the sympathies of the public. But then Miss Terry was made for Portia. There is also one distinct gain when the star is Portia. Last night — greatly to the delight of all lovers of the drama — the delicious poem which forms the last act of the play was restored.

Clearly, when Shylock was the 'star', either the Portia would not be sufficiently competent to sustain the last act, or if she was, she was not to be allowed to weaken Shylock's domination of the piece.

But since Ellen Terry was prepared to play Portia, Charles Kelly had to modify the conventional interpretation of Shylock. It was

a subdued performance. It never rose to a great height, but it was always impressive. The actor, departing from the old traditional custom, sought to enlist something like sympathy for the Jew, who, despite the fact that he is technically the "villain" of the play, is really so terribly put upon, insulted, and robbed by the Christians that he has cause for resentment. Mr Kelly's Shylock is a Jewish

merchant of noble bearing who, living in a Christian community, feels himself infinitely superior to those with whom he is forced to associate and who so persistently revile him... The speech commencing "Hath not a Jew hands", which is surely an outburst of passion if it is anything at all, was spoken by Mr Kelly last night rather as a general protest by Shylock against the sufferings of his race.

This 'Hath not a Jew hands' speech was a proof to the reviewer of the error of this interpretation of the part: 'Mr Kelly's Shylock seems to us to be wrong in conception - but it is the wrong conception of an intelligent gentleman'.

This speech apart, Kelly's Shylock was clearly rather more in accordance with Ellen Terry's Portia, and with a more sympathetic understanding of the play than the 'old traditional custom' had shown, and Ellen Terry's performance was the key to it: she was

full of grace and instinct, with gentleness and true womanly feeling. In the quaintly pretty dress of the part she looks a very picture - in her graceful movements and the soft tones of her rich musical voice she realises to the full Shakespeare's exquisite sketch of the Lady of Belmont. There is not a bend of the body or a movement of the hands which is not expressive, and the attitudes which the actress assumes would with apparent unconsciousness delight the soul of such painters as, say, Mr Frank Dicksee, or Mr Marcus Stone, not to mention a score of others. The music of Shakespeare's verse falls softly and smoothly on the ear when repeated in Miss Terry's soft and low-toned voice, and all the womanly tenderness of the noble lady are /sic/ brought out by subtle though perfectly distinguishable touches... In the trial scene commencing "The quality of mercy is not strained", the lines fell upon the ear in soft musical cadences, and every shade of meaning was realised and made clear.

It is interesting to note that though we have been given

some idea of Kelly's characterisation of Shylock, we have from this review more of an idea of Ellen Terry's personality than of her characterisation of Portia. Doubtless this could in part be attributed to the part that Shakespeare wrote, but I think we must also see in this some degree of exploitation of her own personality in order to appeal to the audience, rather than acting and interpretation pure and simple. This will become clearer when we examine the reasons that the reviewer gave for her comparative failure in the part of Beatrice in 'Much Ado about Nothing', and her success in the part of Lillian in 'New Men and Old Acres'.

'New Men and Old Acres' was written by Tom Taylor and A.W. Dubourg, and was first performed at the Haymarket Theatre, London, in 1869. There the hero and heroine, Samuel Brown and Lillian Vavassour, were played by Mr Howe and Mrs Kendal. Mr Hare revived the play at the Royal Court Theatre, London, with Charles Kelly and Ellen Terry in these parts.

The theme of the play was a familiar one: 'The struggle which now and again takes place between blue blood and poverty on one side and successful commerce on the other'.<sup>39</sup> However, the success of the play revolved round the personalities of the two principal actors. 'The interest of the comedy,' said the Yorkshire Post reviewer

despite the fact that there are some well-defined character sketches, is mainly sustained by the two strikingly opposite characters of the aristocratic daughter of the

poor but proud house of Vavassour, and the "new man" in the shape of the enterprising Liverpool merchant. If we are interested in the impending ruin of the Vavassours it is because of Lilian.

The two central characters act out an archetypal love story:

After having at first treated Mr Brown with something like scorn, the haughty young lady thaws towards him when the true nobility of his character appears, and eventually loves him.

The audience's attention was held solely by the evolution of the relations between Lilian and Samuel Brown:

The endeavours of the scheming Mr Bunter to get hold of the estate of the Vavassours because of its suspected mineral wealth appear only of interest in so far as they may affect the interests of the lovers.

'New Men and Old Acres', then, functioned at the level of a love story, with, at its centre, an intense interest in the personal experiences of the two main protagonists. The fascination of the love story is in the intensity of the feelings of its characters. The narrative is only concerned with the events that circumscribe or create those feelings to the extent that such events can be used to reveal them. The personality that Ellen Terry portrayed, therefore, was the essence of the play, and it was created out of the minutest detail:

Lilian's share in the dialogue with her aristocratic mother on her very first entrance is admirably managed. Seated at the piano, she runs lightly over the incidents at the ball on the previous night, playing little scraps of melody meanwhile. Her light banter is charmingly natural, and the first scene with the grave Mr Brown is full of delicate and admirable touches of nature. Miss Ellen Terry is throughout perfect in her picture of the daughter of an old race, wayward and fanciful, but full of true womanly feeling. The music of her voice and the grace of her attitudes cannot fail to charm the eye and the ear, and when the voice is charged with pathos, as it is in the scene of the parting in the old Abbey ruins, the listeners feel with Lilian in her grief; the actress is not thought of, but all the sympathy goes out for the girl whose newly-found happiness is wrecked.

Again, the role of Samuel Brown was peculiarly suited to Charles Kelly:

Mr Charles Kelly never had, and possibly never could have, a character more thoroughly suited to his natural and manly style than the Liverpool merchant.

(In passing we may note Kelly's contribution to the impoverished aristocrat/self-made man of business theme in his characterisation of Samuel Brown:

This Samuel Brown is a grave and earnest man — a man born to make his way by sheer strength of will and cleverness of intellect. Without having had many social advantages, the merchant has everything which goes to make up a gentleman, and is even courtly in his blunt way.)

The performance of 'Much Ado about Nothing' on Friday, 3 September was Ellen Terry's first as Beatrice, and in it the reviewer began to indicate that she had decided

limitations — limitations which had not shown up in the two previous plays:

In its own range Miss Terry's art is perfect, and when we say that range is limited, we are saying nothing in disparagement of her talents. She suggests different emotions by different touches of art, and only close attention will show how she produces some of her effects. But Miss Terry undoubtedly succeeds best in characters which require sympathy, tenderness, and womanly feeling... At this performance the actress, doubtless, had not all her resources at command, but it seemed last night that there are many actresses at present on the stage who could more successfully present the madcap gaiety and unfailing high spirits of Beatrice than Miss Terry.

(The reviewer was perhaps comparing Ellen Terry's performance with that of Caroline Heath in the opening production at the Grand Theatre.)

There was not sufficient abandonment — not sufficient spontaneity in her utterances of the flashes of wit in her war of words with Benedick. The performance lacked neither grace nor beauty, but we missed the buoyancy of spirits and the half good-humoured, half malicious satisfaction which the merry Beatrice may have felt in her triumphs during her verbal encounters with the professed woman-hater. "She speaks poignards and every word stabs," says Benedick: but these words could scarcely be said of the Beatrice in the early scenes of the comedy. In the church scene, however, when Hero is falsely accused, Miss Terry's art was seen at its best. Every detail of the "business" of this scene was admirable, and the after-scene with Benedick, where she confesses her love and adjures him to kill Claudio, was excellent both in design and execution.

After 'Much Ado about Nothing' on Friday night 'The Captive', a 'monodrama' by Monk Lewis was performed. The reviewer thought that it was risible, 'turgid nonsense',

even though when it was first given (in 1803) 'many persons fainted, and others went into hysterics at the horrors presented'.<sup>40</sup> Ellen Terry managed to save it from laughter, however, and it was, thought the reviewer, 'a high compliment to the actress's powers to say that she made the lines impressive, and even succeeded in giving them an air of naturalness'.

Ellen Terry was followed on 6 September by another 'star' actress, Helena Modjeska. She played in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, 'Heartsease' on Wednesday and Thursday, and 'Romeo and Juliet' on Saturday. She was supported by Wilson Barrett and his company from the Royal Court Theatre.<sup>41</sup> For this week the admission prices were raised for the dress circle and the orchestra stalls from three shillings and half a crown to five and four shillings respectively. (This was normally only done for the better opera companies like the Carl Rosa company.)

As we saw with Ellen Terry, Victorian actresses could best succeed when their roles were suited to their personalities. 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' was ideally suited to this kind of exploitation:

The heroine of the play is the famous actress of the Comédie Française, who lived in the time when the corrupt French Court flattered and patronised the players... The tragic events of Adrienne's love, jealousy, despair, and death afford excellent scope for the dramatist who is capable of running through a very large portion of the gamut of human emotion.<sup>42</sup>

Helena Modjeska herself was a famous Polish actress — she was advertised as such — which clearly began the process of fitting her for the role. Then, also, although the dramatist was to 'run through ... the gamut of human emotion', if we compare 'Adrienne's love, jealousy, despair' with, for example, the inner struggle of a Hamlet, or the public tragedy of a Lear, we can see the narrow range of Adrienne Lecouvreur's 'gamut of human emotion'. The scale is entirely different: Modjeska was not offering a representation of humanity; she was offering an extension of her own feelings.

The reviewer went on to say that Modjeska was

singularly gifted personally for the representation of such a part as Adrienne... Slender and graceful in figure, she moves with remarkable grace, and some of her poses would have delighted a sculptor in the days when sculpture was the greatest of the arts. Her face is pale, her eyes are dark, and are capable of all sorts of expression, from tenderness to furious passion.

And he identified the essence of her performance when he said:

By what marvellous means Madame Modjeska contrives to let the audience see, as it were, into her mind, and by facial expression and gestures to convey her very thoughts, it is not easy to divine.

The Yorkshire Post reviewer's impression of the play, I think, provides an accurate view of the contemporary audience's reception of the piece, and because it gives

such an insight, I will include an edited form of it here:

Actors and actresses are gathered together in the foyer of the Comédie Française, when the distinguished performer of that day comes upon the scene, studying the part of Roxana. It is a great night for her, as her rival in the affections of the public — Madame Duclos — is to play in the same piece with her that night. The old prompter Michonnet is particularly anxious that nothing shall occur to disturb the mind of his protégée before the great trial comes off. At this moment the renowned soldier, Maurice de Saxe, enters the foyer, and this is the man with whom Adrienne is deeply and passionately in love, believing him to be a poor and unknown lieutenant. The love scene which occurred between the two showed at once the tenderness which Madame Modjeska can infuse not only into her voice, but into her eyes, and even, as one may say, into her limbs. Very beautiful were her attitudes during this love scene, expressive at once of love and trust...

How expressive is the joy of Adrienne when (in the third act) she first learns that instead of being an obscure soldier, her love is the great Maurice de Saxe. Doubt comes at first, and the use Madame Modjeska makes of her eyes as she wonders whether he is still true cannot fail to be noted. The nervous anxiety with which the question "Are you still my Maurice?" is asked, and the delight of the woman when the hero again vows his love, are little points which produce a great effect. But the pangs of jealousy come when Adrienne learns that she has a rival. Absorbing love — love which seems like Juliet's in its utter abandonment — now gives place to a state of fear and doubt. The woman is wrought up to the highest pitch of sensitiveness, and the discovery that Maurice has arranged to meet another woman causes the most acute pain. The scene between the two women in the darkened chamber is very striking. Adrienne's rival is the Princess de Bouillon, but the two women are unknown to each other, and, stung by jealousy as she is, the actress aids the escape of the unknown Princess.

Up to this point we have scenes of trusting love and the bitter pangs of jealousy. But the Adrienne has not had her full chance yet. Her powers are strikingly shown in the next act — the fourth — where Adrienne comes to recite some lines from 'Phèdre' in the salon of the Princess. Soon the secret is out and the Princess and the actress discover that they are rivals for the love of Maurice. The Princess uses words that stab Adrienne to the quick; and the actress replies with thrusts that are even more pointed and acute. Here Madame Modjeska's suffering and excitement are very marvellously shown. She seems as if she could fly at the throat of her calm and implacable rival.

The prompter Michonnet begs her to be calm. "There are better actresses here than you," he says, alluding to the stony manner in which the Princess receives the bitter home-thrusts of Adrienne. The actress, however, carried away by a mad jealousy and rage, selects a speech from 'Phèdre', describing a woman who has been false to her marriage vows, and these lines she literally hurls at the Princess with a remarkable mixture of passion and scorn. This scene was electrical in effect, and cheer after cheer greeted Madame Modjeska at the termination of the act.

The last act is certainly the most powerful of the whole performance. The Princess sends Adrienne a bouquet on which is sprinkled a poison so subtle that if any person smells it the poison will directly affect the brain and cause death. Adrienne believes that the flowers are from Maurice and kisses them. The kiss is fatal. Remarkable as are some of Madame Modjeska's attitudes when she believes her lover to be false, and throws herself into the chair in an agony of grief, it is when the poison begins to take effect that her art is seen at its best. The spasms of pain, the wild delirium, the mental and physical torture under which the woman is suffering — all these are shown with singular vividness and force. It is a pathetic and absorbing scene. Every movement of the hands and body suggests the anguish she is suffering; but realistic as the scene is, it is never for one moment repulsive... At last the agony is over, and Adrienne falls dead into the chair. It takes a moment or two for the audience to recover from the effect of the vivid acting in this scene, and then the applause comes... Not till she had appeared twice before the curtain were the audience content to turn their attention to some of the other personages in the drama.

The performance was clearly a tour de force for Modjeska, and it is interesting to note that the same kind of intense participation that the earlier melodrama had demanded, was created by a fervid intimacy between spectator and star. As we have seen before, this strong emotional involvement would allow an improbable and melodramatic climax to the play. It is further significant that the tragedy of Hamlet does not end till many people have died with the central character, and the audience is left with an objective vision of them being carried off, whereas in

the late Victorian play the single death of the character through whom alone the audience has seen and felt the course of events, must immediately end the play. Through Adrienne Lecouvreur, and characters like her, the Victorian playgoer participated in a subjective view of the world.

Madame Modjeska's second play in the week, 'Heartsease' (an English adaptation by J. Mortimer of 'La Dame aux Camélias'), achieved its effect through very similar means to those of 'Adrienne Lecouvreur'. 'The actress presents us with a vividly drawn picture of a woman of highly-strung susceptibility, who suffers from intense physical weakness,' said the reviewer.<sup>43</sup> In fact she had consumption from which, at the end of the play, she died. Throughout the play she suffered both from the disease, and from an anguished love which she felt it her duty to suppress, but which broke through here and there. Thus it provoked a reciprocity in its object (Armand Duval) which oscillated between euphoria and pointed reproach. The vicissitudes of this affair were a familiar dramatic element to the reviewer, who, though he praised this side of the plot and Modjeska's sympathetic playing of it, paid more attention in his notice to the depiction of the progress of the consumption. Constance's 'fatal cough', he said, was heard 'even in the first act', and she had frequent fainting fits which 'are only carried off by the wild whirl into which the woman recklessly casts herself'.

It is hard, as we witness the faintings and swoonings, the vain endeavours to stifle the fatal cough, to imagine

that the woman is not really ill, and but for the fact that the chord is too long played upon, the greatest sympathy would go out to the woman despite what we know her to be.

And he went on to praise Modjeska's achievement at a technical level:

The art of the actress is shown in the manner in which having to faint and swoon through five acts, she manages to avoid any suspicion of monotony.

At a technical level, also, he noticed an incongruity between the large playhouses that the late Victorians had inherited, and the new style of acting that Modjeska was representing:

It is necessary to be very close to Madame Modjeska to watch her remarkable subtle play of feature. In a large theatre, this facial expression — one of the greatest characteristics of Madame Modjeska's performance — is necessarily lost upon a great portion of the audience. She makes more use of her expressive eyes than any actress we can remember.

The fact that the prices of the dress circle and orchestra stalls were raised for Modjeska's performances (these were the seats from which one had the closest view of the stage) indicates that Wilson Barrett was alive to the strengths and attractions of Modjeska's acting.

That the audience responded to this kind of acting was shown by its giving Modjeska three curtain calls at the end

of the fourth act, and Wilson Barrett was the recipient of a fourth call.

'Romeo and Juliet' on the Saturday night, was however, a disappointment to the reviewer:

Madame Modjeska's Juliet was marked by many fine and subtle touches, particularly in the earlier portions. The thrill which ran through her as she received Romeo's first kiss in the ball-room scene was a clever idea, and the eagerness of Juliet in the scene where the Nurse brings news of Romeo was finely expressed. But at the very point where, judging from her previous performances, one naturally thought that the actress would be great — notably in the poison scene and the death scene ... her power was not called forth. Then, though the "business" of the part was admirable, and the death scene was especially clever — the fall with the cloth drawn over the face being in excellent taste — the foreign accent ... marred the magnificent music of the verse.<sup>44</sup>

Here, surely, the reviewer is (perhaps unconsciously) admitting that Juliet provided little opportunity for Modjeska's principal histrionic talents. That she forced an unhappy interpretation on the play is evident from the fact that Wilson Barrett was uncomfortable as Romeo, a role which normally suited him well:

Mr Barrett has played Romeo before Saturday night, and has played it better. He was doubtless over anxious on Saturday,<sup>45</sup> and in the scenes of passion his utterance was so rapid that the words were occasionally indistinct... Nor was it pleasing to see Romeo engage in a wrestling match with Paris in the last act, and stab him while they were struggling. The stage direction is "they fight", but as played on Saturday it looked something like assassination.

Helena Modjeska was succeeded by another week of comic

opera. 'HMS Pinafore' returned, but this time it was performed by a cast of children.

It could hardly be considered a flattering comment on the musical taste of the age that a group of children could perform the most popular musical composition of the ... century with quite as good effect as a company of trained grown-up singers, and doubtless the cynical author of the libretto was laughing in his sleeve.<sup>46</sup>

However, the reviewer did reveal himself susceptible to the charms that made the children's company appeal to the audience, when he went on:

The absurdity of the burlesque seems much enhanced when we see a company of well-trained little people going gravely through all the business, and speaking their lines with excellent point.

The 'little actors', he thought, delivered their lines 'with the mock gravity expected of them'. Effie Mason, who had a contralto voice (this the reviewer regarded as abnormal in a child) played Buttercup.

The children's 'HMS Pinafore' was followed by a fortnight of the 'elevated clowning'<sup>47</sup> of the Hanlon Lees and M. Agoust in 'Le Voyage en Suisse'. This piece, which involved a succession of spectacular incidents - for instance the overturning of a bus during which the Hanlon Lees, who were sitting upstairs, were catapulted down to the footlights, and the blowing up of a Pullman train - had been played by them for twelve months prior to its

visit to the Grand Theatre, both in Paris and in London. It opened at the Grand Theatre on 20 September, and it was announced in the advertisements that it was to return to the Imperial Theatre in London on 10 December.

'Le Voyage en Suisse' was followed on 4 October by a company formed by T.W. Robertson to perform his father's plays.<sup>48</sup> For this week they played in 'Caste' of which the reviewer thought there was little to say, except that it was 'the most perfectly told story upon the modern stage' even though he recognised that there were then many writers who found fault with Robertson's 'method of work'. 'The audience received the performance well,' he added.<sup>49</sup>

'Caste' was followed by another visit of 'Les Cloches de Corneville'. It played still to a good house. Many of this company were new to Leeds, though they had been playing in the opera for some time.<sup>50</sup>

'Les Cloches de Corneville' was followed by a week of the Carl Rosa Opera Company, which gave five operas: 'Mignon' on Monday and Saturday, 'Bohemian Girl' on Tuesday, 'Zampa' on Wednesday, 'Faust' on Thursday, and 'Carmen' on Friday. 'Maritana' had originally been advertised for Saturday, but the success of 'Mignon' on Monday caused it to be repeated.

The plot of 'Mignon' revolved round three familiar themes:

the gipsy life, the fascination of actresses, and a father's recognition of his daughter. Mignon was stolen by the gipsies as a child, and her father set out as a wandering minstrel looking for her. She was brought up by the gipsies but cruelly treated by them. Wilhelm, a student, bought her out of compassion. Mignon fell in love with Wilhelm, but he was infatuated with a young actress. However, in the end Wilhelm rescued Mignon from a burning pavilion, her father recognised and identified her, Wilhelm got over his infatuation and fell in love with Mignon, and all ended happily.

'Zampa' on Wednesday, exploited another familiar theme: pirates and the sea. But it also introduced a *deus ex machina* that is particularly interesting. Briefly the plot was this: Zampa was the name that the young Count of Monza adopted when, having dissipated his fortune, and in the process seduced and deserted Alisa di Manfredi, he elected to become a pirate. The deserted Alisa, roaming in search of him, was taken in by a Sicilian merchant, Lugano. She died broken-hearted while in his care, and he had a statue made in her memory.

Zampa captured Lugano at sea, and came to Sicily to demand a ransom. Here he was taken with Lugano's daughter, Camilla, and he demanded her as the ransom. (She was about to marry Alphonso.) Zampa and the pirates took possession of the merchant's house, and during a celebratory feast Zampa put a ring on the finger of the statue of Alisa as a joking token of fidelity. When he came to try

to remove it, however, he found that the statue had closed its fist.

On the following day, Zampa was leading Camilla to the altar when the shadow of Alisa's statue appeared threateningly at the chapel door. Undaunted, Zampa proceeded into the chapel. Here Alphonso arrived to denounce Zampa as a pirate, but, immediately, Zampa was granted a pardon on condition that he went to fight the Ottoman. Camilla was not to be spared it seemed.

At night Alphonso went to take a final farewell of her, but was surprised by Zampa. Alphonso drew a dagger, and was on the point of killing Zampa, when he recognised him as his long-lost elder brother, and desisted. Alphonso was promptly seized by the pirates.

Zampa was now alone with Camilla and began to pursue her. She, seeking refuge, ran towards a prayer desk. Zampa followed her, but Alisa's statue interposed, and 'precipitated Zampa into the abyss'.<sup>51</sup>

This is yet another example of a strange and sudden, not to say potentially absurd, resolution of a plot, but I think its significance lies not in this so much as its allowing an inanimate object (doubtless represented by a real person, but this is not the point) to take a necessary step in the evolution of the plot. The use of statues to provoke changes of attitude or of thought, certainly, was not new. But the use of such effects as an integral part

of the narrative, as an actual agent in the drama, was a Victorian innovation. This was perhaps but a minor example, but the principle is the same as that behind the earthquake which we shall meet later in Wilson Barrett's 'Claudian'.

The week of Carl Rosa's Opera Company was followed on 25 October by W. Duck's company<sup>52</sup> in a play which was first produced at the Royal Court Theatre under Wilson Barrett's management, 'Courtship; or, the Three Caskets'.

This was a 'very light comedy'<sup>53</sup> by H.J. Byron, and its story dealt with a young lady, Miss Vivian, who had three suitors: 'a needy, fortune hunting captain; a low, vulgar, illiterate, retired ironmonger; and a poor but honest young English yeoman, - familiar characters in Byron's comedies, we may begin to feel. The three suitors were tested 'in much the same manner as Portia's lovers are tried by the test of the three caskets. To the captain ... Miss Vivian represents herself as poor; to the vulgar tradesman ... she represents that she is of humble birth'. These two shied off and left the field open to the young yeoman. He, however, was so 'bluff' that he resented this trickery and renounced Vivian, thereby, according to the reviewer, furnishing Byron with the excuse for another act before they could be happily united.

The reviewer had noted of a previous piece by Byron that it was the latter's friendly and humorous personality 'which somehow managed to show through' that kept the

audience responding to his plays. Clearly, some charisma would be required to sustain the plot outlined above, and it is interesting to see that Wilson Barrett, whom we had not previously thought of as a comic actor, played the captain during the play's performance in London.

'Courtship' was followed by another Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera, 'The Sorcerer', which was accompanied by an operetta called 'Six and Six'.<sup>54</sup> 'The Sorcerer' was succeeded by Jennie Lee in the drama, 'Jo'.

'Jo' was performed all the week except Friday when a play called 'Nell' was given. Both were adaptations from Dickens - 'Jo' from 'Bleak House', and 'Nell' from 'The Old Curiosity Shop'. For their success upon the stage (and 'Jo' was certainly successful - it had had eight hundred performances before this week at the Grand Theatre) these plays clearly relied upon unabashed sentimentality. As the reviewer pointed out,<sup>55</sup> the effect of Dickens's stories depended largely upon fine character drawing, and much less on dramatic incident. And the area that the plays intended to explore was made clear by the characters that they chose to exploit. Jennie Lee, who gave an 'intensely realistic' performance as Jo

must have studied the ways of the wretched waifs and strays of the London streets with unwearying patience, for her performance of the hungry and ignorant little outcast ... is full of marvellously suggestive touches... The weary, hunted air, the furtive glances, the instinctive throwing up of an arm to avoid the expected blow when roughly addressed, all these are clever and truthful touches of

nature. When driven into a corner by the watchful Inspector Buckett, the mingled air of defiance and appeal, and the pathos of the inquiry "Where am I to move to?" strike one as being very true... No point is finer than the recital of the goodness of Jo's dead friend, and the sob in the voice at the words "I'm as poor as you, Jo, today, he says". Almost equalling it in pathos is the scene outside the ghastly hole which does duty as a burial ground in the heart of London. The gleeful shout at the sight of the rat, and the pathetic suggestion of the "business" in which Jo slowly brushes with his stump of a broom the steps leading to the gate — his last tribute to his benefactor — are in themselves points which show how closely Miss Lee has studied her model. The death scene is pathetic, too, though perhaps it is a trifle too long drawn out; and something is lost by making the practical Inspector Buckett whisper the Lord's Prayer into the dying boy's ear.

Despite the reviewer's claim of 'realism' and 'truth to life' for this characterisation, and for many of the incidents, I do not think their real purpose is very far hidden. The point is made when, talking of a tendency to farce in some scenes, and of moments in Chadband's House which were suggestive of a 'pantomime rally', the reviewer said that he was prepared to accept these 'for the sake of Jo's sorrows and sufferings'.

If any further clue is needed, it may be in the reviewer's description of J.P. Burnett's characterisation of Inspector Buckett as 'the astute and stern detective with a soft place at the bottom of his heart'.

Interestingly enough, this same note on Burnett's performance gives an indication of the style of acting of the piece. Burnett, said the reviewer, 'frequently loses something by making his chief points for the benefit of the gallery'. As Burnett played the second most important part in the play, I do not think his style of

acting would have been accepted as an undesirable necessity. The reviewer did not like it, but for eight hundred performances, the audiences had.

Nell was a 'half-starved and dirty little London servant'. Jennie Lee played her, and also doubled as the Marchioness. This play was less successful than 'Jo', and the reviewer did not think that it came very near the book. He instanced 'the scene where Dick Swiveller sings the scena from 'Norma' while the Marchioness is singing against this melody in a nigger melody, the two joining in a breakdown dance at the finish. This would be much more in place in a burlesque than in a play founded — however remotely — upon 'The Old Curiosity Shop''.

'Jo' and 'Nell' were followed by a return visit of Bernard's company in the comic opera, 'La Fille du Tambour Major'. The company was little changed since its previous visit to Leeds.

'La Fille du Tambour Major' was succeeded on 22 November by a production of 'Henry V' in which George Rignold was the star, and over two hundred auxiliaries were advertised to appear. The advertisement also bore the claim that this production was to commemorate the opening of the theatre, and was headed 'Festival Week', though it is at least possible that such claims were merely prompted by a fortuitous coincidence in the timing of the engagement.

George Rignold had recently returned from a tour of America where his 'Henry V' had been a great success.

Undoubtedly the principal interest in this production was the staging of it. Rignold had 'kept to the old arrangement of the drama' and maintained the speeches of the Chorus, and this allowed him to introduce his two hundred auxiliaries who formed 'stage pictures' to illustrate these speeches. 'Tableau curtains' were used to present the stage pictures,<sup>56</sup> so we may see that they had only a secondary relevance to the drama.

This separate, illustrative function of the stage pictures was made clearer by a reference in the Yorkshire Post review of the production to the fact that though the cast list was a long one, many of the parts were doubled, 'and we have the spectacle of the Dauphin of France, who has bid the most bitter defiance of the English, turning up presently in the guise of one of the leaders of the English side'.<sup>57</sup>

Scenically we may suspect that the mounting of the piece was not as lavish as it might have been from the comment that:

Although Mr Rignold's production of the work is not so heavily laden with decoration in the shape of gorgeous scenery and dazzling costumes as to dazzle the eye at the expense of the poetry, it is more than respectable, and a very large number of persons are concerned in it.

As for George Rignold himself, he had 'a fine and handsome presence, a manly bearing, a good voice capable of giving

full effect to all the stirring battle speeches, as well as to the expression of the King's doubts and fears... There are also touches of dignity and pathos in the prayer before the battle, and in the reading of the list of the dead after the victory has been won, while the scenes with the bluff soldier Williams and with Katherine give evidences that Mr Rignold is not deficient in the quality of humour'.

'Henry V' was followed on 29 November by a return visit of Alfred Hemmings and the Walton family in 'Crutch and Toothpick' with 'Cruel Carmen' which had previously been at the theatre for a week in April. 'Crutch and Toothpick' was followed by Wilson Barrett's Hull company<sup>58</sup> in another American play, 'The Galley Slave', by Bartley Campbell. It had been a great success in America, and Wilson Barrett had not had it adapted for performance in England, which, in the Yorkshire Post reviewer's opinion, was a mistake.<sup>59</sup> Though there were 'many germs of dramatic power ... it was a very crude and shapeless work ... one third too long ... and surcharged with cheap sentimental clap-trap,' he said.

The plot was indeed complicated, but as it represents an unsuccessful exercise in a familiar genre, I think it is interesting to look at it in more detail. Again I leave it in the reviewer's own words as I think his impressions important.

Mr Campbell's story deals with a young American heiress named Cicely Blaine, who appears to us a most inconsistent

and wayward personage... The heiress ... has two suitors — the Baron le Bois, who is one of the wicked foreign noblemen of the stage; and Sidney Norcott, an English artist. It turns out almost as a matter of course that the wicked nobleman has been married before, and has deserted his wife and child, and now seeks to entrap the fair American for the sake of her dollars. The deserted wife — an Italian artist's model named Francesca — appears just at the time when Miss Blaine has rejected the wicked Baron and accepted the virtuous artist. Francesca sees the Baron, her husband, kiss Miss Blaine's hand as he departs having received his cong , and unfolds the tale of her wrongs. She thinks he is Miss Blaine's lover, and alludes to him as such, while Miss Blaine, hearing her "lover" accused of perfidy and seemingly on good grounds, jumps to the conclusion that Norcott is spoken of. The mistake causes serious trouble, and during the progress of this trouble the comedy characters come on, go through their scenes, and go off again, much as a circus clown cracks his jokes between the pauses of an equestrian act. In a fit of jealous rage, this inconsistent lady accepts the Baron — whom, of course, she does not love — and then goes into tears and spasms as the hour approaches for the wedding. After the wedding is over — the interval between the departure and the return of the wedding-party being filled up by the comic servants — Sidney Norcott enters the room by the balcony, and finds his lady love (now the Baron's wife) alone. After a scene of mutual recrimination, they each learn how the mistake has arisen. Sidney Norcott is certainly a most selfish fellow for a hero, for, learning that the American lady has just married owing to her mistaken idea, he implores the new-made wife to fly with him, and asks piteously, "What is to become of me?" He is an inconsistent fellow, too, for the moment after he has begged her to fly with him he says — when footsteps are heard approaching — "I will protect your honour at any price". The Baron enters, followed by the comic lovers and "omnes"... The Baron, seeing Norcott with his wife's amber necklace (a returned present) in his hand, and, not knowing him, believes him to be an ordinary thief, and gives him into custody as such. Norcott, in order not to compromise the lady, accepts this view of matters, and — the scene being layed in France — is marched off to the galleys. The next act is in the prison. Here we see Norcott in chains, preparatory to being sent to the galleys, and Francesca is also doing twelve months for stealing bread for her child. When the American heiress and the Baron appear on the scene, a most effective situation is led up to, in which the Baron is proved to be a bigamist, Francesca recognising him as her husband... The last act is devoted to proving the Baron guilty of bigamy — which the audience knew already — and Sidney Norcott, who has been released by some legal process not explained, offers to let him go free if he will sign a paper giving up half

his property to the benefit of his deserted wife, Francesca... The play ends by Norcott and the inconsistent heiress being united.

If we ignore the transparency of the structure of the plot/comic sub-plot relation, it may seem difficult to discover how this play differed from many others that the reviewer had found quite acceptable. We have seen many such improbabilities of plot gone over unremarked; equally we met similarly 'inconsistent' characters to whom no objection was taken. Clearly the reviewer confidently made a very fine distinction between what was absurd, and what was not. But, though it may be difficult to follow precisely how this distinction was made, I think it important to see that it was made, and perhaps on a basis of 'tone' rather than any technical quality.

To keep matters in perspective, I think we should notice also that the reviewer admitted his over-sensitivity when he concluded his notice: 'The shoddy sentiment with which the piece is copiously interlarded seemed to be to the taste of the audience'.

'The Galley Slave' was followed on 13 December by a third return visit of 'The Old Love and the New' which ran for a week. The theatre was closed for the first three days of the following week, and opened on 23 December with the pantomime, 'Aladdin'.

'Aladdin' was written by J. Wilton Jones, but, as ever,

its chief attraction was its spectacular scenery, and this was provided by Lester Sutcliffe, F. Fox, and Stafford Hall, while the transformation scene was by Charles Brew. In his notice of 28 December 1880 the Yorkshire Post reviewer wasted no time in getting down to a description and assessment of the scenery, giving, on this occasion, a particularly balanced account:

The curtain rises and discloses the Egyptian Hall (Lester Sutcliffe), a spacious chamber, which it needs no stretch of imagination to conceive might exist beneath the pyramids. A sphynx impassively looks down on the throng of demons impatient for the show which the great magician, Abanazar ... performs every day at three and eight in the Home of Unnatural Magic.

(It is not difficult to see a structural parallel between this scene and the Hall of Inventions with which 'Blue Beard' began: self-conscious and topical satire here clearly supplant the traditional beginning of the pantomime by the establishment of the opposition of the good fairy and the demon which previously had been done in fairly straight, lyrical terms.)

The scene changes to a gorgeous street in Pekin — a full and gorgeous set from the brush of Mr Sutcliffe — in which China, its palaces and pagodas, its canals and its temples, seemed to be realised. It is the market square, as it were, of the capital of China, and the market people, as the set is disclosed, are found puffing their wares in song... The Emperor of the Moon enters in procession on his way to his "annual" ablutions with a brilliant retinue, and then the scene changes to...

The Widow's Cottage (Stafford Hall) is a cleverly painted front-cloth, which, like all the artist's productions,

gives the idea of size and distance... If there is one scene which may be expected to be slow it is that front scene before the cavern unfolds itself. This is artistically and naturally worked up to. The scene itself, "Outside the Cavern" (Lester Sutcliffe), is a fine bit of wild landscape... Darkness and gloom now settle over the place, and all seems to favour the magician's plans, when he is subjected to another interruption. The watch marches by calling the hour "Past twelve o'clock"... After the usual amount of bragadoccio and fear, both of which are admirably depicted by Miss Hill, Aladdin disappears into the bowels of the earth, followed by Abanazar. As soon as they have gone away the King and his following ... approach in their search after the scamp, and are overtaken in a storm... The rain pours down and the thunder rolls in a fine style, and ludicrously comic is the way in which head-gear is blown away and umbrellas turned inside out.

"The Jewel Cavern Scene" (Lester Sutcliffe) is a fine bit of painting, consisting of basaltic pillars rising one upon another, which reflect in a thousand prismatic hues the light of the magic lamp. As Aladdin takes the lamp, Abanazar appears at the opening above and demands the lamp... Abanazar closes the rock over him and leaves him to his doom ... but Aladdin summons the Genius of the Ring, who, at his request, instantly transports him to the Garden of Jewels (Lester Sutcliffe). The change from one full set to another is well done, and evokes enthusiastic plaudits, not only for the clever way in which the purely mechanical part of the transformation is contrived, but for the innate beauty of the picture disclosed... [We then] return to the Widow's Cottage [where] joy finds vent in a general song and dance. This dance is an imitation of one of the Haverleys' performances, and includes a series of "tableaux vivants" marvellously executed, and much aided and enhanced by the putting on and the shutting off of the lime-lights... "The Imperial Chinese Court" (Stafford Hall) is another fine bit of painting on the flat, suggesting as it does, far-reaching-chambers and courts, and giving glimpses of tropical vistas beyond... When "Aladdin's Palace" (Stafford Hall) does appear, it realises in every letter the fervent description given it. The artist has made it a perfect realisation of a structure of dreamland; it is quite ethereal and seems as if a breath had made, and a breath would unmake. The court assembling in it to welcome fair Aladdin's bride, the revels to celebrate the nuptials begin. First and foremost is the China Ballet. The members of the corps de ballet are dressed in costumes to imitate Sèvres, Dresden, and other kinds of pottery...

(It is fascinating to note such an elaborate visual illustration of the pun.)

The revels of Lilliput follow [which were enacted by children]. Then Abanazar summons the slave of the lamp and bids her transport them to Africa's shore; and "heigh presto", and the Magic Palace disappears, and brings us to the culminating scene of the pantomime - "The Sub-Tropical Gardens" (Stafford Hall) - a picture which we venture to think everyone who sees it will consider one of the most beautiful pictures ever put upon the stage. The audiences so far have gone into raptures over it and the Grand Ballet of White Porcelain, which commences the scene ... is certainly enough to send anyone into ecstasies.

(This is now the beginning of the construction of a visual climax, which parallels the scene in the Sultan's Palace in 'Dick Whittington'. That the scene was started with 'White Porcelain' suggests that the same kind of visual shock - changing from white, or black and white predominating, to a sudden riot of colour - was being used here as it was in the Sultan's Palace.)

All now is nearly ended, and a Feast of Lanterns, in which three hundred performers are on the stage at one time, and in which two camels and one elephant appear as accessories [takes place]...

The last scene of all is a Chinese landscape, willow pattern (Stafford Hall) [which is a front scene rendered necessary] to prepare the transformation scene, which requires all the stage room.

Before going on to the transformation scene, I think we should notice in the foregoing description the blending of mechanical virtues in the scene changes with purely aesthetic values in the painting of the scene: both coexist, but the mechanical proceeding from one scene to the next forms a setting in which the scenes are seen as simply visual phenomena. It is no distortion of the reality of

pantomime production that the reviewer could see the unfolding visual spectacle as a narrative in itself. Its relation to the plot of the pantomime (which we have seen could be a tenuous thing in itself) was perhaps not very strong, and I think it is fairly clear that the reviewer saw the story of the pantomime and its visual aspects as quite distinct entities.

There was no need for any such distinction, however, in the final scene of the pantomime, the transformation scene, for in this the story was completely sacrificed to spectacle. The scene was created by a specialist in such scenes, and not by the theatre's regular scenic artists. It was called 'Love's Paradise Revealed by the Wonderful Lamp':

The scene represents a gloomy cavern. A high piece of rock descends, discovering the Wonderful Lamp, suspended from the roof of the cave. Presently the Lamp becomes illuminated, and in its centre are seen two figures - Cupid bending over the sleeping Psyche in silent rapture. The vision fades and the cavern disappears, leaving the Lamp suspended in a mist. The Lamp and mist disappear, discovering the entrance to a fairy-like chamber, guarded by the angry gorse, bristling with its gold-headed spears. This in turn gives way to a drooping mass of acacias, which ascending reveals a gigantic bed of marigolds. This bower is peopled during its development. Fairies arise and others are revealed embracing each other; and the climax is reached when Cupid and Psyche ascend in the background amid a glittering final movement, very massive and striking.

The importance of the purely visual aspect of the pantomime cannot be over-stressed, and to make it clear, the reviewer ended his notice with an assessment of the development of the artists' talents:

As to the scene painters, the remarks made in passing already indicate the very exalted estimate of their portion of the work. Since last year Mr Lester Sutcliffe has made great strides, and has got rid of a certain undefinable lowness of tone which somewhat marred what in every other respect was of great merit. As to Mr Stafford Hall, we consider him one of the most promising scenic artists of the day, and if he goes on producing such glorious work as the Sub-Tropical Gardens, there is no position which he may not aspire to and claim.

Notes

- 1 The plans were drawn up by Watson, and it was estimated that the work would cost £165 10s.
- 2 Yorkshire Post, 2 March 1880, p. 4.
- 3 Charles Vandehoff played John Stratton, and was 'earnest, natural, and emotional as occasion might require', Elsie Maisey played Lilian, possessing 'genuine dramatic instinct' and 'that peculiar quality "tears in her voice"', Arthur Darley played the Count, G.H. Leonard played Harold Kenyon with 'nervous force and excellent taste and feeling', Mr Peach played Westbrook, which was 'one of his quiet, polished studies of old men', Messrs Clitherowe and Denis Coyne played character parts, Rebecca Arons played the child, C.H. Arnold played George Washington Phipps, Emmeline Ormsby played Florence, a 'heartless coquette', and Mrs Ormsby played a 'romantic and kind-hearted old lady'. Many of these actors and actresses would have been familiar to the audience since they had been appearing at the Grand Theatre during 1879 in Wilson Barrett's regular company. It is also interesting to observe how the reviewer's brief listing of their attributes sketches out stereotypes with a practised economy.
- 4 The company included Walter Fisher, Fred Leslie, Fred Solomon, and Fanny Heywood. The conductor was J.P. Smith.
- 5 Yorkshire Post, 23 March 1880, p. 4.

6 The company included Ethel Castleton, Reita Walton, Julian Cross, George Walton, and Alfred Hemmings.

7 Yorkshire Post, 6 April 1880, p. 4.

8 Yorkshire Post, 14 April 1880, p. 4.

9 Yorkshire Post, 15 April 1880, p. 4.

10 Yorkshire Post, 17 April 1880, p. 4.

11 Yorkshire Post, 14 April 1880, p. 4.

12 Yorkshire Post, 20 April 1880, p. 5.

The company included Richard Mansfield, Lithgow James, James Sydney, Arthur Rouseby, Edith McAlpine, Madge Stavart, Miss M. Duggan, and Mr Billiston. Mr Halton conducted the resident orchestra.

13 Yorkshire Post, 4 May 1880, p. 4.

14 Yorkshire Post, 14 May 1880, p. 5.

The company included Eliza Saville, Miss S. Booth, Edmund Tearle, Mr J.S. Blythe, and Mr E. Chamberlaine.

15 Yorkshire Post, 18 May 1880, p. 4.

16 The company included Emily Soldene, Rose Stella, Signor Leli, Signor Oimi, Mr Marshall, Mr Wallace, Clara Vesey, and Maggie Duggan.

17 Yorkshire Post, 25 May 1880, p. 5.

18 Yorkshire Post, 1 June 1880, p. 4.

19 The company included Kathleen Corri, Fred Wood, Mr Rosenthal, Allen Thomas, and Fred Stimson. The orchestra was led by John Crook.

20 The company included Louisa Gourlay, and T.H. Potter. Bessie Sampson had taken over Rosina Vokes's roles in the major plays.

- 21 Yorkshire Post, 15 June 1880, p. 4.
- 22 Yorkshire Post, 22 June 1880, p. 4.
- 23 The company included F.M. Paget, Robert Medlicott, and Florence Cowell.
- 24 Yorkshire Post, 6 July 1880, p. 4.
- 25 Yorkshire Post, 6 July 1880, p. 4.
- 26 The company was managed by Charles Wyndham, and included Eleanor Bufton, Richard Purdon, Samuel Dawson, H. Reeves-Smith, Ella Strathmore, Emily Vining, Mr G.F. Sinclair, and Mr T.B. Bannister.
- 27 Yorkshire Post, 13 July 1880, p. 4.
- 28 Yorkshire Post, 26 July 1880, p. 4.
- 29 The company was Charles Wyndham's, and included Mr Aynsley Cook, Madame Tonnelier, Anne Pool, Carrie Lee Stoye, David S. James, and Katie Logan.
- 30 Yorkshire Post, 3 August 1880, p. 4.
- 31 Indeed he noticed that 'the audience vigorously applauded the entrance of the army in the last act', and we may take this both as a spontaneous reaction to pleasing visual spectacle, and, in the light of the audience's response to the procession in 'Dick Whittington' previously mentioned, as an indication of the audience's involvement with the subject matter represented on the stage, and its willingness to use the theatre as a place for political or moral expression.
- 32 Coghlan took the principal role, and the company further included Amy Roselle, Edward Price, J.D. Beveridge, Miss Giffard, Laura Lawson, Arthur Dacre, and Mr Phipps.

- 33 Yorkshire Post, 10 August 1880, p. 5.
- 34 The company included Miss M. Jones, Mr W. Ward, and Mr Seymour Dallas.
- 35 Yorkshire Post, 17 August 1880, p. 4.
- 36 The company included Norman Forbes, Arthur Wood, Mr Beaumont, Clara Cowper, and Eleanor Aitkin.
- 37 For which Stafford Hall and Lester Sutcliffe had painted new scenery.
- 38 Yorkshire Post, 31 August 1880, p. 4.
- 39 Yorkshire Post, 1 September 1880, p. 4.
- 40 Yorkshire Post, 4 September 1880, p. 4.
- 41 The company included Mr G.W. Anson, Arthur Dacre, Miss Masson, Brian Darley, Cissy Graham, and Mrs Bickerstaff.
- 42 Yorkshire Post, 7 September 1880, p. 4.
- 43 Yorkshire Post, 9 September 1880, p. 4.
- 44 Yorkshire Post, 19 September 1880, p. 3.
- 45 At the end of the performance Wilson Barrett announced that the night's takings exceeded those of any previous night at the Grand Theatre.
- 46 Yorkshire Post, 14 September 1880, p. 4.
- 47 Yorkshire Post, 23 September 1880, p. 4.
- 48 The company included J.F. Young, George Alexander, T.W. Robertson, and H.R. Teesdale.
- 49 Yorkshire Post, 5 October 1880, p. 4.
- 50 The company included Lizzie Beaumont, Irene Verona, J.H. Rogers, Harry Collier, Wilfrid Esmond, W.G. Bedford, and Joseph Eldred.

- 51 Yorkshire Post, 21 October 1880, p. 4.
- 52 The company included Mr H.A. Roberts, Mr T. Bolton,  
Mr E.J. George, Emily Loreintz, and Nellie Young.
- 53 Yorkshire Post, 26 October 1880, p. 4.
- 54 The company included Richard Mansfield, Arthur Rouseby,  
Ethel McAlpine, Madge Stewart, Mary Duggan, Mr Sydney,  
and Mr Billington.
- 55 Yorkshire Post, 9 November 1880, p. 4.
- 56 And there was 'a great deal of incidental music' which  
accompanied the scenes, according to the Yorkshire Post  
reviewer.
- 57 Yorkshire Post, 22 November 1880, p. 4.  
The cast included James Craig, T.C. Burleigh, J.G. Bayley,  
and a Miss Henderson who declaimed the speeches of the  
Chorus.
- 58 It included J.S. Hayden, Alfred Cuthbert, Mr A.T. Hilton,  
Agnes Templeton, Denis Coyne, W.P. Grainger, and  
Bertha Burton.
- 59 Yorkshire Post, 7 December 1880, p. 5.

CHAPTER V:1881

The Grand Theatre company secretary sent Wilson Barrett a reminder of the rent due for the theatre and the Assembly Rooms for the first quarter of 1881 on 5 January, and was able to acknowledge the receipt of a cheque for six hundred pounds on the fourteenth of that month. The letter of acknowledgement also included a note which began a series of renegotiations of the leases of both theatre and Assembly Rooms. The letter of 14 January simply asked Wilson Barrett to join the directors in an undertaking not to terminate the lease of the theatre at the end of three years (which would have fallen on 16 November 1881) as was in both parties' power, but to let it run its full five years. This the directors were prepared to accept, said the note, despite the fact that they were 'satisfied' that the rent of the theatre was 'inadequate'. The note concluded by indicating the directors' agreement to Wilson Barrett's erecting some lamps (he had previously suggested that the outside of the theatre and the entrance to the Assembly Rooms should be better lit) as long as he bore the expense. It seems possible, therefore, that asserting the 'inadequacy' of the rent may primarily have formed a preamble to this simple decision, though doubtless it also indicated a general commercial posture.

No further move with regard to this joint undertaking was made until 20 April 1881, when again a note was appended

to a receipt for Wilson Barrett's second quarter's rent of the theatre and Assembly Rooms. Wilson Barrett's response to the suggestion of the joint undertaking, said the note, had not been in accordance with the resolution the directors wished to make. Clearly, Wilson Barrett wrote to inquire of the exact form in which his undertaking was required, for the secretary again wrote to him on 27 April in a letter which gave an exact form for each side's abandoning its right of termination of the lease.

On 12 May the secretary called a board meeting for the seventeenth of that month to begin discussion of the final winding up of the company's capital account - that is, the side of the company's activities to do with erecting and furnishing the theatre - so that the company could settle down in its other role, that of landlord. The first step was to approve final accounts for the construction of the theatre, shops, and Assembly Rooms, and to examine these, along with the year's balance sheet, in order to prepare a report for the 1881 Annual General Meeting.

In the course of these preparatory manoeuvres both the company's solicitor, and the architects submitted bills, and the directors' responses to these bills were indicative of the company's finances at that time, and of the general feeling with regard to the involvement of Barr, Corson, and Watson with the company's activities. The solicitor had asked for two hundred and twenty pounds, but was asked 'considering the circumstances of the company' to accept

one hundred and ten pounds. The architect was told that two items on his account (of fifteen guineas and fifty pounds respectively) were 'objectionable', and that his request for £8 5s. commission on the £165 10s. spent on alterations to the Assembly Rooms was 'highly objectionable', and that he should not press for payment of these three items.

On 28 May the secretary replied to a request from Wilson Barrett that the one hundred pounds due to be spent annually on augmenting the stock scenery under the terms of the lease should be deducted from his rent rather than spent on scenery. The board had agreed to it.

Watson had completed the two inventories, one of property, and one of stock scenery that belonged to the company, which he had been commissioned to prepare in 1879, and submitted them to the board at the end of May. The shareholders' report and the balance sheet were prepared, and, as the chairman of the company's approval was required, they were sent to him on 1 June. The Annual General Meeting was held on 28 June 1881.

After the meeting the directors attacked two familiar problems: the first, the more intractable, was the raising of capital to finally pay off the contractors; the second related to the lease of the Assembly Rooms, for Wilson Barrett's tenancy expired on 1 August 1881.

Accordingly, Wilson Barrett was asked in a letter of 28 June if he wished to renew his lease of the Assembly

Rooms, and he replied immediately that he did not. A board meeting was called on 5 July to discuss the problem, and the directors decided to advertise the lease of the Assembly Rooms in The Era throughout July. On 11 July Wilson Barrett was sent a reminder of the rent due for the third quarter of 1881 which consisted of £475 for three months rent of the theatre, and £41 13s. 4d. for the remaining two months of his tenancy of the Assembly Rooms.

The board meeting called for 5 July was so badly attended that nothing could be decided, and the company secretary wrote about this to Sir Andrew Fairbairn on 14 July:

The meetings of the board to consider amongst other business the payment of contractors' balances and the closing of the capital account have been attended by so small a number of directors that the business has been from time to time adjourned.

The contractors are very urgent for their money and it is considered desirable that they should be paid with as little delay as possible, and I am requested to ask you to be good enough to fix a day which will be convenient to you to attend a board meeting so that a full meeting may consider and deal with this important matter.

Sir Andrew did not regularly attend board meetings, and it is an indication of the seriousness with which this problem was regarded that he was asked to attend. It was perhaps symptomatic of the difficulties which the company suffered in trying to convene a meeting competent to resolve the capital problem that Sir Andrew should reply:

I am sorry to say that I cannot fix any date for a meeting of the board at which I can promise to attend.

I fear, moreover, that it will be impossible for me to say with any degree of certainty when I can be in Yorkshire until the prorogation of Parliament takes place.

On 29 July a second reminder was sent to Wilson Barrett about his third quarter's rent, and this he paid, an acknowledgement being sent to him at the Royal Princess's Theatre, London. This letter was addressed to him as 'Lessee and Manager, Royal Princess's Theatre' which forms the board's first acknowledgement of this further step in Wilson Barrett's managerial career.

At this time Wilson Barrett clearly had a change of mind with regard to the letting of the Assembly Rooms, for on 4 August the secretary wrote to him saying that the directors 'were obliged to decline' his offer to take the Assembly Rooms. They were, they said, negotiating a permanent lease, though they would consider his offer if they did not succeed.

This response of the directors does not seem to refer to anything more positive than their advertisements in The Era. That they had no promising approaches with regard to a lease is indicated by their inserting an advertisement in the Yorkshire Post on 6 August 1881 which read:

Grand Assembly Rooms, New Briggate, Leeds.  
Wanted a room keeper who will be required to attend at the Rooms daily at a stated time to answer applications and arrange for letting the rooms and generally to take management of the rooms.

It is proposed to pay by salary and commission on the rents received.

This seems to indicate that the directors had come to accept that they were unlikely to make a permanent letting, and were now prepared to let the rooms for individual bookings

through their own agent. This was something that they had previously wished to avoid, and had been the cause of their taking Wilson Barrett's offer of 'the lowest rent they would accept' when the Assembly Rooms were first opened.

Wilson Barrett was interested enough in the Assembly Rooms to write a second letter (on 5 August) following up his inquiry, and asking what the lowest rent that the directors would accept was, for:

I would rather meet them if possible than let the rooms go to a stranger, as I fear badly managed the rooms will seriously injure the reputation of the Theatre, and prove an annoyance to the theatre goer.

The argument and the offer are familiar, though this does not necessarily invalidate them. We know that in 1880 Wilson Barrett had tried to give his lease of the Assembly Rooms up, so that we can see he must constantly have been in two minds about it, and perhaps we can see this change of mind as indicating a preference that his rising fortunes in London allowed him to take up in 1881. This incident serves also, I think, as an example of contractual brinkmanship which indicated a certain astuteness in business management on Wilson Barrett's part.

Wilson Barrett was invited to attend a board meeting on 17 August as a consequence of his letter of 5 August, but instead he wrote again on 15 August suggesting that a new, joint lease of theatre and Assembly Rooms be drawn up. This was duly considered and approved by the board and a

letter setting out terms for such a new lease was sent to Wilson Barrett dated 24 August 1881. It said:

The board are prepared to cancel the present lease of the theatre and to grant a lease to be approved of the Theatre and Assembly Rooms jointly for a term of seven years from November next at the annual rent of two thousand five hundred pounds nett for the first year, two thousand six hundred pounds for the second year, increasing one hundred pounds each year of the term.

The company shall not be required to lay out one hundred pounds a year in scenery and the directors shall have a right of free access to the Theatre without payment.

The lease to be prepared and entered into at once and the company will give you the free use of the Assembly Rooms up to November next when the new lease is to be commenced.

The directors consider the terms offered very liberal and they will not be disposed to alter them.

While waiting for Wilson Barrett's reaction to this proposal, which was formulated at a board meeting on 17 August, the directors prepared a circular suggesting that the directors be invited to buy four fifty pound shares each at half price in order to raise the capital to pay off the contractors. Nothing was heard from Wilson Barrett in early September, though a Mr J.W. Swann did reply to the advertisement for a room keeper for the Assembly Rooms. (The secretary asked him to write a formal letter of application, stating what he intended his function should be: 'For instance: attend to the gas, see after the cleaning and sweeping, let the rooms etc.', and to present himself at a board meeting for interview.)

Still no reply was forthcoming from Wilson Barrett, and the secretary wrote to him on 13 September urging him to

do so, and saying that the directors regretted not having a personal interview with him to discuss the matter.

On 14 September the board sent the text of an advertisement to The Era which invited single bookings for the Assembly Rooms, and directing inquiries to J.W. Swann. It is clear that in the absence of a reply from Wilson Barrett the board was going ahead with its original plan.

On 15 September a circular was sent to directors calling a board meeting on 20 September to discuss Walter Harding's proposition that the resolution regarding the purchase by directors of four shares at half price be rescinded, and that all the directors be asked to make an hundred pound loan until 1 January 1885, at an interest rate of five per cent. Harding's proposition was accepted, and circulars sent to the directors on 21 September informing them of it, and asking them to pay their money into Beckett's bank 'forthwith'.

On 19 September Wilson Barrett did reply to the directors' suggestions as to the new joint lease, and asked that a meeting be called on 3 October so that he could discuss the matter with the board. Wilson Barrett attended this meeting which was chaired, on one of the few occasions when he did so, by Sir Andrew Fairbairn. An agreement was reached as to the joint lease and the rent, but confusion over what was said about the directors' demand for free admission was to cause heated exchanges — culminating in Wilson Barrett's threat to give up the lease of the theatre altogether, and Sir Andrew's insistence that he himself

would resign — continued for some months, so that the new lease was not drafted in an acceptable form and signed until the summer of the following year (1882). However, sufficient agreement was reached at this October meeting for the theatre to continue to function, and for the rent to be calculated at the old rate up to 16 November, and at the new rate thereafter in 1881. But for the remainder of 1881 the board and Wilson Barrett seem to have been preoccupied with other matters.

On 5 October the company secretary sent to Kitson an estimation of the company's financial position. From 18 November the company expected an income of roughly two thousand five hundred pounds per annum from theatre and Assembly Rooms, and two hundred pounds from the shops. Against this their expenditure was expected to be roughly one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds in interest on the mortgage, seven hundred and fifty pounds in interest on the debentures, fifty pounds interest on the personal loan of the directors, two hundred and forty-eight pounds in insurance premiums, an estimated one hundred pounds on maintenance of the building, fifty pounds in property tax, and fifty pounds for 'sundries'. This left a probable surplus of two hundred and thirty-two pounds. There is clearly some difference between this figure and the projected figure given to the bank in 1879, when one thousand and thirty pounds was the estimated annual surplus. This difference is accounted for principally by the fact

that the total income from rent in 1881 was expected only to be two thousand seven hundred pounds, whereas the estimate of 1879 had been of three thousand four hundred pounds — a difference of seven hundred pounds; and though after November 1881 the company hoped to be rid of the burden of having to spend one hundred pounds per annum on scenery, the insurance and the interest on the directors' personal loan virtually nullified this saving, and property tax and 'sundries' added a further one hundred pounds to the expected cost of maintaining the theatre after 1881. It is the shortfall in rent of the theatre that is perhaps the most interesting, and the fact that the directors had to accept this suggests at once both the strength of Wilson Barrett's position viz à viz the company, and the precarious nature of theatre management — for clearly, even accepting the board's avowed sympathy for Wilson Barrett personally, there can have been no pressure from other interests to take the lease, which would surely otherwise have forced Wilson Barrett to raise his rent.

Wilson Barrett followed up his success in gaining approval of the joint lease he desired by proposing to make an alteration to the theatre building. Watson acquainted the board with an outline of the scheme at a meeting on 15 November, and was instructed to draw up a detailed plan. Briefly what Wilson Barrett required was to build out an extension to the prompt side stage property room over the

gallery entrance passage. Though there was plenty of room on the other side of the stage for keeping ready all the properties needed for spectacular productions, the prompt side of the stage was narrower, and nearly all of the off-stage space was taken up by dressing rooms. Wilson Barrett clearly thought that it was important to have this storage space on the prompt side, and continued a correspondence about it for some time, offering to pay for it himself when the directors said that they were opposed to it.

On 17 November a committee of directors, chaired by Benjamin Goodman, inspected the part of the building that Wilson Barrett wanted to alter, and decided that as it would be an 'encroachment upon an already narrow area' it was 'objectionable'. To the fore in their minds was the objection of the owner of shop number one, Boswell, that he needed a passage twelve feet high to allow him to bring wherries laden with large casks up to the back of his shop.

But the principal concern of the directors at this point seems to have been that the entrance passage in question was in a 'very filthy state' and was 'quite unfit for people to pass over' as they had to get to the gallery entrance. Boswell's carts cannot have improved matters, and the directors instructed Watson to get an estimate from Messrs Dawson and Nunneley for concreting the passages from Harrison Street to the gallery and cellar entrances.

When Watson submitted his plan of Wilson Barrett's intended extension to the directors they rejected it because it showed a height only of ten feet for the passage, which would have been necessary for the extension to be level with the stage floor, but was unacceptable to Boswell. Here the matter lay for a while.

In the meantime the board wrote to James Wood, the main contractor in the erection of the theatre buildings, reminding him that he had promised at the 1878 General Meeting to take three hundred pounds worth of shares in the company. Clearly this was in fact to be deducted from his final account. Also Corson was offered in a letter of 19 November £159 9s. in settlement of his account.

Boswell wrote to the board on 22 November asking when the passage to his shop and cellar was going to be concreted as he could 'scarcely get goods in' such was its state, and Kitson instructed Watson to get it done at once. On the same day a letter was received from Wilson Barrett urging that the directors reconsider the matter of the extended property room. The secretary called a meeting on 29 November to discuss it, and in acknowledging Wilson Barrett's letter, took the opportunity to inform him that he owed the company £239 9s. in rent for the period from the end of the third quarter to the date at which the new lease was to begin. As yet the new lease had not been acceptably drafted, and this was added to the agenda of the board meeting called for 29 November. On 24 November

Wilson Barrett sent another letter formally asking the directors to reconsider their decision on the property room extension, saying that:

It will be a great advantage not only in this pantomime but in all pieces of a spectacular nature - that side of the stage being for so large a theatre very cramped and inconvenient.

The secretary acknowledged receipt of this letter on 25 November, and further acknowledged what must have been a third letter from Wilson Barrett which enclosed the £239 9s. rent on 28 November. This spate of letters from Wilson Barrett seems to indicate some degree of concern on his part to have this extension - to what was often said to be the theatre with the largest stage and service areas in the provinces - authorised, and it seems a large coincidence that his cheque for the arrears of rent should arrive the day before the board considered his request. In the event the board decided that:

The directors see great objections to this alteration some of which are the following: permanent damage to light of shops; interference with conditions on which insurance is based; architectural disfigurement and weakening of the building.

They declined to permit it. Curiously, however, on the same day that they wrote their decision to Wilson Barrett, they also addressed a note to Watson sanctioning the alteration so long as the gallery entrance passage maintained

a head room of twelve feet, and wrote again to him three days later asking him whether or not he intended to proceed with it. In fact the alteration was not made.

By the end of November nine of the directors — Sir Andrew Fairbairn, W.L. Lawson, Kitson, Benjamin Goodman, F.H. Barr, J.W. Harding, J.M. Sagar-Musgrave, A.J. Lawson, and C.E. Bousefield — had contributed their one hundred pounds to paying off the contractors, but C.G. Wheelhouse, and George Irwin had not, and the board instructed the secretary to write to these two saying that the other nine had paid, and asking if they 'really declined' to contribute as well. There appears to have been no response to these letters.

In early December it was noticed that the heads of the columns that formed the (recently altered) entrance to the Assembly Rooms were in a 'rough state', and the directors wrote to Corson to inquire if the work had been properly completed. Kitson, also, was moved to make formal inquiry about the theatre's fire fighting equipment. The secretary was instructed to get Lee Anderson's assurance that in particular the water pipes over the stage ('sprinklers' and 'drenchers') were in good order. This was symptomatic of a permanent concern for the safety of the theatre, and it is interesting to note in this context that press advertisements for the pantomime which opened on the twenty-third of this same month were headed 'Grand Theatre, Leeds ... Safest Theatre in the World'.

Lee Anderson wrote to the secretary on 10 December asking him to assure the directors that all the equipment was in perfect order, 'the fireman engaged on the Establishment having nightly to assure himself of that fact and also to periodically test the pipes'.

On 29 December a further step in the settling of the theatre's accounts was taken when Frederick Barr wrote to formally request that two hundred and fifty pounds which the company owed him should be paid in debentures. By this means, clearly, the company could put off having to find the cash, at the expense of the relatively high interest rate that it would have to pay on the debentures.

It was likewise important to induce James Wood to accept three hundred pounds owed to him in the form of shares. Wood had written on 28 November demanding the money, and wrote again on 20 December asking for some response. The secretary wrote to Benjamin Goodman, explaining the situation, and saying 'Had you better not see him and strive to arrange with him as requested at a previous meeting of the directors?' (that is, that he should accept the three hundred pounds worth of shares).

Goodman acted by writing to Wood saying that 'the board threw your account aside when your letter of 28 November was read denying your offer to take six more shares in the final settlement of your account'. He went on to assert that Wood had made this promise at the Annual General Meeting of 1878 along with several other contractors all

of whom had honoured their promise. He said that it was only because of these promises that the board had allowed work to begin, and that considering that the contract must have been 'a very profitable one' to Wood, six hundred pounds did not seem so big a sum. He ended:

We have no money; the balances of contracts have been paid out of the directors' own pockets; and if you will honourably fulfil your promise we will advance the balance, which there is no legal responsibility to compel us.

Clearly this was a firmly adopted position, and negotiations were to go on into the next year, as they were in connexion with Wilson Barrett's lease, though the directors were clearly unaware of this when the secretary wrote to Watson on the last day of December:

I expect Mr Barrett will shortly sign the new lease of the Theatre and Assembly Rooms.

Will you please write me to say whether the List of Stock Scenery and Inventory of property belonging to the Theatre Company which are written in the two books are complete to the present time. If not complete it should be made so at once so that the books may be signed at the same time as the lease.

The programme for 1881 showed a continuation of the trends observed in 1880: the pantomime ran for an extra week, taking eleven weeks in the year, as did comic opera, increasing by the same amount to occupy the same number of weeks. Opera was further reduced from three weeks in 1880 (against four and one half in 1879) to two weeks in

1881, and both these weeks were filled by the Carl Rosa Opera Company which in those two weeks introduced only one new opera to the Leeds public (Wagner's 'Lohengrin' which was given, in all, three performances). The number of weeks filled by dramas and comedies again declined slightly; there were thirty-one weeks in 1879, twenty-eight weeks in 1880, and twenty-seven weeks in 1881. Four of these weeks in 1881, however, were taken by spectacular, or panoramic melodrama, when only two weeks had been taken by such performances in 1880, and none in 1879. The number of runs of a fortnight slightly increased in 1881, from four in 1880 to five in 1881 (but there had been seven such fortnights in 1879).

The 1881 seasons were principally remarkable for a season of seven weeks of melodramas revived by Henry Neville and Harry Jackson's company which took place in the summer, a week's visit by Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, and the Lyceum company in September, and a single performance of 'La Dame aux Camélias' by Sarah Bernhardt. Wilson Barrett did not act in any performance at the Grand Theatre in 1881, being more concerned with his affairs in London, where he took over the management of the Princess's Theatre in Oxford Street on 2 July.

The pantomime, 'Aladdin', closed on Saturday, 12 March 1881, and was succeeded on Monday, 14 March by the Hanlon Lees and M. Agoust in 'Le Voyage en Suisse' which had

previously been seen at the Grand Theatre in September 1880. Then it ran for a fortnight, as it did now, and it is at least conceivable that such spectacular effects as it relied upon took so much fitting up that the Hanlon Lees were not prepared to perform it for a lesser time. It was preceded by a farce, 'Coalition', which was written by Thomas T. Hardman and Herbert North, and was in its first year of performance.

'Le Voyage en Suisse' was followed on 28 March by 'The Princess of Trebizond', an opéra-bouffe by Offenbach, presented by Joseph Eldred's company.<sup>2</sup> It was a 'bright and tuneful' work,<sup>3</sup> more in the composer's opéra-comique style than the burlesque of 'La Belle Hélène' and 'Orpheus in the Underworld', and had first been performed in England at the Gaiety Theatre in London. The plot dealt in quite familiar subject matter, being concerned with theatre people who won a baronial hall in a lottery, and provided much extravagant buffoonery in their attempts to maintain the dignity of their new position. The Yorkshire Post reviewer noted that Eldred had introduced topical allusions 'of the kind expected in pantomime' though he accepted this without demur, presumably as natural to the genre.

'The Princess of Trebizond' was followed on 4 April by another comic opera, Gilbert and Sullivan's 'The Pirates of Penzance', performed by the D'Oyly Carte company.<sup>4</sup> The

work dealt with many familiar themes – pirates and orphans, fallen Peers and 'bought' respectable ancestry, romantic settings (the first act was set in a cave on a rocky shore, the second was set in a ruined chapel); Frederick, the central character, suffered an abiding, if not extravagant, sense of duty which motivated much of the plot – though, of course, they received Gilbert's peculiar treatment.

The opera had first been performed twelve months previously, and had been touring for some while before this company arrived at the Grand Theatre. This may explain what the reviewer thought was a somewhat unsatisfactory performance.<sup>5</sup> Only one or two of the cast, in his opinion, 'thoroughly appreciated the humour' which underlay Gilbert's situations, and most of them missed 'the tone of mock earnestness without which the whole scheme became meaningless'.

'The Pirates of Penzance' ran for a fortnight, and was followed on 18 April by an American play, 'The Danites', which had first been performed in England in 1880 at the Globe Theatre, London. The play 'had been received with the greatest enthusiasm', said the reviewer,<sup>6</sup> both here and in America. It was presented at the Grand Theatre by a touring company under the management of Charles Morton,<sup>7</sup> and Lester Sutcliffe had painted new scenery for it.

'The Danites' was a 'romantic' drama by Joaquin Miller which the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought was more likely to suit the tastes of a 'popular' audience than to satisfy

more critical spectators. The play was set in California, and it contained 'pictures of the wild mining life... There were scenes and incidents showing how much tenderness and nobility might underlie the rugged exteriors of the sturdy giants who delved for gold in the mining camps'. An illustration of this theme which particularly appealed to the reviewer was a scene in which 'the rough miners troop into the cottage with their offerings of gold for the first baby born in the Sierras'.

However the play had more purpose than merely to be a pastoral idyll set in the American gold fields, and the plot got under way with the entrance of the characters of the title:

"The Danites" are two mysterious individuals who enter to slow music. Their mission is to kill Nancy Williams, the last of a family doomed to death by these Western Nihilists — these avenging angels of melodrama. As a matter of course they approach with mysterious tread, and look off at the wings to make sure that no one is in sight, and equally of course their nefarious purpose is being foiled by the good miners.

Once the villains were established, the plot seemed rather thin, but, considering how much the villains were heavy melodramatic archetypes, the play seemed quite light and 'modern':

This Nancy Williams lives at the camp disguised as a boy and under the name of Billy Piper. She has long loved Sandy McGee /the hero/ ... and when that honest fellow loses his heart to and marries a certain womanly little woman known as the "widder", the sufferings of the disguised

Nancy Williams are of course harrowing. The "widder" discovers the sex of the so-called Billy Piper and befriends him — or, we should say, her — and this leads to jealousy and violence on the part of Sandy McGee.

Inevitably the play came to a satisfactory conclusion, but it is interesting, I think, for its archetypal characters (as well as the villains there were a comic Chinaman ('of course', said the reviewer), and 'several typical characters, including a miner who is called the "Parson" because he can outswear any man in the camp, and an eccentric individual known as "The Judge"), and the weakness of its plot which nonetheless stood up because of the tension built up between the depth of the depravity of the villains, and the fascination of Nancy Williams and Sandy McGee's love story.

'The Danites' was succeeded on 25 April by a fourth week of comic opera. In fact this week was taken by a return visit of the company of children performing 'HMS Pinafore'. They had previously performed it at the Grand Theatre in September 1880. There had been little change in the company in the intervening seven months.

The childrens' 'HMS Pinafore' was followed by another returning production, Charles Wyndham's company in 'Betsy', which had previously been seen at the Grand Theatre ten months before, in May 1880. 'Betsy' was followed by another comic opera, 'Olivette', which played for the week beginning Monday, 9 May.<sup>8</sup>

'Olivette' was an adaptation by H.B. Farnie of Audran's 'Les Noces d'Olivette', which, according to the Yorkshire

Post reviewer,<sup>9</sup> had been 'a considerable success' in London and America. This was its first performance in Leeds, and Lester Sutcliffe had painted new scenery and effects for it.

The plot was broad farce, and dealt 'with the desire of a nephew to marry a girl who is betrothed to his uncle', a situation which might seem unpromising in itself, but it was enlivened by the nephew disguising himself as his uncle, a device which triggered off 'the most absurd mistakes', until, inevitably, the two met.

Clearly, the subject was treated with very little reverence, and the reviewer thought that the libretto was over long, contained excessive conversation and jokes, and 'vile puns ... as plentiful as blackberries'.

'Olivette' was followed on 16 May by 'Where's the Cat?', an adaptation from a German source, and presented by a company of Charles Wyndham's.<sup>10</sup> 'A light and ingenious trifle,' the reviewer thought,<sup>11</sup> it often 'depended as much upon ... "business" as upon the original intrigue'. But despite the occasional 'tasteless innuendo', this 'bustling intrigue' was 'written with considerable grace and force in the dialogue'.

The plot was at least unusual:

Three gentlemen have agreed to make the skin of a cat their bank, and invest savings to a large amount in this singular manner. They are to meet at a spot in Westmoreland ten years afterwards and share the money — the sum amounting to three thousand pounds. Their password is to be, "Where's the cat?"

However:

Two young unmarried ladies get hold of the password, and — for reasons which are not clearly explained — endeavour to pass themselves off as the wives of two of the three gentlemen in question, representing by the somewhat culpable device of forged letters that their supposed husbands have sent them in their stead.

The plot was further complicated when a third person became mixed up in the secret. He was Garroway Fawne, 'a mercurial, dashing young gentleman, who gets into the imbroglio by accident, and is puzzled at every turn by the questions put to him as to the cat's whereabouts'.

There are thus three real and three false claimants to the wealth enclosed in the cat's skin, and with the second act the indescribable game of hide and seek begins.

Two more characters had to be introduced, however, before the plot could be resolved: Madge, 'a pretty and simple Westmoreland girl' who was in love with one of the genuine claimants of the cat, and an 'aesthetic' young gentleman called Scott Ramsay. The latter was given to extravagant language, calling his books his 'children', and was overheard saying that one 'fell dead from the press', another was 'lying at home in a trunk', and a third 'saw the light' but a critic who disliked it immediately 'sat on it and slaughtered it'.

This obviously was in danger of appearing a transparently contrived device for creating comic situations. Clearly,

also, with eight protagonists sharing the stage there was a possibility of genuine confusion. We have noticed before occasions when actors seemed to have had little real rehearsal, and other occasions when they seemed, to the reviewer at least, not to have grasped the basis of the humour of the piece. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the notice of 'Where's the Cat?' paid specific attention to these points:

Great praise is due to the really excellent manner in which the piece is played. It goes with clockwork precision, and the manner in which the "business" has been worked up shows the hand of the experienced stage director.

'Where's the Cat?' was accompanied by a drama in two acts, 'Brave Hearts', adapted from the French by Arthur Mathieson. The play was a variation upon a familiar theme, but stated it rather succinctly: its central character was a 'proud and poverty stricken aristocrat, who tunes pianos for a scanty subsistence, and tries to hide his poverty from his daughter'.

'Where's the Cat?' was succeeded on 23 May by another comic opera played by a company of children - 'Les Cloches de Corneville', given by Charles Bernard's company. Again the reviewer thought the audience favourably impressed by this novel presentation of a by then quite familiar piece,<sup>12</sup> and for the same reasons as he had given for the success of the company of children who gave 'HMS Pinafore'

in the previous month, but he did think that the latter opera was more suitable for presentation by children, since 'Les Cloches de Corneville' contained long passages of dialogue which he suggested might be cut.

'Les Cloches de Corneville' was followed on 30 May by a new play to Leeds, 'The Mother-in-law', presented by Alfred Hemmings's company with the Walton family.<sup>13</sup>

'The Mother-in-law' was a three-act comedy, and was accompanied by 'The Corsican Brothers' Babes in the Wood', both of which were written by G.R. Sims. Sims, it will be remembered, had written the play in which Alfred Hemmings and the Waltons had previously appeared at the Grand Theatre — 'Crutch and Toothpick', in April and November 1880. At the time of the visit of 'The Mother-in-law' to the Grand Theatre, another of his plays, 'The Member for Slocum' was playing at the Royalty Theatre in London.

The subject of the play was a self-consciously theatrical one:

The plot mainly turns upon the love adventures of one Talfourd Twigg, a barrister and dramatic author, and Rose Matilda, the daughter of a terrible old lady named Mrs McTurtle... Talfourd Twigg, engaged to Rose Matilda, has written a play, the chief character in which he has sketched from Mrs McTurtle, his future mother-in-law. Mrs McTurtle visits the theatre during the performance of this piece, and all the efforts of the terrified dramatist are directed to preventing the old lady from seeing her counterfeit presentment on the stage.<sup>14</sup>

The play had a scene set in the theatre's stage corridor, which the reviewer thought possibly derivative from

'Le Roi Candaule' by Meilhac and Halevy, but otherwise he thought the play quite 'original', and superior to Charles Wyndham's 'Criterion successes' which were generally adaptations from the French. But it is interesting to note that the dramatist was happy to exploit the inner workings of the theatre, as well as its public face, for the sake of his plot.

'The Mother-in-law' was followed by a seven week season of revived melodramas given by Henry Neville, Harry Jackson, and a company from the Princess's Theatre.<sup>15</sup> The season began on 6 June with 'Proof', and included five other plays: 'The Ticket-of-leave-man', 'The Two Orphans', 'After Dark', 'Camilla's Husband', and 'The Lady of Lyons'. In many of these plays Henry Neville, Harry Jackson, and Mrs Hudson Kirby who was also in the company, had been the original London stars, and the reviewer suggested that Wilson Barrett had arranged this season with the idea of giving the Leeds public the opportunity to see the originators of roles with which they had been made familiar only by touring companies.<sup>16</sup> Generally the season seems to have been well attended, which shows Wilson Barrett to have been sensitive to the tastes of his audience, though one might wonder whether these plays had so popular a hold that they would have drawn audiences irrespective of who the stars were, or whether it needed the injection of the original stars to boost public interest.

A similarity in all the roles which Henry Neville played

in this season quite clearly emerges from an examination of the plays, and this type-casting becomes quite blatant in Harry Jackson's case, for he made a speciality of playing villainous Jews.

Many of the company were familiar to the Leeds audience, and it included Maud Milton ('an emotional actress whose services to the melodrama were of unquestionable value'), Miss Mason, who had recently appeared at the Grand Theatre with Madame Modjeska, Mrs Hudson Kirby, Mrs Huntley, and Katie Barry and Helen Redcliffe, who, playing the child and Madeline respectively, were both in the Wilson Barrett company which gave 'Proof' at the Grand Theatre in April 1879.

Henry Neville, of course, played the hero in these plays, and in 'Proof' the Yorkshire Post reviewer characterised his performance thus:

The sympathy throughout is of course with Pierre Lorance, and it is necessary that the representative of that long-suffering and much-wronged French soldier should be a fine, manly fellow, with a natural ring in his voice and a strong dash of heartiness and sympathy in his manner... When Pierre Lorance is wrongfully accused of the terrible charge, Mr Neville is able without exaggeration to represent the conflicting emotions in the brave soldier's mind; and when suffering unjustly mental and bodily torture at the galleys, he bears himself with the dignity of a brave man. There is no maudlin sentimentality about the pathos; it is the grief of a man who feels acutely, but is brave and manly under his sufferings.<sup>17</sup>

This explicit denial of sentimentality is important to note, for it is common for the contemporary critic to fall into

the trap of assuming that the Victorians consciously wallowed in sentimentality at the expense of all reason. However sentimental the tastes of the times may now seem, I think it important to remember that the Victorian reviewer thought that he was seeing something real.

In 'The Ticket-of-leave-man' which followed 'Proof', on 13 June, Henry Neville played the part of Bob Brierley, which he had been the first to perform, and had by this time played 1345 times. Harry Jackson gave 'his great Jewish impersonation', Melter Moss. The play was, of course, written by Tom Taylor, and after its first production in 1863 it had quickly become a staple of the melodramatic repertoire. Frequent performance had bred in some companies a somewhat cavalier attitude towards its presentation:

Tom Taylor's powerful and interesting drama ... has long been recognised as one of the best "drawing" pieces in the entire collection of modern plays, and for years past it has been the custom to hastily put it on — more or less mutilated according to the strengths or weaknesses of the company and the quickness of study amongst its members — whenever an attraction was wanted... Crowds have sympathised over the fall of the frank-hearted Bob Brierley, and have grieved over his subsequent struggles to gain a fresh start in life, even when the incidents of the story have been set forth in rough dialogue improvised by actors who had not been able to devote study or rehearsal to the play.<sup>18</sup>

In this production, however, the play was given in its entirety by a competent cast and 'ran more smoothly than usual'. Neville's performance had 'natural heartiness and frankness', it was 'manly, tender, and touching' and was an

'excellent and highly finished' portrait of the 'good-hearted', but 'easily-tempted' Bob Brierley.

'The Ticket-of-leave-man' was followed on 20 June by 'The Two Orphans', John Oxenford's adaptation of 'Les Deux Orphelines'. Henry Neville had originally 'created' the part of Pierre in this play, and had given 673 performances of it in London. William Rignold, who had also acted in the original production was brought in specially for this revival at Leeds, and Mrs Huntley, who was already in the company, also played her 'original' part, La Frochard.

'The Two Orphans' lacked the emotional engagement that the Yorkshire Post reviewer required of a play,<sup>19</sup> and he attributed this to a rather mechanical translation by Oxenford. It was very often 'bald', he said, and the spectator was frequently struck more by the author's ingenuity in moving his characters around like chess pieces than with the 'intended passion and pathos of the play itself'.

The central character, Pierre, was a very pathetic figure in the tale – a crippled knife-grinder. Neville's playing of the role was 'built up' with 'unforced and perfectly natural points' and 'artistic touches'. Set against him was the 'cruel and villainous Jaques' played by William Rignold 'with dash and energy'.

The reviewer picked up an interesting point of scenic detail at the end of his notice which helps identify the style of production:

The piece is, it need hardly be said, mounted in a thoroughly efficient manner. One anachronism which can easily be remedied may, however, be pointed out. It was singular to see in the scene of old Paris last night, gentlemen in the square-cut coats, bag-wigs, and three-cornered hats of the Louis XV period walking arm-in-arm with ladies in the costumes of the present day, ranging from the effective "arrangement in black velvet and ermine" of Mrs Hudson Kirby, to the most recent thing in "ulsters" on the part of the supernumeraries.

'Proof' was repeated for the first five nights of the week beginning 4 July ('The Two Orphans' having run for a fortnight), but on Saturday Boucicault's 'After Dark' was given. In this play Henry Neville played Old Tom, and Harry Jackson played Dicy Morris. New scenery was painted by Charles Brooke and E. Stocks, and Robert Wade and assistants contributed 'great mechanical' and 'enormous sensational effects'.

In the play, said the reviewer,<sup>20</sup> 'probability had been sacrificed for the sake of ... "strong interest", and the inevitable sensation scene was relied upon to work the interest of the audience up to the highest possible pitch'.

The play was clearly written to exploit the success of 'The Streets of London', and dealt similarly with various kinds of 'London life' likely to be familiar to the audience. 'After Dark', said the reviewer, 'introduces the audience to various haunts, including the "Elysium Music Hall" while the performance is proceeding at that humble temple of the Muses'. It was a precursor of the 'panoramic' melodrama, developed by Meritt, Pettitt, and Augustus Harris, in that it relied upon the excitement of spectacular action, and despite his earlier disparaging remarks about

the sensation scene the reviewer faithfully mirrored the structural importance of this scene by devoting by far the largest part of his notice to describing it. His response shows clearly how the scene affected the audience:

The great sensation scene is well led up to, and is sufficiently exciting; and as it made the fortune of the play in London it will doubtless do the same here, particularly as it is put upon the stage in a marvellously realistic manner. Gordon Chumley is rendered insensible and laid across the line of the Metropolitan Railway by the villain, Chandos Billingham. A train is approaching, and he is rescued from his perilous position by old Tom, the good genius of the piece, just as the train dashes past. So skilfully is this scene led up to, and so impressive are the surroundings, that the spectators are liable to forget the absurdity of old Tom breaking through the massive and solid masonry of the underground railway in the course of a few minutes, and have no time to reflect that such a thing could not be done. Eagerness prevails — as the man is lying there and the train is rapidly approaching — to see whether the rescuer can reach the spot in time, and when the rescue is effected the applause which is brought down from all parts of the house is a testimony to the skill of the ingenious gentleman who devised the situation, but still more to the staff of the Grand Theatre, who have put the scene on the stage in such a realistic fashion. The train is a huge solid affair, built to the size of an ordinary locomotive and passenger carriages, and as it dashes along — propelled by unseen mechanism and emitting smoke and flame in plenty — the deception is complete.

'After Dark' had nine performances, and then this season of revived melodramas was ended with two performances of 'Camilla's Husband' on Wednesday and Thursday, 20 and 21 July, and a single performance of 'The Lady of Lyons' on Friday, 22 July. The season ended on a Friday because Sarah Bernhardt was to give one performance only of 'La Dame aux Camélias' on the Saturday.

In 'Camilla's Husband', which was written by Watts Phillips and first performed in 1862, Henry Neville played Maurice Warner, 'a wastrel of an artist, wandering about the country with no money in his pockets, drunken, dissolute, and altogether reckless, but still a gentleman'.<sup>21</sup> He agreed to marry Camilla for a fee, because she needed to have a husband in order to inherit some property. He was supposed never to see her again after the ceremony, but eventually fell in love with her, was reformed by this love, gave up the drink, and devoted himself to his art with, naturally enough, brilliant success.

Neville's playing, thought the reviewer, was 'sound, conscientious, and graceful throughout', and did not suffer the vicissitudes of the star system:

With the instinct of a genuine artist he Neville acts for the piece and not merely for his own part. Mr Neville is fortunately not a star in the ordinary acceptance of the word — ensuring that his own part stands out prominently and leaving the rest of the piece to look after itself — for he is always thoroughly in the picture.

One specific incident was revealing of the nature of the play and of Neville's acting; it came towards the end of the play, when Maurice was on the road to salvation. The reviewer described it as a piece of acting technique:

The way in which his face lights up with joy when he hears his wife's request, "Maurice Warner! Fight that man," may be referred to as one effect among many which go to make up a complete and carefully studied performance.

Sarah Bernhardt's visit to the Grand Theatre was part of a short English provincial tour on which she was supported by the Gymnase company. In some towns she played for three nights (when she usually included one performance of 'Frou-Frou'), but in Leeds she played only one, although the reviewer 'mentioned on authority' that the attendance at the Grand Theatre was considerably greater than at any other provincial theatre.<sup>22</sup> She played to a full and 'brilliant' house who had paid 'greatly' increased prices for admission.<sup>23</sup> All seats, including those in the pit, gallery, and amphitheatre circle had been able to be booked (this was quite exceptional) and an extra row of orchestra stalls had been provided. The play was performed in French, but an English synopsis by Thomas Hardman which gave 'plot, brief description of each act, the entrance of each character, and an explanation of the action' was sold at the box office.

The Yorkshire Post reviewer, after his usual strictures on the 'immorality' of the piece, and finding the Gymnase company poor in talent and inferior to Harry Jackson's company which had just completed the season of melodramas, went on to describe the audience's reaction to Sarah Bernhardt with evocative detail:

The audience was at first expectant, and on her entry in the first act Mdlle Bernhardt was warmly cheered. Then, for the first two acts, despite the grace of manner of the actress, and the wonderful musical voice — capable now of expressing infinite tenderness, and now of indicating a spoiled child's gaiety — there was a feeling of evident

disappointment among those who looked for the big effects of the piece too soon. But from the commencement of the well-known scene between Margueritte and M. Duval père in the third act, the actress carried all before her. She proved herself perfect in the range of the part; she attacked the situations with consummate ease and unflinching effect. The feeling of curiosity and expectation which had before characterised the audience gave way to a genuine and unmistakable enthusiasm, and as the curtain fell on the third, fourth and fifth acts, Mdlle Bernhardt was recalled again and again by ringing cheers. Despite the fact that the language in which she spoke was almost unknown to many among the audience, the exquisite grace of her style, the music of her voice, and the strong, nervous power she displayed made a decidedly favourable and striking impression.

Later, he gave a more technical description of Sarah Bernhardt's performance, indicating clearly the telling incidents of the play and the qualities of Bernhardt's acting that were especially successful:

Though the attack of illness while dancing in the first act was admirably indicated, Mdlle Bernhardt failed to altogether suggest that Margueritte was suffering from an illness which was destined to prove fatal, and was recklessly throwing herself into the feverish life to escape from thought and pain. But in the interview with Armand's father, in the third act, the tearfulness of her pleading was most pathetic — the words often seem to melt away into tears, so perfectly was the voice managed. The exit in this scene was splendidly done, and the sacrifice which the woman was making in giving up Armand was most powerfully suggested by the despairing gesture of the actress as she staggered down the garden path. The scene with Armand at the end of the fourth act was a magnificent outburst. Alternately indignant at the bitter words of her lover and piteous in her pleading she passed from one phase of the scene to another by swift but perfectly natural transitions; she clung to him desperately, and the abandonment of her grief and shame were as much suggested by the attitudes as by the voice. The act drop fell amongst great enthusiasm. In the death scene, which brings the play to a close, there were one or two touches well worth waiting for. The groan which she gave as she surveyed her pale and worn face in the mirror most eloquently told its tale. But the return of Armand to the dying woman's side was one of the most thrilling episodes of the evening.

The cry of surprise and joy, and the manner in which she clung to him – hungry for his love and sympathy – could not have been made such a strong point by any other living actress. The well-managed business of the death brought down the curtain effectively, and resulted in calls again and again repeated.

The theatre was closed for the week beginning 25 July, and reopened on 1 August with a 'farcical comedy', 'The Guv'nor'. The play was written by R. Reece and was advertised as 'the latest London success'. It was first performed in 1880, and had had two hundred and fifty performances at the Vaudeville Theatre, London. It was presented at the Grand Theatre by Messrs T.W. Robertson and Bruce.<sup>24</sup>

In the opinion of the reviewer the play relied upon: three characters – one of whom stammered, one was deaf, and one spoke 'with studied nasality over a garden wall'; a 'slightly unwholesome taint ... the inferred infidelity of a young wife', and 'a few similar poison-fanged suggestions'; and 'the occasional aptness of the repartee and the freshness of some of the illustrations from nature'.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly the play did not have the 'tone' that the reviewer required, and in his remarks he seemed to be recognising a trend: 'The very title of the play is a vulgarism, and it is followed up by another in "Yer 'and, guv'nor, yer 'and" [a catch phrase that was included in the press advertising]. Gags and tags used to be confined to the boards – they are now finding their way on programme and placard as a sort of bird-lime catchword for the modern playgoer'.

One scenic note, showing the perspective illusion with

which even this kind of play was illustrated, ended the notice: 'The piece was prettily mounted, the peep up the river through the boat-house being very picturesque'.

'The Guv'nor' was followed on 8 August by a comic opera, 'Billee Taylor', presented by Charles Bernard's company.<sup>26</sup> It was written by H.P. Stephen and E. Solomon. The reviewer thought it was 'one of the latest things in English comic opera'.<sup>27</sup> It was a variation on an old story, he said, 'told with neatness and despatch', without 'strikingly superfluous music, libretto, or business', or 'a quiet vein of humour running through, and except for the twist which some of the members give to the situations and characters, there is really very little of the absolutely comic. Indeed, 'Billee Taylor' with another name [̄this one was associated with a music-hall song], played seriously, with a development of the pathetic and even tragic, could be made a far more engaging, a far more powerful and certainly a more artistically promising English opera than it at present is with its unavoidable trivialities and mock emotion'.

That comic operas tended to be of a type with regard to subject and plot was shown when the reviewer said: 'Occasionally there are not musical but literary and theatrical reminders of 'HMS Pinafore', though these arise from palpable coincidence of situation rather than serious plagiaristic imitation.'

'Billee Taylor' was followed on 15 August by Dion Boucicault and his company<sup>28</sup> who played for a week in 'The Shaughraun', 'Arrah-na-pogue', and 'Kerry'.

The week opened with 'The Shaughraun', but the reviewer<sup>29</sup> thought that Boucicault's appearances in the provinces were so few that he and his cast were of more interest than the play, which had had some half dozen different productions in Leeds. ('The Shaughraun' had first been performed in 1874.) The play itself had stood the commercial test, said the reviewer, and proved to have 'more money in it' than any other of Boucicault's plays, but the author's acting was characterised thus:

Mr Boucicault, as an actor, is a thorough and finished artist, and his humour is fresh, spontaneous, and quite irresistible. His identity is lost completely in the part, and he fills up the sketch which, as the author of the play, he had drawn with innumerable happy touches. We see the actual scapegrace before us, making love with charming grace to his pretty sweet-heart Moya, describing with ill-concealed delight his theft of the squire's horse on a hunting day, ready with all kinds of ingenious excuses to the priest when his love of whisky has got him into a scrape, and showing by many a sly twinkle of the eye his enjoyment of his wild, roving life. Conn, with his fiddle and his oft-spoken-of dog Tatters, becomes a very human and probable figure in the hands of Mr Boucicault. There is life in the sketch, and, despite the fact that it is many years ago since Mr Boucicault first appeared before the public, there is no lack of vigour, the actor's humour being as fresh and as fascinating as ever. The easy, natural grace of Mr Boucicault's style is apparent in all that he does.

Dion Boucicault was followed by a return visit for a week of Henry Neville and Harry Jackson's company in 'The Scuttled Ship'.<sup>30</sup> This was the title given to a revised adaptation of his own novel, 'Foul Play', by Charles Reade. The

first provincial performance of the earlier adaptation, then called 'Foul Play', was given by John Coleman at the Old Theatre Royal, Leeds, when it was 'exceptionally well mounted' and had two runs of performances.

The Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>31</sup> thought that it 'now seemed an exceptionally unsatisfactory piece of work, and showed plainly what had been proved times out of number before — that a readable and interesting novel may make only an indifferent play':

The scenes in 'The Scuttled Ship' appear like chapters taken at random from a novel and thrown together without any attempt at growing interest and logical sequence. We are taken from the wreck in mid-ocean back to England, then back to an island on which some of the survivors are cast, then back to England, back to the island again, and then finally back to England. All this is quite permissible in a book, but it is confusing on the stage, and the main thread of the interest is repeatedly dropped in the most aggravating fashion.

This sense of dislocation and interruption, presumably resulting in a dissipation of the dramatic tension, is an interesting basis of complaint considering the disruptive effect that we might assume spectacular and mechanical effects to have had. But these effects cannot have been considered to have had any such consequences, for the reviewer specifically allows of their great success in this piece when he went on: 'One merit may be accorded to Mr Reade's work — it gives chances for spectacular effects. The scenery is by Mr C. Brooke of the Princess's Theatre, London, and last night the mechanical effect of the sinking ship drew down a tremendous round of applause.'

Henry Neville's performance as Robert Penfold was 'manly ... easy, natural, and dignified' and impressed the audience by its 'truth to nature', but, though 'the highly romantic island scene gave him some good chances, and ... here he won the warmest sympathies of the spectators', the reviewer thought that he was not seen in this play to his usual advantage.

'The Scuttled Ship' was followed by 'The Colonel', a satire on the Aesthetic movement. It was an adaptation by F.C. Burnand of 'Le Mari à la Campagne', and was being performed at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, and also by two touring companies in the provinces.

The Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>32</sup> did not give it a detailed notice, contenting himself to call it 'an undoubted monetary success' and to record that 'the Leeds audience ... endorsed the verdict previously passed by other towns'. In an oblique comment upon the piece's satire, he added that 'the furniture and decoration of the stage in the scene of the "aesthetic" room in the first act were so tasteful and charming as to almost make one firmly believe in the movement which Mr Burnand has set himself to ridicule'.

'The Colonel' was followed on 5 September by a week in which Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, and the Lyceum company presented six plays: J. Wills's 'Charles I' on Monday,

'The Merchant of Venice' on Tuesday, 'Hamlet' on Wednesday and Thursday, 'The Cup' and 'The Belle's Stratagem' on Friday, and 'The Bells' with 'The Belle's Stratagem' on Saturday. ('Daisey's Escape' by A.W. Pinero accompanied 'Charles I' as a curtain-raiser.)

Advertising made much of the fact that Irving had brought the whole of the Lyceum company with him - in all over fifty people, thirty-two of whom were actors, and the rest, presumably, were musical, technical, and managerial staff. He also brought with him the properties, costumes, tapestries and draperies which were used at the Lyceum, as well as the temple scene painted by Hawes Craven for 'The Cup'. A special train was chartered to transport what amounted to many tons of scenery, costumes, and properties, and the Yorkshire Post reviewer noted that Henry Irving's week at the Grand Theatre, which 'might be regarded as the most important theatrical event of the year' in Leeds must have been a costly one both to Irving and to Wilson Barrett.<sup>33</sup> Their enterprise was rewarded, however, for example on the Tuesday night, by an audience which 'thronged the Grand Theatre from floor to roof' and paid 'the largest amount of money ever drawn to a play of Shakespeare's in Leeds'.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly the audiences were strongly attracted by Irving and it is possible to see something of the character and style of playing that exercised such a fascination percolate through what must be regarded as very ambivalent notices

in the press. The Yorkshire Post reviewer was certainly guarded in his praise of Irving, but his criticisms were almost vitriolic, and evinced such a strength of feeling in the matter that, at least, they indicated the seriousness with which the theatre and its characters were taken.

His criticisms became repetitive, but in essence they were that though Irving was 'the best actor in the picturesque melodrama that the modern stage has seen' (he named 'The Lancashire Lass', 'The Bells', 'Louis XI', and 'The Lyons Mail' as illustrations of this) he suffered 'peculiarities of pronunciation, which often sadly mar the beauties of Shakespeare's verse', and he had an 'awkwardness of gait' which, the reviewer pointed out, some people had 'bitterly denounced'. As Irving's career had developed the reviewer thought these 'mannerisms' had become intensified, and he had the suspicion that this was done deliberately, calling them 'fashionable' pejoratively, and in places regretting that young actors seemed to imitate them.

In complaining about Irving's Shylock the reviewer<sup>35</sup> attempted to illustrate some of these 'peculiarities of pronunciation' saying that 'the letter i was always sounded as an e; the letter o gained a sound something like ur; and the letter a was invariably given the open, or French, sound like ar'. This rendered much of the play unintelligible, he said, and a knowledge of the words would help the playgoer. Fashionable mannerisms, awkwardness of movement, mispronunciation and even halting misemphasis

of words, then, were the basis of the reviewer's criticisms.

But if we look at the plays with a wider view, we can begin to see how Irving's individuality, allied with forceful delivery, fitted into the larger picture.

'Charles I'

dealt with the most exciting period of the life of Charles I, showing him first in the gardens of Hampton Court Palace making merry with his children, and leading a life of pure domestic happiness. Dark rumours of discontent and disaffection reach him, but do not disturb him to any considerable extent. The rebellious spirit, however, grows; the King finds his power slipping away from him, until at last — after a most pathetic leave-taking of his queen and children, he leaves the room in Whitehall Palace for the scaffold.<sup>36</sup>

It seems likely that a highly individual performance would help to invest a greater degree of interest in a character which might run the risk of banality in such a domestic treatment. Certainly the visual aspect of the performance was designed to extend the character of the King:

When Mr Irving came upon the stage last night in the gardens of Hampton Court Palace, he seemed to have stepped out of one of the innumerable canvases of Vandyke dedicated to the unfortunate monarch. Again, in the battle scene, where the King is captured through the treachery of Lord Moray, the armour which Mr Irving wore made up a striking and picturesque costume.

The reviewer was sensitive, too, to the fact that Irving was trying to invest personality and individuality in his Shylock. However, as far as the reviewer was concerned, it failed. It was 'scrappy' and 'incomplete', he said:

It was full of suggestions unrealised – replete with ideas which might, had the actor cared to take the pains, have been almost electrical in effect. But the chance was constantly lost.

Much of the difficulty was caused by Irving's lack of clear diction, the reviewer thought:

The famous speech "Hath not a Jew ears" was all sound and fury, signifying nothing.

But it is conceivable that Irving was developing 'realism' beyond the point that the reviewer could follow, for we may get some clue as to Irving's approach to the role when, later, the reviewer said:

It may be said that Mr Irving's Shylock exists only for the celebrated trial scene. He waits for this, and when he comes he is found to the fore. He stands there like a figure of Fate, demanding his bond. He is remorseless and implacable. Now he half turns with something like a smile to his arch tormentor Gratiano, and again he turns to the Duke with a face full of fierce determination, demanding "justice". His "business" and bearing during the whole scene where Portia, in the disguise of the learned doctor, pronounces judgement, could not be excelled; and his attitude when the judgement is pronounced against him is almost terrible in its crushed and heart-broken intensity.

Again in his Hamlet Irving fell foul of the reviewer in the soliloquies: 'He made awkward pauses in the midst of certain words which need not have been accentuated, but he sometimes actually divided syllables'.<sup>37</sup> The reviewer thought that he was better in the 'colloquial passages'.

However, the play was 'beautifully stage-managed':

The scenes in the Danish court were all really exquisite stage pictures. From first to last it was evident that there had been exercised a guiding intelligence and an unimpeachable taste. The rich draperies which hung from the stone walls of the Danish royal castle were in admirable keeping with the surroundings, while the dresses, the armour, and all the accessories ... contributed largely to the effect... The management of the crowds and processions, too, was beyond all reproach.

Tennyson's 'The Cup' owed much to its stage management, too:

The play is perfectly produced. Throughout we have strains of quaint, barbaric music performed upon stringed instruments, and picturesque costumes and beautifully designed scenery are seen during every stage of the action. There is a perfect feast for the ear and the eye, but still the piece is not a drama in the strict sense of the word — being rather a lyric poem illustrated with all the aids that the stage can give. The scene in the temple of Artemis in the second act, with its picturesquely arranged groups of priestesses, its lights, its music, and its elaborate ceremonial, is probably one of the most picturesque sights that the modern stage has witnessed.<sup>38</sup>

Irving's triumph, as far as the reviewer was concerned, was in 'The Bells',<sup>39</sup> and doubtless it was played at the end of the week in consciousness of its popularity.

Irving's performance was:

very striking and powerful, the ghastly details of the murder being reproduced with vivid force in the exciting dream scene. The large audience was hushed to complete silence during the whole of the vividly effective recital of the murder, and the subsequent scene of the wretched man's death. It was not until the curtain had slowly descended and had hidden from view the body huddled up in

the chair that the cheers of the audience broke forth; the actor whose powerful representation had so closely held the attention of every spectator being then summoned before the curtain by a perfect storm of applause.

Henry Irving's week was followed on 12 September by the Carl Rosa Opera Company in five operas. Four of them were quite familiar to the Leeds public: 'Bohemian Girl', 'Mignon', 'Maritana', and 'Carmen', performed on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday respectively, but the week was opened with the first performance in Leeds of Wagner's 'Lohengrin'. This opera was sung in an English version by John P. Jackson, and new scenery was painted for it by Mr C. Brooke.<sup>40</sup>

Carl Rosa's Opera Company was followed on 19 September by a return visit of Charles Wyndham's company in 'Brighton' which they had previously played at the Grand Theatre in May 1880. 'Brighton' in turn was succeeded by a return visit of Charles Bernard's company in 'Les Cloches de Corneville'.

J.L. Toole and his company followed 'Les Cloches de Corneville' on 3 October in the latest play that H.J. Byron had written for him, 'The Upper Crust'. As its title at once suggests this was a comedy along familiar lines: Toole played an opulent 'soap boiler' who wanted to get into society for the sake of his daughter, making himself ridiculous because of his pretensions. The play was

accompanied by a one-act comedy by A.W. Pinero, 'Hester's Mystery', which was based on a reconciliation between a 'somewhat soured and strong-minded mother to her daughter's clandestine marriage brought about by the daughter placing her month old baby in her mother's arms'.<sup>41</sup>

H.J. Byron was also the author of the play which followed after Toole's week: 'New Brooms', which was performed by Edward Terry and his company.<sup>42</sup> It was accompanied by 'The Forty Thieves' which was a contraction into five scenes of 'the Gaiety burlesque drama', and this latter was in fact the major piece of the evening in the reviewer's opinion.<sup>43</sup>

'New Brooms' and 'The Forty Thieves' were followed on 17 October by John Coleman and a 'specially selected' company in a new play, 'The Shadow of the Sword' by Robert Buchanan. The play proposed a somewhat sophisticated moral dilemma, and in this 'leading motive' the reviewer thought he detected the influence of Victor Hugo.<sup>44</sup> The author's aim was

to show a brave man — a poor peasant — smarting under suffering of no common order, who tries with his puny power to resist the tyrannical military sway of the first Napoleon. Rohan Gwenfern is a noble fellow in advance of his times, who alone stands forth and challenges the despotism of the man who presses all the youth of France into his service for schemes of conquest. His father has been killed in battle; his brother, who returned home after being wounded, has been shot as a deserter; he himself is drawn as a conscript, and the news that her only remaining son is called to the wars breaks the widow Gwenfern's heart. The man

has therefore deep and bitter wrongs to sustain him in his unequal contest. The soldiers come for him, but he flatly refuses to serve. Of his bravery there is no question; he declares that, should his country be in peril, he would fight willingly to defend its hearths and homes; but he is firm in his resolve that he will not lend himself to the rapacity of conquest.

The hero was hunted as a fugitive throughout the play, hiding in lonely caves, ragged and starving, performing 'miracles of personal valour', and finally rescuing his 'sweetheart Marcelle from her position of deadly peril when the rising flood threatens to overwhelm her'.

Though the reviewer came close to the truth in his analysis of the play, he was content to leave it at the level of an exciting story:

The love interest runs through all the scenes of storm and flood and peril of all kinds... /And/ there is also a contemptible and somewhat conventional villain who constantly pursues Rohan Gwenfern with a deadly hate, and desires Marcelle for himself. But the main theme must always be the fight of one poor and unknown man against the ruler of half Europe.

The military subject, of course, gave opportunities for the stage manager: 'The audience will find plenty of action and movement, and not a little military bustle - in one scene a military band gives stirring effect to the finish of an act'.

'The Shadow of the Sword' was followed on 24 October by a return visit of the D'Oyly Carte company in 'The Pirates of Penzance', and this in turn was followed by a second

week of the Carl Rosa Opera Company which performed 'Faust' on Monday, 'Bohemian Girl' on Tuesday, 'Zampa' on Wednesday, 'Lohengrin' on Thursday, 'Carmen' on Friday, and 'Mignon' on Saturday.

Carl Rosa's week was followed by another visit of the D'Oyly Carte company,<sup>45</sup> this time in 'Patience' of which this was the first performance in Leeds. The reviewer regarded this as another satire on Aestheticism, and thought that as it was therefore aimed at a passing fad it was unlikely to be long-lived. He did, however, concede that it had been Gilbert and Sullivan's biggest box office success.

'Patience' was followed by a week in which Miss Wallis appeared in four plays: 'Romeo and Juliet' on Monday and Wednesday, 'The Lady of Lyons' on Tuesday, 'As You Like It' on Thursday, and 'Ninon', by W.S. Wills, on Friday and Saturday.

Miss Wallis had only been to Leeds once before when she played at the Amphitheatre roughly seven years prior to this visit. She was, however, 'a great favourite' in Lancashire.<sup>46</sup> Besides the 'usual' range of Shakespeare's plays which lady stars had in their repertoires, she had played in 'Cymbeline', and 'Anthony and Cleopatra', the latter of which she had revived at Drury Lane. She also included in her repertoire two 'highly poetical' plays by Ross Neil, 'Paul and Virginia', and 'The Lovers of Palma'.

In his notice of her 'Romeo and Juliet', which he thought her best piece, the Yorkshire Post reviewer made an interesting distinction between forceful acting and overacting:

So strong are Miss Wallis's effects in the fourth act that she might almost be accused of overacting, did not the terribly tragic nature of the situation require the full powers of an actress of the highest calibre. Doubtless there may be some artificiality and sign of method in the sudden changes of emotion which are presented, but the scenes of passion and of horror are on the whole played so realistically that it would be ill-natured to cavil.<sup>47</sup>

Miss Wallis was followed on 21 November by one of Holt and Wilmot's two companies which were touring 'The World' by Messrs Paul Meritt, Henry Pettitt, and Augustus Harris.<sup>48</sup>

The reviewer<sup>49</sup> found it necessary to introduce his discussion of the work at length, for reasons which become obvious:

It is difficult to know from what point of view to criticise 'The World', the startlingly sensational drama which was produced last night for a fortnight's run at the Grand Theatre. The play is in no fewer than nine acts, and the incidents and sensations follow each other with such startling rapidity as to fairly take one's breath away. Time was when one sensation scene, such as a water cave or a house on fire, was deemed sufficient to draw large audiences to a realistic play of modern life. But matters have changed during the past few years, and instead of a drama in three or four acts with front or carpenter's scenes to allow of elaborate sets being prepared behind, we have now a panoramic sort of drama, arranged in nine short acts or tableaux, the sensational effects being rapidly prepared one after the other, and the action of the story running on swiftly, with no more dialogue than is absolutely necessary... Messrs Paul Meritt, Henry Pettitt and Augustus Harris have been devoted rather to designing situations which would allow of scenic illustration and startling effects than to writing a story of human interest. The triumph of this drama is mainly the triumph of the scenic artist and the stage carpenter. It must not be

understood, however, that no credit is due to the authors. On the contrary, they have displayed considerable constructive skill in the manner in which they have kept their story of vice against virtue, running clearly through all the varied and striking tableaux. The thread of interest, indeed, starts soon after the curtain rises, where we find that an impossible Jew, named Moss Jewel, has consigned a cargo of sham diamonds by the steamer Lily of the Valley, and has insured them for twenty thousand pounds. He has placed an infernal machine on board, intending that the vessel shall be blown up in mid-ocean and never more heard of, so that he can then claim the insurance money. A passenger by the vessel is Sir Clement Huntingford, who has been cast from home, and has worked in the diggings by the name of Charles Hartley. The action here is very rapid, and a large amount of plot and counterplot is told in a very few words... The vessel sails from the quay with all the chief characters on board, and this effect closes the first act. In the second act the deck of the steamer is shown, and after more rapid but perfectly clear action, the terrible discovery is made ... that an infernal machine is concealed on board. Before the cargo can be overhauled the machine explodes, and this explosion is made the occasion of a very striking and realistic effect, which brings down the curtain to storms of applause. The next brief act shows the raft on which four of the principal characters have saved themselves. The action here is very exciting... There occur the death of one of the passengers, and the giving in trust to the hero ... of some real and valuable diamonds, for the benefit of the dead man's daughter, a fight between Sir Clement and Martin Bashford — one of the many villains of the piece — for the last drop of water, and the sighting of a vessel by the starved, parched and frantic party on the raft. Those on the vessel see their efforts to attract attention, and fire a gun as a signal, and the ship tacks and bears towards the raft — an effect which again brings down the curtain to loud applause. In the next act ... we are in England at the Westminster Aquarium, and a new intrigue ... is started. Sir Clement Huntingford's younger brother, Henry, ... thinking his brother dead, has assumed the title. When the real holder of the title and the estates turns up, the design of the younger brother is to murder him... It is ... impossible not to recognise the ingenuity by which the story is carried on, and the scene in which the wicked Henry Huntingford attempts to murder his brother ... but by a mistake ... murders ... one of the villains aforesaid is really a cleverly designed situation. The piece continues full of incident and situation even from this point... Clement Huntingford is unlawfully consigned to a private madhouse... The hero escapes by knocking down nine or ten of the warders in the melodramatic fashion of thirty years ago, and is afterwards seen escaping in a punt down the river. However, the story is effectively wound up after a scene in a large hotel, and another at a fancy dress ball.

There were elaborate sets for nearly all the nine acts, and they were all brought by Holt, who himself played Sir Clement Huntingford, and gave his melodramatic scenes in a 'quietly effective and self-contained manner' which the reviewer regarded as much more impressive than 'the mere noise of ordinary melodramatic actors'. Holt was shortly to have six other companies touring, though not all of them would be playing 'The World'.

'The World' was followed on 5 December by a return visit of Charles Wyndham and D'Oyly Carte's company in 'Olivette'. The performance at this second visit was better, thought the reviewer,<sup>50</sup> than the first, when the libretto had suffered from 'twaddling and foolish dialogue' — either from Farnie's intent, or 'gagging' interpolation by the actors. This had been reduced on the second visit (though the cast was virtually unchanged) and the whole production tightened up and played 'closer'.

'Olivette' was followed on 15 December by a week in which Madame Modjeska, supported by her husband, Forbes Robertson, and Wilson Barrett's company, appeared in five plays. Three of these — 'Heartsease', 'Adrienne Lecouvreur', and 'Romeo and Juliet', presented on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday respectively — she had given on her visit to Leeds in the autumn of 1880. Two of them, 'Mary Stuart', an adaptation from Schiller by Lewis Wingfield, and 'Frou-Frou', were fresh to her repertoire. (The addition of 'Frou-Frou'

to that repertoire might have been inspired by Sarah Bernhardt's summer tour.)

The qualities that Modjeska invested in her acting had not changed, and the reviewer established them with a new accuracy.<sup>51</sup> Madame Modjeska was 'seen at her finest', he said, in 'Mary Stuart' in a scene where Mary Stuart and Queen Elizabeth met. Elizabeth had been made 'exceedingly hard and cold' so that Mary might 'shine by contrast', and in this scene 'the sympathies of the audience go more strongly with Mary than at any other portion of the play...

She is every inch a queen, and the manner in which at first she humbles herself before her proud royal sister is replete with suggestions of pathos. When, stung by Elizabeth's cruel taunts, she casts off her mask of humility, and casts back reproach for reproach, the audience is completely carried away by the force of the actress.

The play ended in a way that might recall Irving's 'Charles I', in a farewell scene heightened in emotional intensity by the impending execution of the central character. In this last scene Modjeska's voice was 'charged with emotion', and though the scene was 'somewhat artificially arranged' she kept full sympathy, and the curtain fell on her 'progress towards the place of execution' and on a performance which was 'graceful and deeply impressive'.

The reviewer amplified this intensity of sympathy which built up between actress and audience when he went on, later, to discuss 'Adrienne Lecouvreur':

It could not but delight the experienced playgoer to notice

the exquisite tenderness of Madame Modjeska's love scenes with Maurice. Every tone was full of love, and every attitude was the perfection of grace. There was something so intense and joyous in the woman's love as she caressed the brave soldier who has protected her from insult, that, though the love story is never absorbing, everyone must be deeply interested in the love of Adrienne Lecouvreur when the part is impersonated by Madame Modjeska. Space forbids the mention of a large number of apparently small but really important details, which went to make up this absorbing performance; but at the close of the fourth act it may be said that the Polish actress fairly electrified her audience by the force and fire of her invective in the delivery of the speech from 'Phèdre'.<sup>52</sup>

The emotional empathy which she could develop with her audience was essential to what the reviewer thought was her triumph of the week, in 'Frou-Frou':

In the wife's appeals to her husband and sister /in the third act/ to be allowed to fulfil her duties as a wife, Madame Modjeska shone conspicuously. The perfect naturalness of the actress at this point appeared to strike the audience most forcibly. The new-rising jealousy and the eager striving to be all that a wife should be to her husband were expressed by a thousand subtle touches. The key-note was struck when poor Gilberte — striving hard to be considered as a woman and not as a frivolous child /Frou-Frou/, and still feeling the power of De Valreas, who has made love to her, exclaims "Now! I have done my part — let them do theirs!" From this point all was triumph for the actress. She swayed the emotions of her audience just as a Hallé or a Rubinstein might touch the keys of a pianoforte.<sup>53</sup>

Later in the play, the misunderstood Gilberte had fled to live with her lover in Venice, and her husband went to see her:

Here the emotional phase of Madame Modjeska's art was shown most strikingly. Her acting went direct to the hearts of the people by its perfect truth to nature. When she hears

of the inevitable duel which is to be fought between her wronged husband and the worthless lover with whom she has eloped, a hundred conflicting emotions are waging war in her breast. Fear for her husband's safety, shame at her own folly and wickedness, and horror at the thought that she should be the cause of bloodshed are the uppermost of these emotions, and they are expressed by consummate touches... The agony of Gilberte touched all hearts last night, and the pathetic scene of Gilberte's death was liberally productive of the genuine tribute of tears.

Madame Modjeska closed the week with a repeat performance of 'Mary Stuart', and this also closed the autumn season. The theatre remained closed for the first half of the following week, to reopen with the pantomime, 'Red Riding Hood', on Thursday, 22 December.

'Little Red Riding Hood; or, Harlequin, the Demon Wolf of the Enchanted Wand' was written by J. Wilton Jones, and despite the fact that he had to tailor his book to the 'specialities' of the artistes, and the spectacular scenery which dominated the construction of the pantomime, in the Yorkshire Post reviewer's opinion, he had produced 'an allegory - a poem'.<sup>54</sup>

In it he portrays the struggles of the child's mind between her fears and her duty. Duty calls her to her sick grand-ma's bedside. The evil spirits, personified in the form of a wher wolf, a wicked baron, and a host of myrmidons, beset her path; and, anon tempting and anon combatting, try to turn her aside; but, watched over and tended by the fairies, the flowers, the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, and even by mankind - there's a touch of nature there - she holds on through the busy world and the secluded solitudes alike until the wished-for goal is reached... Wilton Jones ... meets all the exigences imposed upon him in the production of a pantomime book, and at the same time preserves what may be called the

dramatic entities... To find fittings openings for spectacular display ... and yet keep up the thread of the story is no easy task ... /but/ the Bad Baron and agile attendants, Flipper and Flopper; Old Mother Hubbard and her Poodle Dog; Little Boy Blue and Pretty Miss Muffet; Little Johnny Stout, Little Johnny Green, and Little Jack Horner, and all the moving incidents of their memorable lives; the Wolf and the Cat, and the rest come in as naturally as possible, and each and all play their several parts in a drama which ... is always moving, and which from a pantomime point of view is strikingly full of powerful dramatic situations.

This said, the reviewer got down to the substantial part of his notice which described the scenes. For this pantomime Wilson Barrett had augmented the work of his usual scenic artists (Sutcliffe, Hall, Stocks, Fox, and two new recruits, Spong, and Mapleson) with scenes by Beverley, Telbin, and Hann. The resultant spectacle made a strong impression on the first night:

The Fringe of the Forest, a lovely emanation from the brush of the veteran, Beverley, which, though painted on the flat, suggests great expanse and distance, no sooner came into view than the surprised and delighted audience by one irresistible impulse burst into uncontrollable plaudits, and loudly called for "Barrett". Mr Barrett, however, did not choose to gratify their wishes. Why, did not seem clear at the moment; but the reason must have dawned upon everybody, when the scene, uplifting, disclosed another piece of Beverley's handiwork - a surpassingly beautiful set scene, in which the eye encompasses a grand vista of meadow, and water, and wood, with a noble castle in the middle ground, and glimpses of sylvan glades around. Coming so soon after the other the audience had their breath momentarily taken away by this exquisite picture: but recovering themselves, went off into rapturous cheering, which was again and again renewed as Mr Barrett, stepping forward, bowed his acknowledgements of the audience's appreciation of his artists' work. By the River, a sunset effect on the rushes and turbid water of a marshy stream, a fine conception of Telbin's, is not the kind of thing which usually appeals forcibly to the imagination of such an audience as that assembled at the Grand Theatre on Thursday; but both its descent, and the descent, also, of

a Courtyard View, into which Walter Hann has put some of his best work — quiet and delicate touches, sunny and warm — in each of these instances the audience, wearied somewhat as they evidently were at the slowness of some of the later scenes, saw at a glance the great merit of the paintings and testified their approval unstintingly...

Leaving these gems of scenic art, over which one is strangely inclined to linger, there remain yet to be noticed the efforts of the artists of the establishment. The three great set scenes of the pantomime are ... an Old English Farm, a highly realistic set by Spong, in which are all the accessories of farm and farm steading, with a windmill, with moving sails, thrown in; the two great ballet scenes, the Enchanted Glade in Summer, with an instantaneous mechanical change to Winter, by Lester Sutcliffe; and the Grand Hall in the Castle (Stafford Hall). Unforeseen casualties interfered with the full effect of the last-mentioned scene on the first night. There were gaps in the scenery, several of the fine candelabra, designed by Mr J.R. Watson, and from which thousands of candles are to flood the Hall with light, were either not hung, or unlighted, and the stage was not fully "dressed" during the Yule Tide Revels. These defects had been remedied by last night, and the scene looked splendid... As to the Transformation Scene, which during the later stage consists of openings out of flowers, descents and uprisings of sylvan nymphs, and the like — pretty enough, and striking enough in their way, but in the conventional style which appears most to gratify the people — notice should be taken of the two opening cloths which are the work — and very good work, too — of Mr Stocks.

The reviewer's incidental comment on the wearisome nature of the middle portion of the pantomime was set in context when he later attempted to indicate the pace of the performance:

An impression may have been formed that it is devoid of fun and go. Fun and Go! Why the two first scenes, the Demon scene and Mother Hubbard's School, are regular "whackers", as the phrase goes. It is bang, bang, bang all the time. All is as merry and bright and jolly as can well be conceived; song and dance and quip and crank, and business of side-splitting kind, tread in the footsteps of each other.

The cast was a large one (over three hundred, including supernumeraries) but the principals were Miss Addie Blanche ('who distinguished herself in last year's Drury Lane pantomime' and was 'a very talented little lady, and infused into her Little Red Riding Hood much pathos and point'), Mr Storey and Miss Kissie Wood, Mr Jean Stanley, Mr J.S. Haydon (who played the wolf), Harry Rickards (who was 'one of the idols of the music-hall stage') - he played Baron Badlot - Jenny Hill (the previous year's Aladdin, and who now played Boy Blue), Henry C. Arnold (who played Mother Hubbard), Brown, Newland and Wallace (who played Little Johnny Stout, Little Johnny Green, and Little Jack Horner), and William Walton who played Mother Hubbard's dog. The Fairy Dryada was played by Elsie Cameron who had been in Wilson Barrett's Hull pantomime in the previous year, and had then gone on to play in 'Patience'. The stage manager's wife, Jennie Hastings, made a nervous debut in this pantomime, and with Elsie Cameron played St Andrew and St George respectively in a later scene. The whole company, then, was an assembly of actors from melodrama, comic opera, the music hall, and from more purely pantomimic productions, from Wilson Barrett's companies, from Drury Lane, and even included the stage manager's wife. The orchestra was 'greatly augmented' and, under the direction of Mr Gribben played music that was 'music-hally', and 'jolly and catching'.

At the end of the first performance, Wilson Barrett came to the front of the stage and asked the audience "Are you satisfied with the result?" and, said the reviewer, 'the terrific shout of "yes" that went up from all parts of the house was answer enough...'

Notes

- 1 The company included Mr W.H. Day, Fred Desmond, Miss St George, and Miss M. Hunt.
- 2 The company included Joseph Eldred, Harry Fischer, Lucy Franklein, Grace Huntley, Theresa Cummings, and Carrie Braham. They used the resident theatre orchestra under the direction of Mr Gribben.
- 3 Yorkshire Post, 29 March 1881, p. 4.
- 4 The company included David Fischer jnr, Mr Marler, Laura Clement, and Millie Vere.
- 5 Yorkshire Post, 6 April 1881, p. 4.
- 6 Yorkshire Post, 19 April 1881, p. 5.
- 7 Rose Stanley played opposite Charles H. Morton in the two central roles.
- 8 The company included Phillip Day, Mr G.W. Taverner, and Edward S. Gofton.
- 9 Yorkshire Post, 10 May 1881, p. 6.
- 10 The company included Lytton Sothern, and William Farren jnr, both sons of actor fathers, as well as Mr T.S. Warren, William Blakeley, Alex Knight, Mrs Alfred Mellon, Louise Denman, Miss F. Chalgrove, Marian Forbes, and Kate Rorke.
- 11 Yorkshire Post, 17 May 1881, p. 4.
- 12 Yorkshire Post, 24 May 1881, p. 4.
- 13 The company included Alfred Hemmings, George Walton, Julia Cross, Gerald Moore, Ethel Castleton, Retta Walton, and Sallie Turner.

- 14 Yorkshire Post, 31 May 1881, p. 4.
- 15 The cast included H.C. Sidney, Mr Beauchamp, Lilian Lancaster, Maud Milton, Mr Hewitt, Helen Redcliffe, and Mrs Huntley.
- 16 Yorkshire Post, 7 June 1881, p. 4.
- 17 Yorkshire Post, 14 June 1881, p. 4.
- 18 Yorkshire Post, 14 June 1881, p. 4.
- 19 Yorkshire Post, 21 June 1881, p. 4.
- 20 Yorkshire Post, 12 July 1881, p. 4.
- 21 Yorkshire Post, 22 July 1881, p. 4.
- 22 Yorkshire Post, 25 July 1881, p. 3.
- 23 When Sarah Bernhardt was advertised to appear at the Grand Theatre in 1882 seats in the dress circle and the stalls were to be 10s. 6d., and those in the upper circle six shillings.
- 24 The company included Mr J.F. Young, Miss E. Brunton, T.W. Robertson, George Alexander, and Richard Dalton.
- 25 Yorkshire Post, 3 August 1881, p. 4.
- 26 The company included Edwin Keene, Fred Ferranti, Fred W. Sidney, Carrie Collier, Haidee Crofton, Georgie Lee, and Arabella Lane.
- 27 Yorkshire Post, 10 August 1881, p. 3.
- 28 The company included Shiel Barry (who had played the miser, Gaspard, in the London cast of 'Les Cloches de Corneville'), Mr J.G. Grahame, Mr J.G. Shore, Mr Ford, Mr R.B. Mantell, Cicely Nott, Mrs Carter, Mrs Bernard Beere, and Miss Lemoire.
- 29 Yorkshire Post, 16 August 1881, p. 4.

- 30 The company again included Maud Milton, Lilian Lancaster, Mr Beauchamp, Mr Boleyn, and Mr Huntley.
- 31 Yorkshire Post, 23 August 1881, p. 4.
- 32 Yorkshire Post, 30 August 1881, p. 4.
- 33 Yorkshire Post, 6 September 1881, p. 4.
- 34 Yorkshire Post, 7 September 1881, p. 4.
- 35 Yorkshire Post, 7 September 1881, p. 4.
- 36 Yorkshire Post, 6 September 1881, p. 4.
- 37 Yorkshire Post, 8 September 1881, p. 4.
- 38 Yorkshire Post, 10 September 1881, p. 4.
- 39 Yorkshire Post, 12 September 1881, p. 3.
- 40 Mr C. Brooke was from the Princess's Theatre, London.  
Costumes were by Mesdames East and Putney, and Mr Coombe of Her Majesty's Theatre, London. Armour was by Mr Kennedy of Birmingham, and properties were by Mr Labhart of Covent Garden Theatre.
- 41 Yorkshire Post, 4 October 1881, p. 4.
- 42 The company included Lilian Francis, Katie Ryan, Maria Jones, Rosie St George, and Mark Kinghome.
- 43 Yorkshire Post, 11 October 1881, p. 5.
- 44 Yorkshire Post, 18 October 1881, p. 5.
- 45 The company included George Thorne, Mr Rouseby, James Sidney, Mr J.B. Rae, Ethel McAlpine, Elsie Cameron, and Fanny Edwards.
- 46 Yorkshire Post, 15 November 1881, p. 5.
- 47 Yorkshire Post, 15 November 1881, p. 5.
- 48 The company included Fred Dobell, Mr Vollaire, Mr Melford, and Mr Hague. The scenic effects were by Mr Emden.

49 Yorkshire Post, 22 November 1881, p. 4.

50 Yorkshire Post, 6 December 1881, p. 5.

51 Yorkshire Post, 13 December 1881, p. 4.

52 Yorkshire Post, 15 December 1881, p. 4.

53 Yorkshire Post, 17 December 1881, p. 4.

54 Yorkshire Post, 23 December 1881, p. 4.

CHAPTER VI:1882

On 11 January 1882 the Grand Theatre company secretary wrote to Wilson Barrett asking him for £304 4s. 4d. This was a proportion of the rent for the last quarter of 1881 and was calculated from 17 November to the end of the year, since the new lease was assumed to have come into effect on 17 November. Wilson Barrett sent a cheque for the amount by return of post, so it is clear that neither the company nor Wilson Barrett thought at that time that the new lease was to be a source of contention.

However, Wilson Barrett had second thoughts, and wrote on 16 January objecting to the clause which gave the right of free admission to the directors, which the directors had inserted in the draft of the new lease. The secretary replied saying that the directors did not think that the operation of this clause need have any effect on Wilson Barrett's business at the theatre, and that it did not come within the category of free admissions or debenture or season ticket holders. Clearly this was a mere technical ploy on their part: whatever the name, the clause was intended to allow the directors to enter the theatre free whenever they wished. In fact, this clause was the only substantial difference between the new joint lease and the earlier leases of the theatre and the Assembly Rooms.

It will be remembered that the directors had tried to obtain a similar concession when the first lease of the

theatre was drawn up, and that Wilson Barrett had adamantly opposed it and the proposal had been dismissed. It does not seem that the directors would have kept many potential paying customers out of the theatre, if any at all, and considering the quibbling over nomenclature referred to above, it seems that Wilson Barrett was objecting on the grounds of principle. Perhaps he feared that the knowledge that some people got in without paying would generally have a demoralizing effect on the ordinary public's willingness to pay. In any case, he replied sternly on 23 January:

Sir,

I was perfectly willing to abide by the bargain made between the directors and myself when we last met.

I cannot consent to the altered conditions and decide therefore to continue on my present agreement.

I return the draft lease, and shall be pleased if you will let me know when the directors will retake possession of the Assembly Rooms.

He enclosed a cheque for £475 for rent calculated according to the old agreement, but added a post subscription that might seem to undermine a little the severity of his position, for he said:

As I have no wish to put the directors to any expense or trouble I am willing to let them fix their own time for retaking the rooms - the rent to continue till then.

Clearly, the 'millstone' of the Assembly Rooms was to be a lever in the negotiations.

Wilson Barrett also wrote directly to Kitson, couching his arguments in more personal terms:

I shall be sorry to give up the theatre, which to establish I have worked so hard, and up to now with so little pecuniary profit, but if you insist upon this point I shall be compelled to do so.

The Grand is now, even without further restrictions, the most difficult theatre in the provinces to manage, and considering the liberality with which I met the directors at the last interview, my giving up the one hundred pounds a year (up to this returnable for scenery), my acceptance of that certain loss — the Assembly Rooms, I certainly think that the directors might, at least, have adhered to the bargain made.

Under the circumstances, I must decline to sign the lease unless the free admission clause is struck out.

The difficulties of pleasing the Leeds public, and the 'little pecuniary profit' were matters which Wilson Barrett had only ever alluded to in public before to deny, and no doubt we may temper these remarks with the knowledge that he was doubtless adopting a somewhat extreme posture for the sake of making Kitson capitulate.

The secretary responded by acknowledging the receipt of the two letters and of the £475, and by calling a board meeting at Kitson's behest. At this meeting Kitson discovered what Wilson Barrett had meant when he said that he thought the directors might have adhered to the bargain made in October, and he immediately sent a letter couched in placatory tones asserting that he had not been at the meeting when the bargain was made, nor had he been at the meeting on 17 January when the letter insisting on the free admissions clause had been written, and saying that the directors who wrote that letter had not been aware of

the verbal understanding that Wilson Barrett had arrived at with Sir Andrew Fairbairn. Sir Andrew had, however, now written to say that he and the directors who were present at the October meeting when the understanding was reached had agreed to waive the free admissions clause. That clause, he said, would be omitted from the lease without hesitation now that these things were understood.

However, this was clearly not all that Sir Andrew Fairbairn had said in his letter, for, on 2 February the secretary sent a copy of Kitson's letter to Wilson Barrett to Sir Andrew, hoping that this would explain matters to him, and asking him to reconsider his resignation as Chairman and Director. In fact Sir Andrew did reconsider, but in his reply on 8 February he said merely that he would postpone it until he could go more fully into the matter.

Wilson Barrett followed up his victory by making a further demand for an alteration of the lease in a letter which otherwise broadly accepted it. He said that the term of the tenancy must be slightly extended:

It must run to April instead of January 1889, as I could not produce a Pantomime for one week during the last year of my tenancy - nor could the incoming tenant produce one without some months possession of the theatre.

Your directors will, I trust, at once see the necessity of this alteration.

And he added:

Is not the bankruptcy clause sufficient without that of the execution on goods and chattels?

The logic of his request with regard to the pantomime was in due course acceded to, but no further mention was made of the matter of distraint upon goods and chattels in the case of bankruptcy (clearly this would worry a theatrical manager as it would refer to his stock of scenery, properties, and costumes), and it is to be presumed that it stayed in the lease.

Meanwhile in January the company had received a letter from the solicitors of James Wood, the building contractor, saying that 'it would be perfectly useless' for the directors to press Wood to accept any more shares in payment of his account, and that they, as his solicitors, had advised him to demand interest on the balance of his claim which had now been outstanding for three years, as well as its payment in full. But, though they were offering Wood shares in settlement, the company sent George Corson £175 on 8 February to pay the balance of his account.

One further matter intervened before the final signing of the lease, not a matter directly affecting it, but nonetheless indicating something of the conditions that the people who sat in the gallery experienced in the course of their patronage of the theatre. On 14 February the Urban Sanitary Authority wrote to the company's solicitors informing them that the Authority had received several complaints from the owners of the shops that were part of the theatre block. These complaints were 'respecting the nuisance created ... by parties waiting to go into the theatre [that is, the gallery queue'] using the back of the

premises as a place of convenience'. The Authority requested that some means could be found to prevent this.

The directors held a board meeting to discuss the correspondence over the renewal of Wilson Barrett's lease in February, and on 27 February the secretary wrote to Wilson Barrett to say that the free admissions clause had been struck out, and that the directors saw the logic of his proposal that either the incoming or the outgoing manager ought to be allowed reasonable time either to prepare his pantomime or for it to run long enough for him to recoup his expenditure in mounting it. The board proposed that the new lease should terminate either in June 1888, or in June 1889. Wilson Barrett could choose which year.

Wilson Barrett did not respond immediately, and the secretary sent him a reminder on 6 March. Clearly there was some confusion in Wilson Barrett's mind over what the board had now agreed to, for the secretary had to send him a copy of the resolution that the board had made with regard to extending the lease to allow a pantomime to be produced in the year of its termination. This was sent on 11 March.

Wilson Barrett opted for the extra year, and wrote on 13 March saying that he thought the lease should end in April or at Easter 1889. The board replied that a specific date was to be preferred, and asked Wilson Barrett to consent

to 30 April as that date. Wilson Barrett agreed to this in a letter dated 28 March, and the secretary wrote to him on 5 April to say that the company's solicitors were preparing a new draft of the lease. This was sent to Wilson Barrett on 25 April, for his approval. A reminder about this was sent to him on 29 April, asking him to send the draft back so that the matter could be finished with, and also sending him a demand for rent, recalculated under the terms of the new joint lease, and amounting to £983 6s. 8d.

A further reminder had to be sent to Wilson Barrett on 1 May, and he sent back the draft lease with his cheque for the £983 6s. 8d. by return.

On 5 May the inventory of the theatre company's property, and the list of stock scenery were sent to Watson to be brought up to date. Later in the year his supervisory role over the theatre building and the company's property was to be made official by the payment of a salary. (It will be remembered that he had overseen the installation of the stock scenery with which the theatre was originally provided, and that he was credited with designing chandeliers for the spectacular Hall scene in the 1881/2 pantomime, so that it is clear that he had a competent interest in the staging of performances, as well as a simple architect's interest in his building. The company's faith in his judgement was shown, also, in offering to allow him to go ahead with the property room extension that Wilson Barrett had asked for in 1881, at his own discretion.)

During the prolonged negotiations over the new lease,

Wilson Barrett had maintained that he would continue to rent the theatre according to the old agreement, and in July it occurred to him that in this case the company owed him a half year's contribution to the making of stock scenery. He therefore wrote on 8 July asking for fifty pounds. The secretary replied on 10 July by promising to put the matter before the next board meeting, but in the meantime he said that a quarter's rent at the new rate of £625 was due.

This was quite erroneous, and Wilson Barrett wrote back promptly to point out that the rent was not due until 1 August. This the secretary acknowledged on 13 July. However, Wilson Barrett did not pay the rent when it was due, and the secretary wrote to remind him on 26 August. Wilson Barrett then sent a cheque for the amount, but added a query about the fifty pounds he had claimed in July. The secretary replied by saying that there had not been a board meeting since Wilson Barrett's request, and he called one for 12 September. But, even though he appended a special request for a good attendance on his notice of the board meeting, that meeting was inquorate, and the secretary had to write to Wilson Barrett to promise that the matter would be put before the board again at its next meeting on 10 October. This meeting was quorate, and a cheque for fifty pounds was sent to Wilson Barrett on 17 October.

At this meeting also Watson was appointed to supervise the company's property for a salary of five guineas per annum,

and he was further asked to prepare specifications for painting the theatre (it was thought this should be done the following March) and to invite contractors to send tenders direct to the company secretary.

This meeting also demanded a statement of the company's financial position, which was sent to them by the secretary on 17 October. The directors had been discussing the mortgage, clearly wondering what possibility there was of paying it off, for the statement they received indicated the cost and value of the buildings and their contents, the capital that the company had been able to raise, and concluded with an estimate of the revenue that the company was likely to receive for the next seven years. It will be remembered that the mortgage had been of twenty-five thousand pounds, while £13,100 had been raised in debentures and loans, and £24,800 in actual share capital. On all these interest had to be paid, and the estimated annual income was £2,325.

The company secretary, George Chadwick, died in this autumn, and the next board meeting was called on 5 December to discuss his replacement. A Mr R. Kingston was appointed to replace him, and his first act was to write to Wilson Barrett on 6 December to ask him for the quarter's rent which had been due on 1 November. He acknowledged receipt of the £625 on 8 December.

Benjamin Goodman had raised doubts as to the correctness of the rent that Wilson Barrett had paid since the theatre

and Assembly Rooms opened, and Kingston prepared an account of Wilson Barrett's rent up to 31 January 1883 in order to prove its accuracy. Wilson Barrett was at this point up to date with his rent, and altogether had paid £9,359 15s. 4d. since he had taken up the lease.

On 31 December the balance sheet for 1882 was prepared. This indicated that the company's total income in this year had been £2,723 17s. 11d., while total expenditure had been £2,316 10s. 8d. This left a profit in 1882 of £407 7s. 3d. (This compares with a profit of £138 8s. 7d. in 1881.)

The seasons in 1882 were made up in much the same way that the trends observed in 1881 would have led us to expect. There were eleven weeks of pantomime, as there had been in 1881; there were ten weeks of comic opera – one week less than in 1881; weeks devoted to opera declined still further to a single one in 1882; there were twenty-seven weeks devoted to comedies and dramas, as there had been in 1881, but six of these were weeks of panoramic melodrama, when there had been only four such in 1881; there were four runs of a fortnight (disregarding the pantomimes), a decline of one from 1881; but there was an increase in the number of weeks occupied by returning productions from nine in 1881 to eleven in 1882.

The pantomime, 'Little Red Riding Hood', closed on 3 March

and was succeeded by the first of the year's panoramic melodramas, 'The Lights o' London'. The play was written by G.R. Sims, and was first produced at the Princess's Theatre, London, by Wilson Barrett. It was still playing at the Princess's Theatre when Wilson Barrett's Hull company began this provincial tour of the play at the Grand Theatre, Leeds.<sup>1</sup> It had also been presented in America where it had been received 'enthusiastically'.<sup>2</sup>

The Yorkshire Post reviewer considered that the piece contained the elements of 'humour, pathos, and deep domestic interest in an unusual degree' (Sims had previously been known for his three-act farces). He admitted, however, that the basis of the plot — the troubles which beset an innocent man, wrongfully convicted and sentenced to prison — was a stock one. He elaborated:

The manner in which Harold Armytage is accused of murder at the end of the first act will at once recall a similar situation in 'The Dumb Man of Manchester'. The escape of the convict by changing clothes with the old showman, Jarvis, is another tolerably familiar stage device ... and the scene where Bess turns on the villain and tells her husband, Harold, to "thrash him within an inch of his life" finds its parallel in Watts Phillips's 'Camilla's Husband'. The amusing old showpeople, too, seem almost to have stepped bodily out of Dickens... But these materials, and much more matter taken from actual observation of London life, have been used in so skilful a manner that an air of freshness is imparted to the whole.

In fact the scenes of 'London life' provided the opportunity for the building up of the detailed 'spectacular' visual illustration of the drama which qualified it for the title panoramic melodrama. The reviewer dealt with them thus:

There are several episodes of London street life, having no real connexion with the plot which show Mr Sims at his best as an observer of humble life in London. The scene at the door of the police station in the third act, in which "Philosopher Jack" appears, affords one instance of this. As represented by Mr S. Howard, Philosopher Jack is a real individual; he is indigenous to the soil of London, and could not by any possibility be found outside the borders of the metropolis... Everything he does and says is thoroughly true to London street life... The realism of the character may not be fully appreciated in the country, but in its way it is a perfect little bit. The scene outside the door of the casual ward gives Mr Sims another opportunity for photographing the humour and pathos to be got out of the lives of the poor of London. Equally good is the scene where the starving hero, Harold, and his dying wife are refused aid by two gentlemen who have just contributed largely to a charitable subscription list. "Go to the Charity Organisation Society in the morning" suggests one of the gentlemen. "But she may die tonight!" cries Harold, as he points to the fainting form of Bess on the doorstep... Again in a scene between two tramps ... and an Irish policeman ... the chaff and counter chaff are thoroughly characteristic and natural, and ... might have taken place just as it is represented.

One further episode served to illustrate this element of the piece, and also exemplified Sims's 'pathos':

A ragged street Arab begs the kind-hearted Irish policeman to "run him in", and offers to steal something for the purpose... The father is serving three months in gaol for smashing the bridge on his wife's nose with a pint pot. "And where's your mother?" asks the policeman. "Please, sir, she's doing six months for stealing," replies the boy. "She stole something to raise money to get a lawyer to speak for my father."

These, then, were small points that characterised the atmosphere of the production, but, of course, there was a main plot, and this was narrated in spectacular action. For this the scenery took a quite photographically representational form:

The view is "The Slips, Regents Park", a stretch of wooded ground bordering the Regent's canal close to the spot where some years ago a terrific explosion of gunpowder occurred on one of the barges, with the effect of shattering the bridge near the foot of the Avenue Road, and doing a large amount of damage to the houses of Mr Alma Tadema and other prominent artists, who live in a group in the immediate vicinity. Harold and Bess are here seeking rest on one of the park seats, when Clifford Armytage /Harold's brother, but the villain of the piece/ and Seth Preene /a secondary villain/ appear on one of the bridges crossing the canal. After an altercation Clifford Armytage hurls Seth Preene into the water below. Harold, seeing a man drowning, jumps in and drags Seth Preene to the bank. "You have saved my life and I will save yours!" shouts Seth, as the curtain falls amidst storms of applause...

The last act also had an elaborate and realistic setting:

"The Borough Market on a Saturday Night", with its costermongers and stalls and its ever-moving crowds. The front of one of the houses goes, showing Bess and Harold in one of the upper rooms in the interior. To her enters Clifford, and very shortly afterwards a desperate fight occurs between the two men; the alarm is given, Harold is seized, and after a most natural and splendidly-managed struggle is dragged off to the police office, followed by an excited crowd, and we are then shown the interior of the police court. Here Seth Preene proves as good as his word, and by his evidence the crime is removed from Harold and fastened on Clifford, and with very few words the curtain falls on the spectacle of Harold reunited with Bess.

The play ran for a fortnight, and was well received.

'Many a time during last night's performance,' said the reviewer, 'the tribute of tears was paid — even on the part of the least susceptible of the audience...'

'The Lights o' London' was followed on 20 March by Mr and Mrs Carton and a 'special London company' in A.W. Pinero's 'Imprudence'.<sup>3</sup> 'After Many Days' was performed as a

curtain-raiser. 'Imprudence' had had a chequered career, having first been performed at the Folly Theatre, London, it went to four other London theatres in succession. This performance at the Grand Theatre was by a company assembled for touring the provinces.

The reviewer thought that the work was 'essentially an actor's play: weak and feeble in its main motive, it relied solely for its success upon neatly worked "business", clever situations, and well-defined sketches of character... The piece deals with the selfishness and meanness to be found amongst the inmates of a second-class boarding house. All the various types of selfishness are well portrayed in the ranks of the boarders, and the incidents which follow each other with considerable rapidity, are told in a dialogue which is always an agreeable rattle, and sometimes became witty'.<sup>4</sup>

The play was a farce, and the reviewer noted that Pinero 'made good use of doors and cupboards after the manner of the Spanish comedy'.

'Imprudence' was followed by a week of comic opera in which Joseph Eldred's company performed 'The Grand Duchess' by Offenbach on Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, 'Madame Angot' on Wednesday, and 'The Princess of Trebizond' on Thursday.<sup>5</sup> Joseph Eldred himself was not in the cast as he was performing in 'The Grand Duchess' with another of his companies.

'The Grand Duchess', though it was the first of the successful opéra-bouffes to be seen in England

still maintained its right to be considered one of the best as well as the first of the modern French school... Something in the satire of depicting the pretty court of the Grand Duchy, with its army of half a dozen soldiers, may be lost, but the fun of the situations is almost as vigorous as ever, and the merry tunes in Offenbach's score, albeit they have done yeoman's service as dance melodies, still seemed as bright as ever.<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Eldred's company was succeeded by 'The Trump Card', written by F. Broughton and J.W. Jones, and presented at the Grand Theatre 'for the first time on any stage' by Stanislaus Calhaem and a company 'specially selected' by Holt and Wilmot, with 'entirely new scenery and effects'.<sup>7</sup>

Though the play had a somewhat conventional subject, it was a "strong" drama, and combined elements of the drawing-room play with the exciting and sensational. The play derived its name from the fact that the hero 'trumped' every act, which the reviewer found unusual, since he thought that the villain ought to be allowed to win the penultimate and antepenultimate acts.<sup>8</sup> 'Still there is an effect produced ... the representative of virtue is able to announce at the end of the acts that he plays the "knave", and then the "queen", next the "king", and finally the "ace!"'

Stanislaus Calhaem, as Job Sharp, represents an old groom, formerly an old jockey, who has been falsely convicted of crime through the perfidy of Captain Markham, a reputed chevalier... Captain Markham succeeds in inducing Mr Pixley ... a north country manufacturer, to make him trustee of

his property and guardian of his adopted daughter, and the trustee, who intends to marry this young lady, endeavours to dispose of a rival ... a poor gentleman, by falsely accusing him of robbing the old manufacturer. In the development of the plot, it appears that a woman whom Captain Markham has ruined is a daughter of old Job Sharp, and that Pixley's adopted girl is another daughter. The proverbial Jewish money lender finds a part in the plot as Isaac Jacobs.

The play was clearly very 'realistically' staged, for the reviewer went on:

The scenery of the play is unquestionably most attractive. The "Grand Parade at Brighton", which is the scene of the first act, is particularly effective; and the view of St James's Park, London, where an exciting incident takes place, is exceedingly handsome and realistic, the lake and the foliage being exquisitely painted. "London Bridge on a Winter's Night", where one of the female characters attempts to commit suicide, is vividly pictured. The "Lone House on the Thames", alike as an ingenious piece of mechanism, and as a highly sensational scene, is one which it would be difficult to equal. The last act opens upon a remarkably good representation of the magnificent view afforded by Trafalgar Square, with the National Gallery, the Nelson Monument etc.

'The Trump Card' was followed by a week of comic opera. Kate Santley made her first appearance at the Grand Theatre in Edmond Audran's 'La Mascotte', which was regarded as his most popular work, and of which Kate Santley had acquired the sole provincial rights.<sup>9</sup>

The story was 'pretty and fanciful' and 'quite pastoral'. Bettina, the Mascotte of the title, was a turkey-herd, supposedly endowed by the fairies with the power of bringing good luck to whoever's roof she lived under, so long as she did not marry. She was in love with a young shepherd,

and one of the main features of the performance as far as the Yorkshire Post reviewer was concerned was 'a pretty duet in which Bettina imitates the "glou-glou" of her turkeys, while Pippo [the shepherd] chimes in with the "baa" of his sheep'.<sup>10</sup> Though the superstitious Duke Laurent wished to forestall Bettina's losing her power to bring luck, he could not forever prevent the inevitable marriage of the turkey-herd and the shepherd. 'Pretty music, and charming stage pictures keep the attention of the audience... The opera goes very brightly, and the mounting is excellent, numerous pages, soldiers and retainers, attired in dresses of tasteful design and colour, constantly giving animation to the scene... In addition the programme contained the names of a considerable number of young ladies who had merely to look pretty in various charming costumes and sing the choruses'.

'La Mascotte' was followed by a further return visit of 'Les Cloches de Corneville', performed by Charles Bernard's company with Shiel Barry as the miser Gaspard, the role which he had 'originally' created.<sup>11</sup> The Yorkshire Post reviewer characterised his performance as remarkable for its 'suppressed power' and showing 'by innumerable little touches ... the almost wolfish ferocity of the old miser's nature... Equally able, too, was the representation of madness in the third act after the ringing out of the bells, and the apparent approach of the dead lords of Corneville

to seize the gold which the false steward has stolen, have completely turned his brain'.<sup>12</sup> (There seems here an echo of the haunting in 'The Bells'.)

The work was well received, and to the reviewer its attractions seemed as potent as ever, though there had been many changes in the cast over the duration of the opera's touring, and some of its members seemed unsatisfactorily weak, while the latest 'Baillie' and his shadow, Gobo, now appeared to have over-elaborated their comic business. The mounting of the piece was still 'excellent', using scenery painted by Lester Sutcliffe.

'Les Cloches de Corneville' was succeeded by another of Charles Bernard's companies performing a new 'poetic drama', 'A Shadow Sceptre', by H. Hamilton.<sup>13</sup> Miss Alleyn, billed as 'the young tragedienne' played Lady Jane Grey, with Herman Vezin as Simon Renard. The scenery was by W.F. Robson.

'A Shadow Sceptre' was followed by a second visit by Alfred Hemmings's company and the Walton family in G.R. Sims's 'The Mother-in-law'. This piece, previously seen at the Grand Theatre in May 1881, was accompanied by a burlesque by G.R. Sims, 'The Course-akin Brothers'.

It will be remembered that the climax of the play involved a chase in and out of the theatre boxes in which Talfourd Twigg tried to prevent his future mother-in-law from seeing his play in which he had satirised her. Though the motive

had been changed, the reviewer thought that this scene had been borrowed from 'Le Roi Candaule', but that this was the most 'legitimate' adaptation of a source that had also served W.S. Gilbert in 'Realms of Joy', Robert Reece in 'Seeing Toole', and Alfred Maltby in 'Seeing Frou-Frou'.<sup>14</sup>

'The Mother-in-law' was followed on 15 May by 'Michael Strogoff; or, the Courier of the Czar', an adaptation by H.J. Byron of a French play based on Jules Verne's story, and presented by Charles Dornton's company.<sup>15</sup> The play had run for some time at the Adelphi Theatre, London, and two of the scenes painted for the original production by William Beverley (one of them a battle-field, and the other a 'striking' scene of a city in flames<sup>16</sup>) had been brought with the company.

'Michael Strogoff' was succeeded by another week of comic opera, 'Patience' given by the D'Oyly Carte company.<sup>17</sup> It was preceded by 'Mock Turtles'. 'Patience' was now in its second year in London, and had been successful in America and Australia, as well as touring the provinces.

'Patience' was followed by the second play by Pinero to be seen at the Grand Theatre in 1882, 'The Squire'. It was performed by Miss H. Lindley, supported by Edgar Bruce's company.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Hardy, and his collaborator, Comyns Carr, had claimed that Pinero had adapted Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd' for this piece, and the reviewer thought

that the resemblance 'could not be an accident', though Pinero's 'dramatic workmanship' was 'always neat'.<sup>19</sup>

The central character was Kate Verity, who was a woman farmer, and known as 'the Squire'. She was secretly married to a young officer, but her bailiff also harboured a passion for her. Her husband's nocturnal visits caused embarrassing rumours which drove her to implore him to make their marriage public. However, the officer had married a singer in Brussels, and she now turned up. The bailiff discovered that Kate was married just in time to restrain him from shooting the husband. The plot was rescued from a gloomy conclusion by the singer's dying - 'conveniently', as the reviewer noted.

'The Squire' was followed on 5 June by Mrs Scott Siddons who appeared for a week in 'As You Like It', 'The Lady of Lyons', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'The School for Scandal', and a double bill on Friday for her benefit: 'King René's Daughter' (an adaptation by Sir Theodore Martin from a piece by Heinrich Hertz), and 'The Honeymoon' by Tobin.<sup>20</sup>

Mrs Scott-Siddons had not been to Leeds for some years. At her last visit she had appeared in 'As You Like It', and 'King René's Daughter', and perhaps it was because of some impression that she retained of the Leeds public that she substituted 'The Lady of Lyons' for 'Twelfth Night' which had been part of her repertoire when she appeared in Manchester in the week prior to this visit to the Grand Theatre.

Clearly the success of the performance hung upon Mrs Scott-Siddons qualities as a 'star' actress. The reviewer described her thus:

Time and experience had ripened the method of Mrs Scott-Siddons without detracting materially from the girlish grace and vivacity which previously made her Rosalind so charming. With a handsome and expressive face, a graceful figure, and a voice of most musical quality, Mrs Scott-Siddons makes an ideal Rosalind.<sup>21</sup>

He did, however, complain that a slight American accent here and there 'marred' her elocution, and, perhaps more significantly,

there were times when the spectators might well have conceived the idea that the actress, having played the part /Rosalind in this case, but he also said it of her other roles/ so frequently, was now going through it without altogether feeling its significance.

If Mrs Scott-Siddon's performance was 'mature', and, perhaps, a little mechanical, this was not true of the actress who appeared at the Grand Theatre in the following week. This was Mrs Langtry, a society beauty who had taken to the stage only a few months before she made this visit to the Grand Theatre. She appeared in 'An Unequal Match' by Tom Taylor, and 'She Stoops to Conquer'.<sup>22</sup>

It was her role in the real world as much as her qualities as an actress that exercised a fascination over her audiences, as the reviewer clearly recognised when he said:

There was evident curiosity and interest among the audience when the curtain rose... The position taken by Mrs Langtry

has been so prominent, and her public performances have been marked by so much intelligence, that the rush of the public to see the lady must be excused.<sup>23</sup>

She undoubtedly was an attraction, for it was reputed that in her week at the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool, the box office had taken £1,800 — on average, £257 per performance. (There was comfortable seating capacity at the Grand Theatre for an audience which would pay roughly £140 at one performance.)

Mrs Langtry's plays had been carefully chosen so that her inexperience would be taken as a virtue. Of her Hester Grazebrook in 'An Unequal Match' the reviewer said:

Possibly no better character could have been chosen, for Mrs Langtry's lack of stage experience actually helps in the early scenes to impart the necessary freshness to the part of the simple, innocent girl, living in a Yorkshire dale, who is wooed and won by the pseudo artist and actual baronet who discovers the rustic beauty.

He did, however, complain of excessive and fussy movement of her hands, and 'occasionally a tendency to unduly emphasise the smaller and less important words — a mistake which practice will readily rectify'.

But the nature of her performance is made clearer by the reviewer's remarks on her Miss Hardcastle in 'She Stoops to Conquer' when he said that this role suited her better than her other in that:

Mrs Langtry has an easier task in representing a lady who assumes the character of a barmaid than in showing an

untutored country girl who endeavours to assume the manners of a fine lady.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, Mrs Langtry was substantially playing herself.

In his notice of this second play in Mrs Langtry's repertoire, the reviewer noted that the audience no longer felt the curiosity of the first night, but now wore an air of expectancy before the curtain rose. The audience had accepted her as an actress as well as a famous personality, and the reviewer prophesied that she would become a successful comedy actress for 'she already shows that she possesses most of the necessary qualifications, having a pleasant voice which, used as it is without apparent effort, travels well; a refined manner, keen intelligence, a graceful bearing, and exquisite taste in dress'.

Mrs Langtry was followed on 19 June 1882 by the third visit of 'The Pirates of Penzance' to the Grand Theatre, presented by the D'Oyly Carte company. The opera was played all week, preceded by 'Mock Turtles'. There had been some changes in the cast, for Alice Aynsley Cooke, Mr G.W. Taverner, and Esme Lee had now joined the company.

'The Pirates of Penzance' was succeeded on 26 June by Frank Harvey playing the title role in his 'London success', 'The Workman'. (The company was in fact advertised as Mdlle Beatrice's company, though she had by then died.<sup>25</sup>)

Though the title might suggest a rugged, socially conscious melodrama, in fact the plot was a restatement of a familiar

theme — that of domestic trauma caused by a sister's 'guilty sin'. The Yorkshire Post reviewer characterised the play succinctly thus:

'The Workman' is a domestic drama pure and simple, and its story shows how one good woman makes a great sacrifice for and keeps the wicked secret of her sister who has gone astray from the paths of virtue, but who has subsequently married a rich and proud baronet of the type so commonly met with in fiction. How the good sister bears the weight of her sister's sin and sees the wreck of her home through her husband's belief in her guilt will be found set forth lucidly enough in the five interesting acts of the play.<sup>26</sup>

Though the reviewer thought the motivation and characterisation of the play a little improbable, he noted that 'the situations ... brought down much applause'.

'The Workman' was followed on 3 July 1882 by Emily Soldene and her company in 'Boccaccio', a new comic opera by Franz von Suppé, at this time still playing in London.<sup>27</sup> Emily Soldene played the title role (and though Boccaccio was treated as 'the gay and sprightly youth, the satirical poet' the reviewer observed that Emily Soldene was 'hardly an ideal representative of the part'<sup>28</sup>), and saw no objection to interpolating 'two modern ballads ... quite foreign to and out of harmony with ... the score'. Indeed, though this was only the fourth performance of the work that the company had given, the reviewer criticised the banality and general incompetence of the production, clearly finding it not undertaken in a serious enough manner, for he admonished:

It is to be hoped that the comedians will in course of time have the perception to discover that references to Zoedone and Eno's Fruit Salt in an opera, the scene of which is laid in the fourteenth century, is an insult to an audience of even moderate intelligence.

Though capable of this kind of wit, the company was generally unable to evoke the genuine humour of the piece, and the 'business' was perfunctory.

'Boccaccio' was followed on 10 July 1882 by John F. Sheridan, advertised as 'the popular young Irish comedian (from America)', supported by 'a full American musical and dramatic company' in 'Jarrett and Rice's enormously funny, musical, comedy-oddity in three acts': 'Fun on the Bristol; or, a Night at Sea'. The advertisement was accompanied by a paragraph describing 'The Bristol' in detailed terms - its cost, sleeping accommodation, and the route it plied - which undoubtedly was intended to give an air of reality to a piece which was otherwise 'a nondescript entertainment',<sup>29</sup> had 'no plot whatever', and was a 'mixture of wild farce, comic opera, burlesque, and pantomime, with the best features of a music-hall entertainment added' (advertising further included a list of more than fifteen songs and musical numbers which were 'incidental to the comedy').

In the pantomimic tradition of dames played by men, John F. Sheridan played Mrs O'Brian, 'an Irish-American widow of mature age and great volubility of speech'.

The piece had had over a thousand performances in America, and had been playing to 'crowded and delighted audiences'

in Manchester, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Glasgow for the six weeks preceding this visit to the Grand Theatre. The Yorkshire Post reviewer regarded it as 'a light summer entertainment, full of fun and frivolity ... hardly equalled since the visit of the Hanlon-Lees'.

'Fun on the Bristol' ran for a week, after which the theatre was closed for thirteen days. During this time the theatre's entrance hall was redecorated: 'bright colours were introduced upon the walls and ceiling ... in accordance with Mr Barrett's original design'.<sup>30</sup> (The work was carried out by J.T. Pollard of Leeds.) The theatre reopened on Saturday, 29 July 1882 with 'The Romany Rye'.

This was the first provincial performance of G.R. Sims's play which Wilson Barrett had first presented at the Princess's Theatre, London, himself taking the title role. Charles Cathcart had been sent to America to produce the play's première there, and was now sent to Leeds to manage its English touring company.<sup>31</sup> For this production at the Grand Theatre, scenery was by Stafford Hall and Louis Edouardes. The piece was a panoramic melodrama, having thirty speaking characters, and seventeen scenes.

The play was founded on some of Sims's earlier stories, and was clearly written to follow up the success of 'The Lights o' London', for, though the hero was given a gipsy title, and the opening scene was set in a gipsy encampment, the action quickly moved to the squalid and

vice-ridden quarters of London in which Sims had set his earlier play.

The basis of the plot was also similar, revolving round the struggle of Paul Royston (the Romany Rye, or Gipsy Gentleman) and his half-brother, Philip Royston, over the possession of an estate called Craignest. Here the parallel with the Maitland brothers in 'The Lights o' London' is obvious. (However, the 'feminine interest' that Bess provided in the earlier play was missing in 'The Romany Rye' and for this the reviewer thought the follow up inferior to the original.)

As the piece was a panoramic melodrama, a sequence of detailed pictorial settings was as essential as the plot, and the scenes of London low-life gave excellent opportunities:

We see burglars who keep birdshops in Seven Dials to hide the real nature of their calling; we are introduced to thieves and tramps of various kinds, and are shown professional "bashers" who slink about the unsavoury purlieus of Radcliffe Highway, and who are ready at any time to murder a man and throw his body in the Thames.<sup>32</sup>

So detailed a picture was created that the reviewer had doubts about the propriety of portraying such scenes:

There can be no question but that Mr Sims has drawn his thieves and tramps very cleverly, and has shown with much skill and power what we must suppose is a faithful picture of the blackest and most criminal substratum of life in the great metropolis; but the question very naturally arises whether the stage should be put to the use of showing, with Zola like fidelity, so much sordid wickedness.

Within this photographically detailed setting the play also had its melodramatic sensations:

The "creepy" horrors of that scene in the Radcliffe Highway cellar where the Romany Rye is bound to a post preparatory to being drugged and thrown into the river, have surely never been equalled since the days of Eugène Sue's 'Mysteries of Paris'; and the feeling is one of relief when the scene, by a clever mechanical effect, changes to an exquisitely beautiful set of the river Thames; and the Romany Rye, who has not been drugged after all, strikes down the villain who intended to murder him, and escapes by leaping from the boat. This beautiful effort of scenic art — the finest specimen of the work of Mr Stafford Hall which has yet been given to the public — on Saturday night roused the audience to genuine enthusiasm, and the painter obtained a well-deserved call.

The last act showed the wreck of the steamer Saratoga on the rocks near Falmouth, and the rescue of the hero and his wife — again, praiseworthy pieces of scenic art, as well as stirring scenes, and this combination carried a plot which was otherwise 'fragmentary', lacking in 'human interest', and having 'little more than swiftness of action, and the trick of dramatic surprise'.

This kind of presentation exemplified a definite trend in theatrical development, and the Yorkshire Post reviewer responded adversely to it. 'The Romany Rye', he said,

afforded a striking instance of the wrong direction which melodrama had for some years past been taking. It is the natural outcome of the desire for scenic display and general swiftness of action which have recently usurped the place of plot and real interest. Neither Mr Sims nor Mr Wilson Barrett are responsible for the taste; they have perhaps only acted rightly in their own interest in going one step further than anyone has gone before.

'The Romany Rye' appeared to be 'decidedly to the taste of the public', and ran for a fortnight. It was followed on 14 August 1882 by David James supported by W. Duck's Comedy Company in 'Our Boys'.<sup>33</sup>

David James had played Perkyn Middlewick in H.J. Byron's 'Our Boys' 1350 times at the play's original production at the Vaudeville Theatre, London. Since then the play had been revived at the Standard Theatre in the East End of London, with David James in the same role, and in August 1882 he was making one of his rare provincial appearances.

He was, thought the reviewer,<sup>34</sup> 'very much more like the retired Cockney tradesman designed by Mr Byron than his predecessors in the provinces were', and had 'singular force and freshness'. He had resisted any temptation to 'broaden' the performance and to 'force' or 'over-emphasise' points, as the reviewer thought that playing the part for so long might have led him to do, and indeed, he was given a 'hearty' reception, and the reviewer hoped that the Leeds audience might see him more often.

David James was followed on 21 August 1882 by Edward Terry and his Comedy Company<sup>35</sup> who performed a double bill of H.J. Byron's 'Not Such a Fool as he Looks' (which followed the familiar pattern of Byron's pieces for Terry), and 'The Forty Thieves', the burlesque which Terry had previously performed at the Grand Theatre in October 1881.

Edward Terry was followed on 28 August 1882 by Edward Compton and his Comedy Company.<sup>36</sup> The latter presented

four full length plays and one one-act curtain-raiser during his week. On Monday and Tuesday he gave 'Twelfth Night', on Wednesday and Thursday, 'Wild Oats' (preceded by the one-act 'A Mutual Separation'), on Friday (for Compton's benefit) 'Heir at Law', and on Saturday, 'The Road to Ruin'. This constituted a repertoire in which Compton was 'well and favourably known' to the Leeds public, and elicited little comment from the Yorkshire Post reviewer,<sup>57</sup> save that for 'Twelfth Night' the house was well filled and frequently gave 'hearty' applause.

Compton's Comedy Company was succeeded by a return visit of 'The Guv'nor' presented by T.W. Robertson and H. Bruce's company.<sup>38</sup> The play was a three-act farce and was first produced at the Vaudeville Theatre, London. It had been seen at the Grand Theatre before, in August 1881.

'The Guv'nor' closed on Saturday, 8 September 1882. Sarah Bernhardt had been advertised to appear in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' and 'La Dame aux Camélias' on Monday, 11 September, and Tuesday, 12 September respectively, but her visit was cancelled owing to illness, and the theatre remained closed until Wednesday, 13 September, when John Clayton, with the Royal Court Theatre company presented 'The Parvenu'.<sup>39</sup>

'The Parvenu' was written by G.W. Godfrey, and as its name suggested, dealt with a familiar theme: impoverished aristocracy v. ill-bred wealth, and the propriety of

intermarriage between such groups. The plot involved a 'proud but needy' baronet,<sup>40</sup> his scheming wife, Lady Pettigrew, their daughter who was in love with a handsome young gentleman who was apparently an artist, and the parvenu himself, Mr Ledger, whom the mother persuaded the daughter to accept as fiancé because of his opulence (he had, of course, the faults of ill-breeding).

However, the discovery of a crest and some initials on a silver match-box led Lady Pettigrew to believe that the 'artist' was both wealthy and noble, and she redirected her daughter's affections accordingly. By way of revenge Ledger started a lawsuit over a strip of land between his and the Pettigrew estates. When he realised the young peoples' true love, however, he renounced his claim to the daughter's hand, and gave the young couple the land. Thus while avoiding any offence against caste, the ill-bred Mr Ledger was allowed at least to demonstrate some decency of feeling. Clearly it was a very conventional piece, but the Yorkshire Post reviewer asserted 'the chief charm will not be found in the story itself but in the author's bright, terse, and vivacious style of telling it'. Elsewhere he described it as a 'pretty, fresh and natural conversational comedy ... entirely exhilarating ... bristling with smart and pointed lines, containing clever, though familiar sketches of character, and possessing here and there a few touches of human interest'.

'The Parvenu' was followed on 18 September by another visit of Charles Bernard's company in 'Les Cloches de

Corneville' with Shiel Barry in the role of the miser, Gaspard.<sup>41</sup> The popularity of this piece seemed undiminished, and it was received with enthusiasm by a large audience.

'Les Cloches de Corneville' was succeeded on 25 September by Kate Santley and John Wainwright, 'supported by a London company' in 'La Mascotte'.<sup>42</sup> This production had been seen at the Grand Theatre earlier in the year (in April), and was again received 'with a good deal of laughter and applause'.<sup>43</sup>

Again with this opera the reviewer noticed that much of the piece's success derived from the "gags" and business that successive actors introduced and incorporated in the parts:

When Mr John Wainwright ... is going through some excellent fooling, or when humorous Mr Sidney Harcourt ... is doing that singularly comic walk when the farmer becomes promoted to the Court Chamberlain, the audience can hardly fail to derive some enjoyment.

'La Mascotte' was followed on 2 October by Miss Litton and company in 'Moths'.<sup>44</sup> This play was an adaptation of a novel by Ouida (whom the reviewer called 'the eccentric and erotic writer') by H. Hamilton, whose 'The Shadow Sceptre' had been seen at the Grand Theatre earlier in the year (May 1882). 'Moths', however, was financially successful, whereas 'The Shadow Sceptre' was not.

The central character was Vera, who had 'to bear unheard of wrongs from a husband who had no spark of human feeling

or of decency'. Clearly we are in the area of domestic drama, but 'Moths' inherited a rather greater melodramatic depravity from Ouida's original. Indeed, the Yorkshire Post reviewer could only find three sympathetic characters in the whole play:<sup>45</sup> Vera herself, Fuschia Leach, an American heiress, and Lord Jura, a 'good-hearted, unselfish, stolid English nobleman'.

The reviewer identified the subject of the piece thus:

The simple girl Vera, who is disposed of by her selfish and heartless mother to a Russian prince — perhaps the most diabolical scoundrel ever seen either on the stage or off it — is the centre of sympathy, and the insults heaped upon her, and the manner in which they are subsequently avenged, form matter which is obviously keenly relished by the audience.

The reviewer was obviously upset by the play, finding it depraved and repugnant, and he regretted that a dramatist whom he thought to have shown promise in his earlier work was now certain to continue to exploit the public taste for such plays as 'Moths'.

'Moths' ran for a fortnight, and was followed on 16 October by J.L. Shine's company<sup>46</sup> who presented G.R. Sims's 'The Member for Slocum', and a burlesque, 'Don Juan Junior'.

'The Member for Slocum' contained an unusual amount of political satire and allusion. J.L. Shine played the Member (Onesimus Epps), presenting 'an artistic picture of the difficulties of an honourable member who has been doomed

by his mother-in-law to sit for her native borough, greatly against his own wishes, which would lead him to other spheres of labour — or pleasure — and who has assigned to him the unenviable task of advancing the "rights" of woman and supporting the Married Woman's Property Act'.<sup>47</sup> The ethos of the play, and the characterisation which it presented can be gauged from a comment of the reviewer's when describing Harriet Coveney's playing of the mother-in-law. She had, he said, 'a keen appreciation of a strong-minded female, who "protects" her own sex to such an extent as to leave the male kind out of consideration altogether'.

J.L. Shine's company were followed by the only week of opera in 1882, which was given by the Carl Rosa Opera Company. The company performed a different opera on each night, and most of them were a departure from the repertoire Carl Rosa had previously brought to the Grand Theatre: 'Fidelio' was given on Monday, Balfe's 'Bohemian Girl' on Tuesday, 'The Flying Dutchman' on Wednesday, 'Faust' on Thursday, Donizetti's 'Lucrezia Borgia' on Friday, and on Saturday Boieidieu's 'The Lady in White'.

The decline in the number of performances of 'classical' opera during the year seemed to have the effect of increasing the audience for this one week — for 'Fidelio' the house was crowded 'with the exception of one or two boxes',<sup>48</sup> and for 'The Flying Dutchman' the audience was 'one of the largest ... ever yet assembled at the Grand, hundreds were turned away'.<sup>49</sup> Those that could get in cheered enthusiastically and 'vociferously recalled' the scenic artists responsible

for the sets for the Wagner opera. (The reviewer considered, however, that there had been 'a great many mistakes' in the playing of the music, but thought that though it was not 'entirely perfect', it was 'more than passable'.) Clearly the public's taste was for the romantically modern and the scenically splendid, and the fact that the performance of Donizetti's 'Lucrezia Borgia' was the first revival that had been tried in Leeds for nineteen years seems to lend weight to this notion.

The week of opera was followed by the first visit to Leeds of the American actor, Edwin Booth. Supported by a company from the Adelphi Theatre, London,<sup>50</sup> he performed in Bulwer-Lytton's 'Richelieu' on Monday and Friday, 'Hamlet' on Tuesday, 'Fool's Revenge' on Wednesday, 'Othello' on Thursday, and 'The Merchant of Venice' on Saturday.

Edwin Booth was considered at the time to be America's leading actor.<sup>51</sup> He was the son of Junius Brutus Booth (a contemporary and 'rival' of Edmund Keene), and had inherited his father's style. He had previously visited England in 1861 when he appeared at the Haymarket Theatre (as Shylock, Richelieu, Sir Giles Overreach, and Richard III) but was not well received. He did not return to England until November 1880 when he appeared at the reopening of Wilson Barrett's Princess's Theatre, in 'Hamlet' and 'Richelieu'. His performance there ran for some weeks, and then he went to play at the Lyceum, alternating in the role

of Iago with Henry Irving — with 'unmixed success'.

Clearly his repertoire was very defined, and unchangeing. The pieces, too, were certain to be familiar to the playgoing public wherever he appeared. Consequently on this visit to Leeds the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought it sufficient to describe the man, since this would give adequate indication of his interpretation of the parts. Edwin Booth, he said, was 'somewhat below the medium height ... spare, supple, and studiously graceful'. He combined 'an ascetic pallor' with a dark complexion, and his features were 'finely chiselled'. His acting was 'essentially intellectual, polished by art, and rendered ornate to an extreme degree. There was none of the "robust" style about him and his method stood out as a bright example of what might be done by sinking rant and appealing more to the intelligence than to the sense of hearing'. However, his elocution had a 'striking impressiveness', and he was 'full of emotion, which could be worked up to any pitch, but which, by the exercise of a true art could be nonetheless easily curbed, when occasion demanded'.

Of his Richelieu, the reviewer said: 'There was reality in every detail — in the make-up, which was most appropriate and life-like, in the cough and spasmodic pains which afflict the old man, and in the gait'.

It seems, therefore, that Booth contrived to maintain the classical, or 'Shakespearian', repertoire of the old school, but imbued it with a modern sensitivity of performance and realism of interpretation, and though Irving was perhaps

more melodramatically adventurous in his repertoire than Booth, it is nonetheless possible to see a certain parallelism in their personae and styles of acting.

Booth's week was followed on 6 November by Genevieve Ward in her 648th performance of 'Forget-me-not' by Messrs Merrivale and Grove.<sup>52</sup> The play dealt with a fallen woman (Stephanie, played by Genevieve Ward) who wanted to become morally acceptable. For the Yorkshire Post reviewer,<sup>53</sup> this meant that the play was tainted with French depravity, and he accused the plot of being flimsy, and the dialogue of bordering on 'tameness and inanity'. However, it was relieved here and there by a little 'healthy sparkle and brightness' and he felt that 'coming from the lips of so accomplished ... an actress as Miss Ward, [it] became, at times, really heart-stirring'. Indeed, Genevieve Ward's acting saved the play, for her performance had 'vigour', 'truth', 'fascination', 'all round thoroughness', and 'seemed to find fresh depths of badness and goodness in the character... Where the scene almost reaches the tragic she is particularly powerful, and in the striking episode in which Stephanie tries to transfer part of the load of guilt from her own shoulders to those of the man who has contributed to her downfall, and who has turned a coldly cynical look upon her, the acting is so realistic that the audience are for the nonce persuaded that the ruined girl is more sinned against than sinning'.

Genevieve Ward was succeeded by another female star, Madame Ristori, who played in 'Elizabeth', an English adaptation of Giacometti's play, and 'Macbeth'.<sup>54</sup>

Madame Ristori had not appeared in Leeds since 1873 when she had played Giacometti's 'Elizabeth' in Italian to a crowded house. Now she played in English (though with a trace of foreign accent) to a 'miserably poor' audience, and the reviewer candidly admitted that she was some seventeen years past the height of her powers, though, he claimed, she still retained 'the greater part of her old force'.<sup>55</sup>

The play was evidently well chosen to exhibit its star's strengths:

From first to last Elizabeth is in love with Essex, and the joys and sorrows brought into her heart by the varying fortunes of that man form the main interest of the play. The signing of Queen Mary's death warrant, the defiance of the Spanish ambassador, the rejoicings over the destruction of the Armada, the protest of Essex against his treatment for the part he took in that great victory, and the Queen's death, form strong dramatic incidents which are fully brought out.

Her Lady Macbeth dominated the play in a similar way. Thus the reviewer's attention was drawn to:

The first conception of foul sin in Lady Macbeth's mind, the gladness with which she tells her husband of the "villainous opportunity" ... the fierce ardour with which she incites and pushes forward her dreaming and more philosophical partner; the feigned heartiness of the welcome which she accords the unsuspecting king ... the sleep-walking scene /in which/ ... the audience are held spell-bound gazing on the half-ghastly figure ... the coolness with which the murderess hears that the deed is done, takes the numerous precautions against discovery, chides Macbeth for his vacillation and craven fears, and simulates the grief

of a patriotic courtier ... the jaunty indifference of the hostess at the banquet ... the gradual setting in of the reaction where Lady Macbeth's power to make and carry out treasonous resolutions is utterly broken down under a superincumbent weight of harrassing images ... /and/ the climax ... where, sleep denied her, Lady Macbeth, with heart "sorely charged", recites the dread experience that she has gone through, and, amid remorseful visitings of nature, mechanically goes through the process of washing her hands.<sup>56</sup>

Though the audience was again small, it greeted the end of this last act with 'an outburst of applause that was genuine and enthusiastic' which would seem to indicate that despite her age and failing powers Madame Ristori had managed to hold her audience's attention and sympathies, for it was surely not the play, nor the production, that they cheered, but the star.

In the following three weeks before the theatre closed for preparation of the pantomime, three productions already seen in the year returned: on 20 November 'Patience' performed by the D'Oyly Carte company, on 27 November 'Fun on the Bristol' performed by Jarrett and Rice's combination, and the D'Oyly Carte company returned once more on 4 December to perform 'The Pirates of Penzance'. The theatre closed on 9 December, and reopened with the pantomime, 'Robinson Crusoe', on 21 December.<sup>57</sup>

The book of the pantomime had been written by J. Wilton Jones, and it seems likely that it was the one that he wrote

for the pantomime at the Hull Theatre Royal which was performed the preceding year. The pantomime followed the established lines, being a blend of spectacular scenery, speciality acts, topical allusions, and popular songs interpolated in a familiar story.

The first scene was set in Davy Jones's Locker. 'The scenery (by Bruce Smith) represented a cavern formed on the bed of the ocean of reefs and sea weeds'.<sup>58</sup> Davy Jones was surrounded by various kinds of fish. He embarked upon a dialogue of puns and topical reference — announcing the opening of his "fishy Parliament", and claiming that "there is one above 'fishier' than theirs!" Will Atkins, the piratical chief villain, entered and defended his profession thus:

Compared with some professions it's respectable.  
 At sea I only practise, understand,  
 What lots of well dressed scamps perform on land.  
 Swindles with companies which always fail —  
 Loan office robbers armed with bills of sale.  
 These are the land sharks with capacious maw  
 Who rob the needy in the name of the law.

Jones and Atkins then plotted to acquire Crusoe's sweetheart for Atkins, but 'the good queen Oceana' suddenly appeared and told them she would foil their plans. Thus was the good fairy v. bad genius axis established, as was the convention, in the first scene. This scene ended with a 'fish ballet'.

The next scene was a representation of the port of Hull.

'At the rear the ships are lying in the offing, while on the right stands the Jolly Admiral hostelry, and on the left the house of the Widow Crusoe.' This scene also was painted by Bruce Smith.

The scene opened with the "Coopers' Chorus" from von Suppé's 'Boccaccio'. Then Pounce and Parchment, two bailiffs, set about denuding Widow Crusoe's house of its goods and chattels at Atkins's instigation, but the Widow called her dog (played by H. Lupino), which chased them off. The bailiffs were played by 'specialists' — the Brothers Griffiths — who elaborated their exit with 'comic antics'.

Polly Perkins entered then, to be snatched by Atkins and his henchmen, but promptly rescued by Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe was about to sail, and amidst the hurry and bustle of preparation, tried to calm Polly's fears for his safety with a patriotic speech about British sailors, and Britannia being mistress of the world.

This scene ended with a transformation: 'The lights were lowered, there was a momentary pause, the gas jets glared again, and by a wonderful mechanical contrivance of Mr Bruce Smith's, the scene changes in front of the audience to the deck of the "Lively Polly", a fully rigged ship, all taut and trim'. (The reviewer noted that the port scene had seemed inadequate in the first place, but that its double purpose — the transformation — amply justified this.)

The scene aboard the ship began with a hornpipe danced by children, which was followed by 'A Grand Algerian Ballet'.

Then Polly Perkins, disguised as a lad, was chased on by Captain Bowline, who was about to flog her with a rope's end, when Crusoe intervened in mutinous verse (of surprisingly liberal tenor):

There's too much crime at sea, you prince of cads,  
 Where brutal skippers flog poor weakly lads,  
 Destroy the poor young lives they ought to save,  
 And cast their tortured bodies to the wave.  
 The crew should rise between the ill-matched pair,  
 And say, as I do - "Touch him if you dare!"

Widow Crusoe's sea-sickness provided a butt of amusement until the ship was suddenly attacked by Atkin's pirates. The boarders were repelled after a 'grotesque' cutlass fight, but Atkins invoked Davy Jones's aid, and the latter created a storm. Amidst thunder and lightning the ship broke up, all of it sinking except the deck cabin which, 'by a mechanical contrivance', was transformed into a raft. The storm subsided, and the moon broke through the clouds to reveal Crusoe upon this raft, the coast of an island visible in the distance.

The next scene was set on that island, and here Crusoe scared the Cannibal King and his fellows from 'having one of the savages "done on toast"' by firing his gun. The victim thus saved was, of course, Man Friday, and he offered to become Crusoe's slave. Crusoe, however, declined, in more patriotic and liberal couplets:

No Englishman can own a slave! Yet stay,  
 There's many a semstress in a garret lone,  
 Who works her very fingers to the bone,

And, toiling day and night, can scarce contrive,  
 With her poor pay to keep herself alive.  
 There's many a weakly girl in drapers' shops,  
 Forbidden seats who stands until she drops;  
 These English slaves get little help, alack!  
 Because their skins are white instead of black!

Crusoe then entertained Friday with a song.

At intervals the other characters arrived on the island. Mr Arnold, playing Widow Crusoe, sang 'an original topical song', making various local references. Atkins continued to pursue Polly, and, still frustrated, solicited alliance with the Cannibal King.

The next scene was set in Crusoe's hut which was 'full of warmth and brightness of colour', and was painted by Louis Edouardes. Crusoe began the scene by singing a song again rife with topical allusion, and contriving to advertise the Yorkshire Post. He then went on to sing a 'very pathetic' ballad.

Then the Cannibal King entered. He was played by Mr Chirgwin whose speciality it was to play 'quaint and curious instruments'. His speciality act was followed by those of the Lupinos, the Brothers Griffiths, and other members of the company. (All these extended the pantomime and made it run so late that the reviewer opined that some would have to be cut.)

Indians now approached, to the song 'Hark, 'tis the Indian Drum', then a scene called 'The Broad Lagoon' followed, full of 'rollicking fun', and allowing Atkins to sing his topical song. Crusoe followed this with a song to the air

'Say You Love Me, Nelly', and the scene closed with a quickstep from the orchestra.

Stafford Hall's 'The Golden Island' scene followed, and this was the most spectacular scene of the piece. 'The entire height, length, and breadth of the stage was a mass of richly blended oriental colour, forming a picture which dazzled the eye with its brightness, and captivated the imagination with its beauty and design... Life-sized figures of lions and tigers were disposed here and there. Some three hundred children and adults, magnificently attired, came upon the stage from every hand ... all in motion or in groups [arranged by Stafford Hall and Nelly Vincent, the ballet mistress, who were called forth and cheered].'

Again there were comic specialities, then the scene changed to the state cabin of the ship in which Crusoe, Polly, and the others were returning home. This scene was painted by Walter Hann, and its 'unfurling' provoked a burst of cheering. Mr Chirgwin again played his 'curious' instruments, including several airs on the bagpipes. The ship landed its party at Scarborough - another view painted by Walter Hann.

Atkins then joined the Salvation Army, and the plot was generally wound up before the pantomime ended with Crusoe addressing the audience with one parting pun:

Say, has our pantomime your favour caught?  
It's one of Wilson Barrett's right good sort.  
Now as a "Silver King" he's in good fettle,  
Again he's proved himself a man of mettle.

The piece was well received, Wilson Barrett was called by the audience after the first 'picturesque grouping in the opening chorus', and he made a speech of thanks (the reviewer thought him obviously moved). Bruce Smith was called at the opening of the second scene, and the other artists, as well as J. Wilton Jones, Henry Hastings, and Lee Anderson were also called. Mr Arnold was called thrice.

The transformation scene was called 'Paradise and the Peri' and was by Louis Edouardes, and the Harlequinade was given by the Lupino family, Florence Valeria, and Mr F. Harper.

Notes

- 1 The company included Maud Milton, Leonard Boyne, Mr R.S. Boleyn, John S. Haydon, Mr Arnold, Mrs R. Power, Mrs H.C. Arnold, F. Moreland, Mr H. Butler, and Marie Glynne. The scenery was painted by Stafford Hall, and the production was stage managed by Charles Cathcart, who produced it also in America and Hull.
- 2 Yorkshire Post, 6 March 1882, p. 6.
- 3 The cast included Josephine Rae, Laura Lindon, Mr T. Sidney, Albert Bernard, Richard Edgar, Robert C. Lyons, and Frank Irish.
- 4 Yorkshire Post, 21 March 1882, p. 4.
- 5 The cast included Lucy Franklein, Wilfrid Esmond, and W.J. Handley.
- 6 Yorkshire Post, 28 March 1882, p. 4.
- 7 The cast included Mr J.G. Rainbow, Mr J. Rowland, Mr B.H. Bentley, Mr A.D. Anderson, Mina Broughton, Mr A. Fischer, and Maggie Holloway.
- 8 Yorkshire Post, 4 April 1882, p. 4.
- 9 The cast included Horace Bolini, Mr F.H. Laye, and Haidee Crofton.
- 10 Yorkshire Post, 18 April 1882, p. 5.
- 11 The cast included Annie Poole, Alexina Anderson, Conrad King, John Child, Mr J.H. Rogers, and Harry Collier.
- 12 Yorkshire Post, 25 April 1882, p. 6.
- 13 The company included E.F. Edgar, Frank Rodney, and Mrs Hudson Kirby.

- 14 Yorkshire Post, 13 May 1882, p. 5.
- 15 The company included W.H. Broughton, Charles Dornton, and John Blunt (who played the part of the English special correspondent which Byron had written for himself in the original production).
- 16 Yorkshire Post, 16 May 1882, p. 3.
- 17 The company included Ethel Pierson, George Thorne, Arthur Rouseby, Archibold Grosvenor, G. Byron Browne, James Sidney, Albert James, Elsie Cameron, Fanny Edwards, Clara Deveine, and Rita Presano.
- 18 The cast included Miss M. Talbot, Miss M. Sidney, Mr A. Elwood, Mr C. Fawcett, and Mr A. Chevalier.
- 19 Yorkshire Post, 30 May 1882, p. 4.
- 20 The company included Luigi Lablanche, Mr A. Beaumont, Percy Compton, Mr Crisp, Mr H. Howe, and Mr W.H. Stephens.
- 21 Yorkshire Post, 6 June 1882, p. 8.
- 22 The company included Mr W.H. Denny, Mr M.R. Selton, Mr Forest, Mr W. Hargreaves, Fanny Coleman, and Kate Hodson.
- 23 Yorkshire Post, 13 June 1882, p. 4.
- 24 Yorkshire Post, 15 June 1882, p. 4.
- 25 The company included Charlotte Saunders, Mr J. Carter Edwards, Mr H. Bennet, and Mr H. Andrews, who were all 'old' members of it, and Mr T.W. Benson, Emmeline Falconer, and Eyre Robson who were newcomers 'worth special reference'.
- 26 Yorkshire Post, 27 June 1882, p. 4.
- 27 The company included Kate Lovell, Cicely Nott, Amy Grundy, Mr G.W. Bedford, Mr E. Marshall, and Mr Lewens.

- 28 Yorkshire Post, 4 July 1882, p. 3.
- 29 Yorkshire Post, 11 July 1882, p. 6.
- 30 Yorkshire Post, 31 July 1882, p. 4.
- 31 The company included Luigi Lablanche, Marie Illington, Mr G.R. Peach, Denis Coyne, Mr A. D'Esterre, Mr Ambrose Manning, Harietta Polini, Rachel de Solla, Mrs Hudson Kirby, Mr Shelton, Mr Powell, and Mr Langley Russel.
- 32 Yorkshire Post, 31 July 1882, p. 4.
- 33 The company included Philip Day, Leslie Corcoran, Mrs Egan, and Miss Vernon.
- 34 Yorkshire Post, 15 August 1882, p. 4.
- 35 The company included Mr H.C. Sidney, Annie Jones, Miss Agnes Towers, Annie Robe, Annie Colley, Mr M.A. Kinghorne, Mr F. MacDonnel, Mr E.J. Lonnen, Sara Beryl, and Katie Ryan.
- 36 The company included Edward Compton and his wife, Clara Cowper, Sylvia Hodson, William Calvert, Lewis Ball, Mr T.C. Valentine, and Mr J.S. Blythe.
- 37 Yorkshire Post, 29 August 1882, p. 4.
- 38 The company included Mr J.F. Young, Herbert Waring, Mr T.W. Robertson, and Cora Stuart.
- 39 The company included John Clayton, Sophie Larbin, Mr H. Kemble, George Alexander, Kate Bishop, Lottie Venne, and Mr D.G. Boucicault.
- 40 Yorkshire Post, 14 September 1882, p. 6.
- 41 The company included Annie Poole, Conrad King, Mr J.H. Rogers, and Harry Collier.

- 42 The company also included Arthur Marvins, and Haidee Crofton.
- 43 Yorkshire Post, 26 September 1882, p. 4.
- 44 The company included Carlotta Addison, Maud Brennan, Mr Cartwright, Mr Kyrle Bellew, Mrs H. Leigh, Mr H. Hamilton, Mr W.H. Denny, Louise Willes, and Helen Mathews (formerly of the Lyceum company) who took the part of Vera owing to Miss Litton's indisposition.
- 45 Yorkshire Post, 3 October 1882, p. 4.
- 46 The company included Clara Jecks, Marie Wynder, Emily Welbourne, Mr H. Martell, Maud Locker, and Sydney Haworth.
- 47 Yorkshire Post, 17 October 1882, p. 4.
- 48 Yorkshire Post, 24 October 1882, p. 4.
- 49 Yorkshire Post, 26 October 1882, p. 5.
- 50 The company included Bella Pateman, Mr E.H. Brooke, Mr H. George, Mr S. Fisher, Mr J.G. Shore, Mr Lin, Mr R. Pateman, and Ellen Meyrick.
- 51 Yorkshire Post, 31 October 1882, p. 6.
- 52 The company included Mr W.H. Vernon, Miss E. Lawrence, Rose Roberts, Mr F. Charles, and Harry Fenwick.
- 53 Yorkshire Post, 7 November 1882, p. 4.
- 54 The company included Walter Bentley, Mr W. Bragging, Arthur Palling, Mr G.W. Innes, Mr E.H. Beresford, Mrs C. Dillon, Miss C. Elfon.
- 55 Yorkshire Post, 14 November 1882, p. 6.
- 56 Yorkshire Post, 15 November 1882, p. 6.

57 The company included Mesdames Kissie Wood, Whiteford, Garth, Stanton, Dolby, Vincent, and Fannie Leslie; Messrs Arnold, Burton, the Brothers Griffiths, the Lupino family, Mr Fenwick, and Mr Chirgwin.

58 Yorkshire Post, 22 December 1882, p. 8.

CHAPTER VII:1883

Eighteen eighty-two had seen the settling of the leasing of the theatre and the Assembly Rooms in a way that was to last until Wilson Barrett's tenancy ended. The negotiation of the new lease had, however, been protracted, and Wilson Barrett had demanded, and got, fifty pounds as a half year's contribution for stock scenery, maintaining that the provisions of the old lease remained in force until the new one commenced. In the heat of the negotiations the company had accepted this, but in the new year (8 February 1883) Kingston wrote to Wilson Barrett telling him that the fifty pounds had been paid to him 'under a misapprehension'. He admitted that there had been six months delay in signing the new lease, but now asserted that this was due to Wilson Barrett's asking that the new lease should be made to terminate at the end of April (so that the retiring tenant could reap the benefits of producing a pantomime). On the face of it, it might seem that the delay was really attributable to the directors' holding out for the free admissions clause, rather than the extension of the date of termination, but Wilson Barrett does not seem to have quarrelled with the claim — perhaps because Kingston confused the issue by adding in the letter the statement that Wilson Barrett might deduct two years' landlord's property tax (amounting

to £100 16s. 8d.) for 1881 and 1882 from his first quarter's rent.

Lee Anderson passed on the receipts for the property tax to Kingston, and the latter wrote another letter on 14 February to Wilson Barrett demanding £574 3s. 4d. (£625, plus £50, less £100 16s. 8d.), which was paid immediately — a month and a half overdue.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 7 March, the directors' report and balance sheet having been sent to Sir Andrew Fairbairn in London for his examination on 16 February. The meeting seems to have passed uneventfully, and the company's financial position was now such that at the next board meeting (held on 11 March) it was decided to repay the directors fifty pounds of their loans to the company.

Francis Lupton, who owned the mill adjacent to the theatre on its north side, had written to the company asking for a nominal recognition of the infringement of his right of 'lights' shortly after the theatre's erection. He had received no satisfaction, and now, in 1883, he wrote again.

Kingston replied, however, (12 April) that the directors refused to take any action with regard to his claim. This dismissal did not end the matter, though, and it smouldered on for another year before coming to a conclusion.

On 2 May Kingston applied to Wilson Barrett for his second quarter's rent — now falling into a habit of rather

more forthright approaches, made promptly, than the reminders of his predecessor. He received the rent nine days later, minus £67 14s. 2d. which Wilson Barrett had deducted for property tax.

It will be remembered that there had been at least one other company (with which Wilson Barrett was associated) which was interested in the building of a new theatre in Leeds after the Amphitheatre burnt down. This company had been called the 'Leeds Theatre and Opera House Company, Limited', and by its existence had forced Sir Andrew Fairbairn's company to adopt the more cumbersome 'Theatre and Opera House, Leeds, Limited'. Such a small difference could clearly cause confusion, and in May 1883 Kingston wrote to the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies disclaiming any connexion between the two companies, and saying that he had passed on letters which the Registrar had wrongly directed to him, to the solicitors (Messrs Middleton & Sons) of the rival company, which he believed to have been 'defunct' for some time.

On 28 May, as a result of a decision of the directors, Kingston wrote to several Leeds firms inviting tenders for painting the theatre's exterior wood-work and iron-work, and for other maintenance of the building. Joe Lindley, a plumber and glazier, and an original contractor in the erection of the theatre, tendered sixty-four pounds for the repairs, and this, together with a tender of £75 10s. from W. Walsh & Sons for the painting, was accepted on

14 June. Lee Anderson was informed that both firms had been asked to start work forthwith.

It was Watson's duty to supervise this work (which was completed by 29 October, when he was asked to certify that it had been done satisfactorily), but meanwhile he was also asked to report on the condition of the theatre's exit doors, whether they would be adequate if there was a panic, and 'generally as to the manner of using them by Mr Barrett's employees when the theatre is open to the public'. (There had been an accident when a number of people were injured during the emptying of the Theatre Royal, Leeds, at the end of a performance in the previous year, owing to an exit not being properly clear, and so such dangers were likely to be in the directors' minds.)

Watson reported (at the end of August/beginning of September) that generally speaking the exits were adequate, though he did make 'one or two' suggestions.

Though the company was as yet only able to pay the interest on the mortgage and the debentures, with no plan apparent to enable it to pay off the principal itself in 1883, some interest was shown in the market value of the company's shares in that year. In the summer Kingston received two requests for information about the current quoted market price of the shares: from J. Lister Nichols who wrote from the Eureka Concrete Company Ltd, West Kensington, London, on 28 June, and from J. Shepherd, Goswell Road, London, who wrote on 5 July. To both of

these Kingston replied that there were no sales being made at that time, that it had been a considerable time since any were made, and that he could not find any quoted price for the company's shares.

Wilson Barrett paid his third quarter's rent at the end of August - nearly a month late - and was sent on 7 September a copy of Watson's report on the theatre's exits. The directors were informed, added the letter, that the Corporation fireman who had been employed at the theatre every night, had been replaced by a man from a private company. This the directors disapproved of, and the letter said that they were desirous that the Corporation man be reinstated 'so that the theatre shall be in direct communication with the Corporation Fire Brigade'.

The tenancy agreements for the shops had included a provision that the rents should increase annually. On 4 September Boswell (the tenant of shop number one and the annexed wine cellars under the theatre) wrote asking that his rent should remain at £120 per annum. However, this request was rejected on 7 September, in a letter which took the opportunity to complain that 'rag-boys infested the ash pit in his yard ... to the injury of the property' and asking him to keep his gate closed during the day.

On 3 November Kingston wrote to Boswell again, with another complaint. This letter drew his attention to the

fact that water with which he washed his carts had been getting into the theatre, and that the Sanitary Authority had complained about it.

Kingston applied for Wilson Barrett's last quarter's rent on 6 November, and acknowledged receipt of a cheque for the £625 on the seventeenth of that month.

The make-up of the seasons in 1883 was chiefly remarkable for the increase in the number of productions that were originated by Wilson Barrett. The pantomimes occupied an extra two weeks over the previous year, while there were eight weeks of the spectacularly naturalistic melodramas that Wilson Barrett first produced at the Princess's Theatre, London, and which he then sent out in touring versions. Otherwise there was a decline in the number of weeks occupied by comic operas from an average of roughly ten weeks in the year for the three preceding years to only six weeks in 1883. Opera was given for two weeks — a doubling of the figure for 1882. The number of fortnightly runs remained at the average of four per annum which had been maintained for the three preceding years, but, significantly, the upward trend in productions, companies, and artists returning to the Grand Theatre continued, and thirteen weeks in 1883 were filled by performances that had been seen before at the theatre.

The 1882/3 pantomime, 'Robinson Crusoe', ran until 17 March 1883, and the theatre was closed for the following week, to reopen on 26 March with a 'highly sensational drama', 'The Follies of the Day' by H.P. Grattan and Joseph Eldred, whose company presented the piece, together with a curtain-raiser, 'Out for a Holiday'.<sup>1</sup>

The Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that 'The Follies of the Day' was the worst play that had been at the Grand Theatre 'for a very long time back',<sup>2</sup> and it is interesting to note that he amplified his criticism by accusing the play of being a 'hash-up' of a number of popular pieces ('The New Babylon', 'The Ticket-of-leave Man', 'The Beggar's Petition', 'and a great many other dramas', set upon the foundation of 'The Rakes Progress'). Such powers of combination would seem to suggest some reasonably close relation of many of the popular pieces in theme or themes, and style of treatment.

The reviewer went on to make a further point which, if chiefly indicative of the depth of his distaste for the piece, also reminds us of the Victorians' happy eclecticism in incorporating diverse elements of entertainment into their plays, for the reviewer asserted that the only 'bright spots in the evening' were a ballet fantastique in the second act, a Scotch reel, a duet, and 'more music hall business' in the form of Harry Caradale's farmyard imitations.

'The Follies of the Day' was followed on 2 April by a third visit of Bruce and Robertson's company in E.G.

Lancaster's farcical comedy, 'The Guv'nor'.<sup>3</sup> Though it had been two years since the first performance of this piece at the Grand Theatre (in August 1881) its popularity seemed unimpaired and it was greeted by 'roars' of laughter from a 'well-filled' house.<sup>4</sup>

'The Guv'nor' was followed by a return visit of Wilson Barrett's company in G.R. Sims's 'The Lights o' London'.<sup>5</sup> Though since its formation in Leeds thirteen months previously this touring company had 'had a tour through the provinces than which for many years past few had been more satisfactory', the reviewer was surprised to find that on the first night of this fortnight's visit to Leeds the house was 'scarcely half-filled'.<sup>6</sup> It seems likely, however, that the audiences improved during the run, for the company returned later in the year (in September) for a further week.

'The Lights o' London' was succeeded by a new production – the D'Oyly Carte company in Gilbert and Sullivan's latest comic opera, 'Iolanthe',<sup>7</sup> which had first appeared at the Savoy Theatre on 25 November 1882, and had been touring since the end of February 1883. (The tour had begun at the Theatre Royal, Manchester.) Louis Edouardes and Stafford Hall had painted the scenery for this production at the Grand Theatre.

The season's first week of comic opera was followed by

another fortnight occupied by a return visit of one of Wilson Barrett's companies in a spectacular melodrama. This was 'The Romany Rye', which had first been seen at the Grand Theatre in July 1882, and returned on 30 April 1883 to be greeted with 'repeated demonstrations of gratification by a moderate house'. Again, there had been some changes in the company, but the principal roles were still in the same hands.

'The Romany Rye' was followed on 14 May by a new play, an adaptation by Frank Harvey of a French original by D'Ennery (who also wrote the originals of 'Proof', and 'The Two Orphans'), called 'Woman against Woman'.<sup>9</sup>

The play is interesting because it exemplifies the new 'realistic' moderation of melodramatic tone and sensational situation. The plot concerned Louise, the daughter of a 'clever', but struggling, artist, and played by Miss de Grey as 'delightfully but unconsciously pretty ... unassuming, modest, and artless'.<sup>10</sup> The Viscount Ferdinand fell in love with her, but his sister-in-law was opposed to the match both because of Louise's lowliness of birth, and because she thought that Ferdinand's marriage might make it more difficult for her to acquire the wealth that Ferdinand had inherited.

She discovered that the Duc de Grand Cour harboured an unsavoury passion for Louise, and successfully plotted to convince Ferdinand that Louise was faithless. Indeed, she even contrived to have Louise thrown into prison.

Eventually, of course, these machinations came to light, and Louise became Ferdinand's 'pure minded, worthy wife'.

The focus of attention of the play was the noble suffering of the heroine, whose conduct was 'natural and gentle' even when she discovered that her reputation was being undermined, and she manifested 'the calmness of innocence' which clearly made her subjugation to the villainous plotting the more poignant.

But there was a new moderate tone in all this suffering. She 'did not go in for paroxysms of grief or loud voiced demands for justice'; her knowledge of her innocence sustained her. This restraint could only go so far, however, and at the moment of her parting from Ferdinand she did suffer 'realistic' doubts, and she did eventually 'offer her breast to the avenging sword of the doubting Viscount who thought she had proved false'.

In the end her moral victory was absolute, and she was able to demand as the price of accepting Ferdinand's apology that he should 'banish from his mind all thought of even the possibility of her guilt'.

Though the play was refined in its sensation, the audience suffered no such moderation, and 'Miss de Grey and several other principals were repeatedly called to the front'.

Being an adaptation from the French, 'Woman against Woman' could more easily accept a marriage transgressing the hierarchy of station than an English play, and the play

that followed it at the Grand Theatre on 21 May, 'Comrades' by Brandon Thomas and B.C. Stephenson, found adequate material for its basis in a rather narrower domestic problem.<sup>11</sup>

The comrades of the title were the two sons of a retired general, Sir George Dexter. The latter had kept his first marriage a secret from his second wife, and the sons did not know that they were brothers. However, they became friends, and while staying with their father, the elder fell in love with a lady whom his match-making maiden aunt had intended for the younger.

In the course of the play the elder brother discovered some hint of the truth about his parentage, but suspected that he was illegitimate, and, after some soul-searching, told the lady that he could not marry her.

At this point the brothers were called away to war, where the elder saved the younger's life, which reaffirmed their strained friendship. Meanwhile in England Sir George, in a fit of delirium brought on by brain fever, told all to his second wife, and this revelation left the way open for a resolution of the plot that was satisfactory to everyone but the maiden aunt.

'Comrades' had had a successful run at the Royal Court Theatre, London, when first produced there in the autumn of 1882, and had since been touring the provinces to 'fairly good' receptions. The house for its first night at the Grand Theatre, however, was 'only thin'.<sup>12</sup>

'Comrades' was succeeded by a visit of another of D'Oyly Carte's companies, performing Planquet's latest opéra-bouffe, 'Rip Van Winkle', and this was followed by the Mdlle Beatrice company in another of Frank Harvey's plays, 'The Wages of Sin'.<sup>13</sup> This play shared the domestic nature of the other pieces which Harvey supplied for the company that he managed, and concerned a young lady called Ruth Deana who loved a clergyman, but was induced to marry the villain of the piece by the latter's cunning. After leading her a wretched life for a while, the villain was the cause of his own undoing, and Ruth eventually married her clergyman.

There was a large audience for Frank Harvey's first night, and he produced 'Frou-Frou' for his benefit on the Friday.

'The Wages of Sin' was followed by another week of comic opera when the D'Oyly Carte company returned on 11 June with 'Patience'. This ran for a week, and was followed by Wilson Barrett's company in a new play by Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman, 'The Silver King'.<sup>14</sup>

Again this play was an example of the new moderate melodrama, and the reviewer<sup>15</sup> thought that it was intensely human and real, and though it eschewed characters of 'middling' morality, it nonetheless stopped short of sensationalism.

Wilfred Denver was the hero who had succumbed to the dual vices of drink and gambling, and was first discovered attempting to drown his losses at an inn of the road from

Epsom. He resolved to return to his wife, but a former suitor of hers taunted the maudlin Denver, then left. Denver worked himself into a rage and pursued his tormentor to his lodgings. In fact the tormentor was not at home, but the rooms were being used by burglars who were trying to break through into the house next door. Denver disturbed them, and they quickly chloroformed him.

The tormentor then returned and the burglars shot him with Denver's revolver. When the latter came to he thought that he must be the murderer. He resolved to make a quick confession to his wife, and then flee. Accordingly he caught a train, pursued by a detective. He leaped from the train, and, discovering later that the train caught fire shortly after his jump, and that he was presumed dead, he decided not to see his wife, but to flee at once to America where he worked in the silver mines in Nevada, becoming very wealthy.

After three and a half years he returned to England and began to try to help his destitute wife and children anonymously. Then in disguise he infiltrated the band of burglars, and discovered his own innocence. The way was thus opened for a reconciliation between Denver and his wife, and a happy ending.

The staging of the play was not as spectacular as had been the more recent of Wilson Barrett's productions (though as usual the scenery was painted by Messrs Edouardes, Fox, and Hall), and this fact was not lost upon the Yorkshire

Post reviewer, who referred to it when the company made a return visit in November 1883, saying that the play depended for its sensation upon the strength of situation rather than the stage carpenter. But though this play might therefore seem a step backwards along the line of development that Wilson Barrett appeared to be following, the piece did also contain two elements which were part of this general development, and were quite clear to the reviewer too. The hero, he noticed, was not without blemish: at the beginning of the play he drank and gambled, and the villain was not from the familiar cast of villains, but was 'a cultured and irreproachable pet of society'.

'The Silver King' ended its fortnight on 30 June, and was followed in the next two weeks by performances which were a substantial departure from the rest of the season. The first week saw Sam Hague's Christy Minstrels.<sup>16</sup> This company was organised specifically for touring, and the reviewer thought it a poor one.<sup>17</sup> Their performance contained sentimental ballads, stale jokes, and 'step-dancing' in the first half, and comic sketches, 'a grand acrobatic statue clog tournament' and 'performances with musket and bayonet' by an American, Major Burk, in the second half.

Sam Hague's Minstrels were followed on 9 July by 'The Bentz-Santley Novelty Company's Budget of Varieties'. The company was an American one, and brought with it advertising enterprise that the Yorkshire Post reviewer

had never seen in Leeds before – the town was flooded with 'pictorials' of 'female attractiveness'.<sup>18</sup> This gave a clue to the nature of the variety performance, which included such items as Annie Whiting playing an air on the valve trombone, Mr J.W. Surridge telling some 'droll' stories, Lizzie Simms, the 'transformation dancer' who changed (national) costumes twelve times in the course of her dance, Susie Dillon singing 'explanatory' songs while Mr Dolph Levino drew charcoal caricatures of the Queen, General Garfield, the Premier, and Lord Beaconsfield, and the performance was concluded by a burlesque on Longfellow's 'Evangeline'.

The Bentz-Santley Budget of Varieties was followed by 'the American Soubrette', Minnie Palmer, in 'My Sweetheart'. Minnie Palmer appeared to the reviewer to be 'young, pretty, and gifted, with a smart figure and charming voice', but this description, together with the fact that she had a large and enthusiastic audience, was all that he could find space to mention in his notice.<sup>19</sup> It seems reasonably clear that even despite bringing in lighter forms of entertainment in the summer, Wilson Barrett was hard put to to make a financial success of it, and in fact the theatre remained closed for the next two weeks.

The theatre reopened on 6 August when Kyrle Bellew and his company<sup>20</sup> began a provincial tour of 'The Corsican Brothers' at the Grand Theatre. The play was a thoroughly

familiar one to the public, the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought,<sup>21</sup> and he stressed the financial dangers attendant upon a bad or only moderately good audience for the beginning of such a tour. Clearly he wondered why Bellew should have chosen to open in Leeds, for he went on to point out that Leeds audiences had a tendency only to be found at proven successes.

However, he did account this production a success, saying that the acting was 'thoroughly efficient' throughout the company, and that Bellew himself was good, once his 'mannerisms' had become familiar. Two scenes chiefly impressed him: the Paris Grand Opera which included a carnival in which there were grotesquely dressed characters and some dancing; and the Forest of Fontainbleau, of which 'the subdued tints and sombre surroundings ... were in complete harmony with the deed of retribution to be enacted in their midst'. (The scenic artist was Mr Helmsley.)

These appear to be the reactions of a critic somewhat jaundiced by familiarity with the piece, but a third item in the production caught his attention rather more forcefully: the duel. Bellew's 'lithe physique' he found 'specially adapted' to this feature of the play, and the fight was carried off 'with marked effect'.

'The Corsican Brothers' was followed by a further return of the D'Oyly Carte company<sup>22</sup> in 'HMS Pinafore' which was 'heartily enjoyed' by what the reviewer considered a good

house for the time of year.<sup>23</sup> This was to be the last visit of 'HMS Pinafore' for some years, and the reviewer observed that the cast was one which he did not think could be improved upon. It is therefore perhaps not unreasonable to speculate that this was a deliberate policy aimed at attracting whatever audiences could still be interested in the piece before it was withdrawn.

'HMS Pinafore' was to have been followed on 20 August by 'An Adamless Eden', but 'owing to some misunderstanding among certain members of the company' it was withdrawn,<sup>24</sup> and Boucicault's 'The Shaughraun' substituted at short notice.<sup>25</sup>

In the following week Florence St John and Mr Marius appeared in Offenbach's 'Madame Favart' (an English adaptation by Farnie) on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and the same composer's 'Lurette' on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.<sup>26</sup>

'Madame Favart' had been performed at the Grand Theatre before, in March 1880, when it ran for a fortnight with Mdlle D'Anka in the title role. 'Lurette', however, was Offenbach's latest (and, indeed, last) opéra-bouffe, which had first been seen in England in March 1883 when it opened at the Avenue Theatre, London, (in an adaptation by Frank Desprez, Alfred Murray, and H.S. Leigh) and ran for nearly one hundred nights.

The plot of 'Lurette' was banal in the extreme. In fact

it was yet another reworking of the theme of marriage between aristocrat and peasant. Lurette was a washer-woman, albeit a young and attractive one. Before the action of the opera commenced, she had saved the dissolute Duc de Marly from some robbers. In the unfolding of the plot the Duc's wealthy aunt decided to reform him, and decreed that he must be married within forty-eight hours. The Duc entrusted responsibility for finding a bride to his valet, who selected Lurette. The ceremony was gone through, but Lurette, beautiful as she was, was also 'artless' and unable to compete with the Duc's friends, and the Duc fled.

Ever pragmatic, Lurette set up a laundry where, by exploiting her title on a sign, she attracted aristocratic trade. After a while the Duc returned, was annoyed by the sign, and sent his valet to the shop to have it removed.

However, it was then revealed that Lurette was the woman who had saved the Duc from the robbers, and he was reconciled to her.

'Madame Favart' and 'Lurette' were followed on 3 September by the visit of Barry Sullivan who played in 'Hamlet' on Monday, 'Richelieu' on Tuesday, 'Richard III' on Wednesday and Saturday, 'The Gamester' on Thursday, and 'Much Ado about Nothing' on Friday.<sup>27</sup>

Barry Sullivan was an exemplar of the 'old', 'heavy' style of acting that the reviewer conceded many thought to be going out of fashion.<sup>28</sup> Sullivan had been on the stage for nearly a third of a century, and, indeed, he had 'retired' in 1880.

However, this new tour (visiting Leeds, which he had rarely done before) called forth a large audience – comparable in 1883, the reviewer said, only to the last night of the pantomime. Sullivan gave a performance that seemed to have been deliberately 'toned down' during his three years off the stage, and the reviewer noticed that in 'Hamlet' he did not use 'the full force of his lungs' as, clearly, had been his wont in earlier years. Richelieu, which the reviewer regarded as his best part, and his Benedick, both benefited from this new, less forceful interpretation, and, indeed, the reviewer thought that in 'Much Ado about Nothing' Sullivan expressed 'wholly and perfectly the author's intention'.<sup>29</sup>

Barry Sullivan was followed by Ada Cavendish, who opened on 10 September in 'The New Magdalen' which ran for a week.<sup>30</sup> This was not the first time that the play had been seen at the Grand Theatre, for it had previously been given in December 1879, nor indeed was it new to Leeds, for Ada Cavendish had played it at the Amphitheatre in 1876. However, in the reviewer's opinion, she had 'made the part her own'.<sup>31</sup>

The heroine was Mercy Merrick, a falling woman, who arrested her descent by going as a nurse to tend the wounded in a Franco-German war. While she was doing this she met Grace Roseberry, who had been shot in the head. Grace and Mercy exchanged life stories before Grace seemed to die. Mercy succumbed to the temptation to impersonate her,

and, as Grace had never been seen by her aunt, Mercy set out for London. All this was established in the prologue, which closed after Mercy's departure, with a surgeon skilfully saving Grace's life.

Mercy, 'gentle, affectionate, anxious to please and to be pleased' was accepted in London by the aunt, Lady Janet, as a daughter of the family. Her new environment brought out the best in her, but she suffered pangs of conscience. This, of course, allowed Miss Cavendish 'the opportunity to display her undoubtedly great powers as an interpreter of human feelings'.

The Reverend Julian Grey now fell in love with her. (It was he who first persuaded her to reform and to take up nursing, but now she was so transformed that he did not recognise her.) However, she was engaged to marry Horace Holmcroft.

Inevitably, Grace arrived and denounced Mercy, but Mercy was playing her new role so well that Grace was not believed. Mercy's conscience, however, compelled her to confess to the parson. The revelation was made public, but everyone was so fond of her, and Grace was so 'unforgiving and pitiless' that she lost nothing in esteem, and eventually married the parson.

Ada Cavendish was succeeded by a new comic opera, 'The Merry Duchess', written by G.R. Sims with music by a Mr Clay, and first mounted by Kate Santley at the Royalty

Theatre, London, in the previous season. The piece opened at the Grand Theatre on 17 September, and ran for a week, presented by a touring company.<sup>32</sup>

The opera revolved around horse racing, and most of it was set at the Doncaster course. The Duchess of the title had wagered her hand in marriage on her own horse. She was clearly sure that it would win, and was really in love with her jockey, Freddie Bowman.

The plot was confused by a villain and his wife who strove to 'nobble' the horse. In the process they were disguised first as Persians, then as Spaniards. The Duchess prevailed upon the wife to exchange costumes, in order, she thought, to test Freddie's fidelity. Through various machinations the latter was twice arrested, but freed - in the first instance by the mob, egged on by the conscience-stricken villain's wife, and in the second by pardon of the Home Secretary, who had heavily backed the horse Freddie was to ride. Of course, the horse won, and everything was resolved happily.

Sims's comic opera was followed by a return visit of another of his pieces, 'The Lights o' London', presented by Wilson Barrett's company.<sup>33</sup> The piece had had three hundred performances in London, and nearly four hundred in the provinces. This was its third appearance in Leeds, but enthusiasm for it did not seem at all abated: the pit was 'crammed', and the gallery resembled that for a pantomime. There was 'vociferous' applause.<sup>34</sup>

'The Lights o' London' was followed by J.L. Toole who gave some of his familiar repertoire and a new work by H.J. Byron.<sup>35</sup> On Monday and Tuesday the principal piece was 'A Fool and His Money', with 'Waiting Consent' by May Holt, and 'Mr Guffin's Elopement' (a musical farce by Arthur Law and George Grossmith) accompanying it; on Wednesday and Thursday the main piece was 'The Upper Crust'; on Friday it was a new play by Byron, 'Auntie'; and on Saturday 'Dot' was the evening's main piece.

With the exception of 'Auntie', which, though new, strictly adhered to the familiar lines of Byron's pieces for Toole, the audience must have known the other plays. Nonetheless Toole was greeted after his two years' absence with a warm reception from a house that was well-filled in every part.<sup>36</sup>

Toole's week was succeeded by a return of the D'Oyly Carte company in 'Iolanthe',<sup>37</sup> which in turn was followed by 'Love and Money', a '(not too) sensational melodrama' by Charles Reade and Henry Pettitt.<sup>38</sup> This was followed on 22 October by the Carl Rosa Opera Company which performed five familiar operas - 'Il Trovatore' on Monday, 'Mignon' on Tuesday, 'Esmerelda' on Wednesday, 'Bohemian Girl' on Friday, 'Carmen' on Saturday, and a new opera, 'Colomba', by A.C. Mackenzie and Franz Hueffer, on Thursday.<sup>39</sup>

Carl Rosa's Opera Company was followed by two weeks of comedies. The first (beginning on 29 October) was given

by the Compton Comedy Company,<sup>40</sup> of which Edward Compton and his wife were the principals.

Edward Compton was the son of a theatrical father, and a 'chip off the old block'.<sup>41</sup> His career had started at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, in 1873, and he had progressed (playing with Mr Chute, Mrs Byron, under H.J. Byron, and with Mrs Wallis; and first appearing in London at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1876) until he founded his own company in 1881, thereafter appearing several times in London, and in all the major provincial cities, but infrequently in Leeds. He performed the older comedies — Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith — a selection which paralleled the tragic actor's repertoire, and certainly a repertoire that was declining in popularity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, especially among actors.

Compton gave 'She Stoops to Conquer' on Monday, 'The Rivals' on Tuesday, 'Much Ado about Nothing' on Wednesday, 'The School for Scandal' on Thursday, 'The Comedy of Errors' on Friday, and 'The Road to Ruin' on Saturday. 'The Comedy of Errors' was a piece that was rarely given, because, according to the Yorkshire Post reviewer, of the difficulty of finding two actors alike enough to play the Dromios (a Mr Kennedy was Compton's counterpart in this production). The reviewer also noted that 'The School for Scandal' attracted the first good house of the week, and a further observation of his — that Compton invested his Tony Lumpkin in 'She Stoops to Conquer' with a quality of 'clowning' that few other actors employed — seems to

indicate that Compton played his comedies with a greater broadness of humour than was customary.

Edward Compton was followed by an older comedian, Edward Terry, who had begun his career in 1863 (when he was nineteen), first appearing in London in 1867, and making his mark as a 'grotesque' actor in 1869 in H.J. Byron's 'The Pilgrim of Love'. Terry appeared at the Grand Theatre for the week beginning 5 November in a new comedy by A.W. Pinero, 'The Rocket'.<sup>42</sup>

Though this piece afforded Terry opportunity for his broad, 'grotesque' humour, it was also modern in conception. Terry played 'the Chevalier Walkingshaw', a 'selfish, unprincipled, and frivolous middle-aged man',<sup>43</sup> who attempted to use his niece, whose guardian he had been for some years, as a means of social advancement. He took her to an hotel in France where she met, fell in love with, and became engaged to, Joslyn Hammersmith. The Chevalier thereby was enabled (having returned to England) to make some impression on Joslyn's mother, Lady Hammersmith. However, Joslyn knew his character too well, and ejected him.

The Chevalier was not to be so easily daunted, and persuaded Lady Hammersmith to elope to Paris, whither, also, went the niece (to see her old boarding school mistress), her father (who had been searching for her, and had received a clue), and the Chevalier's wife — all, of course, in ignorance of each other — and they ended up in

the same hotel. Thus the play could enjoy a farcical, but proper, resolution.

Interestingly, the reviewer claimed that the play was a comedy when Terry was not on stage, but a farce when he came on, and this, taken with the fact that he wore a make-up which in itself provoked laughter (and was supposedly even funnier when he himself laughed), gives some clue to his style of performance.

Two weeks of comedy were followed by the visit on 12 November of the Royal English Opera Company<sup>44</sup> which performed two new operas - 'The Piper of Hamelin' and 'Victorian', both based on romantic poems - and three familiar works - 'Maritana', 'Faust', and 'The Lily of Kilarney'. 'The Piper of Hamelin' was by V.E. Nessler, and was based on Browning's poem. It was first performed in England at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester, in 1882. 'Victorian' was by Julian Edwards (the opera company's conductor), and was based on Longfellow's 'The Spanish Student'. It was first produced in Sheffield in 1882. On the occasion of this visit to the Grand Theatre, the reviewer made his frequently repeated criticism of new operas - that they suffered from under-rehearsal - and also complained that the libretto was 'prosy'.<sup>45</sup> The music, however, he thought was 'conscientious', and was given a warm reception.

The operas were followed by a return visit of Wilson Barrett's company in 'The Silver King'. The play seemed

still to have been at the height of its popularity for it enjoyed another fortnight's run only five months after its previous fortnight at the Grand Theatre, and special trains were arranged to bring in audiences from outside Leeds.

'The Silver King' was succeeded by the visit of Miss Wallis (who had previously played at the Grand Theatre in 1881) in a repertoire of four familiar plays, and one new one.<sup>46</sup> On Monday she gave 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' (necessarily inviting comparison with Madame Modjeska, thought the reviewer,<sup>47</sup> but carrying off the performance well), on Tuesday 'Cymbeline', on Wednesday 'Romeo and Juliet', on Thursday 'Measure for Measure', and on Friday and Saturday a new play written by herself and Mr J.W. Boulding, 'For Wife and State'.

Miss Wallis's week ended on 9 December, and the theatre remained closed thereafter until Saturday 22 December for rehearsal of the pantomime, 'Humpty Dumpty'.

The pantomime,<sup>48</sup> written as usual by J. Wilton Jones, contained some striking examples of the balance between the fairy tale source and topical reference that gave the whole its character and atmosphere. The story began in 'The Demon Hen Coop' where the Demon (Hinkubator) hatched a giant egg, and endowed the resultant half mortal/half demon with human shape for twenty-one years, in which time he was to find a silver spoon (the Princess Roseleaf was

reputed to have been born with it in her mouth) or revert to his egg form. He was given a magic crystal egg-cup which could grant wishes and give its owner great wealth, but these powers were nullified in the presence of the silver spoon.

Princess Roseleaf worked as a drudge in the kitchen of Retchid Pasha. The fairies visited her to tell her who she really was. They showed her a vision of the Prince Prettyboy, with whom she instantly fell in love. (In fact it was he who possessed the silver spoon.)

Humpty Dumpty found Roseleaf and asked her to marry him, but she turned him down. He therefore imprisoned her in a giant pepper-box, and whisked her off by magic to her father's palace. (Her father, too, had been under a twenty-one year sentence. He was impoverished, and threatened with the loss of his throne if he could not find his daughter before the twenty-one years was up. Humpty Dumpty had struck a bargain with him that he would provide the king with great wealth if he would let him marry his daughter. The wealth could be created by means of the crystal egg-cup, but in order to prove his power to keep his side of the bargain, Humpty Dumpty appeared disguised as the Silver King from Wilson Barrett's then currently touring melodrama.)

Prettyboy arrived 'with a glittering retinue',<sup>49</sup> however, and Roseleaf again refused Humpty Dumpty. Her father imprisoned her in 'The Brazen Tower', but Prettyboy made it collapse, and she escaped with him. They fled in a

gondola over a fairy lake into a Golden Grotto. Here there was a 'highly poetical' Cupid and Psyche ballet set in the 'etherialised Italian scene'.

Humpty Dumpty and the king arrived in hot pursuit, but the good fairy transported the Prince and Princess to the Gold Mines, where the Gnome King befriended them. However, the Princess became lost in 'The Haunted Wood' - 'a weird scene in itself where all is still, but it becomes ominously terrible when the forest sets itself in motion'. The chase continued, but time was running out for Humpty Dumpty and the king, and they ended up in a burlesque based on the workhouse scene in another of Wilson Barrett's then current successes, 'The Lights o' London'.

The plot might now be resolved in the culminatingly spectacular scene of the pantomime - the Great Hall. This was 'a remarkable piece of architectural painting and arrangement - presenting a noble spectacle of illimitable extent, and as imposing in appearance as in its rich Oriental colouring' (the pantomime was set 'in the east'). The scene was 'dressed' by a procession representing the towns of Yorkshire - a 'grand heraldic procession' - ending with Leeds, and 'Liliputian reproductions of the Mace-bearer, the Town Clerk, and the Mayor'. There followed a ballet of the twelve months which was interrupted by the descent of a horde of demons, but these were vanquished by the Yorkshire Towns. This developed into a 'dance of happiness' - full of 'abandon' yet with 'grace and beauty', which,

'unlike anything seen before', inspired the audience to great enthusiasm. The applause and calls lasted so long that the thread of the narrative was only just salvaged. Wilson Barrett presented Lee Anderson (who was responsible for the ballet), and Henry Hastings (the stage manager) to jointly receive the adulation.

As a coda to the Great Hall scene, Prettyboy took his prospective father-in-law on a tour of the Silver City to demonstrate the wealth that he would bring him. This scene was a final restatement of the silver theme which had been running throughout the pantomime, and was painted by Walter Hann 'with daylight and moonlight effects'. Obviously, it also had the secondary function of providing a front-cloth scene while the transformation ('Oceana', by Louis Edouardes, and which the Yorkshire Post reviewer thought the 'loveliest' and 'most effective' yet seen at the Grand Theatre) was prepared.<sup>50</sup>

At the end of the pantomime Wilson Barrett spoke, making further play upon silver, and the Silver King, and then going on to mention that it had been his custom to invite the inmates of the workhouse to a performance of the pantomime, and to give the children apples and oranges, and the adults a glass of beer or ginger ale and some tobacco. Despite the fact that he had been criticised for this by the Guardians of the workhouse, he said, he intended to make his invitation again.

That this practice should have caused such opposition gives some indication of the moral ethos in which the theatre still operated at that time, and that Wilson Barrett should choose to speak about the matter from the stage at the end of a performance furnishes a further example of the way in which he regarded the theatre as a forum in which his personal relation with the Leeds audience existed and evolved. He ended his speech in his usual way - soliciting the audience's approval for his pantomime, and the audience rising to the occasion with its usual cheer.

Notes

- 1 The company included the Sisters Wilberforce, and the Brothers May (who provided the ballet, reel, and duet), Joseph Eldred, Mr A.B. Cross, Mr C. Derwood, Mr W.H. Handley, Mr A. Blakey, Ada Melrose, Amy Belgrave, Susie Montague, and Miss C. Handley.
- 2 Yorkshire Post, 27 March 1883, p. 6.
- 3 The company, which had undergone little change, now included Mr J.F. Young, Richard Dalton, Herbert Waring, Mr J.H. Darnley, Mr A.D. Adams, Mr T. Robertson, Angus McMurry, Mr W. Groome, Mr C. Thorne, Mr A. Welch, Cora Stuart, Emily Daricombe, Mrs J.F. Young, Miss F. Rayburne, and Maud Kennard.
- 4 Yorkshire Post, 3 April 1883, p. 5.
- 5 The company had undergone some changes: Helen Matthews had replaced Maud Milton as Bess; Mr R.F. Cotton had replaced Mr R.S. Boleyn as the villain, Clifford Armytage; Mr W.P. Grainger had replaced Mr S. Howard as Philosopher Jack; and Minnie Rotchley had replaced Marie Glynne as Hetty Preene.
- 6 Yorkshire Post, 10 April 1883, p. 8.
- 7 The company included Frank Thornton, Mr Federici, Mr Marler, Walter Greyling, Mr L. Cadwallader, Beatrice Young, Fanny Harrison, Miss Forster, Miss Duggan, and Evelyn Carstairs.
- 8 Yorkshire Post, 1 May 1883, p. 4.

- 9 The company included Mrs F. Clifton, Fred Terry,  
Mr F. Rodney, and George Wade.
- 10 Yorkshire Post, 15 May 1883, p. 4.
- 11 The company included Mr F.H. Macklin, Mr C.H. Kenny,  
Mr W. Everard, Mr W.H. Denny, Miss Blanche Henri,  
Julia Warden, Maria Jones, Kenneth Black, Mr Etienne Girardet,  
Mr E. Gordon, and Timothy Hopper. 'Comrades' was  
accompanied by the burlesque 'Sinbad' by Frank W. Greene.
- 12 Yorkshire Post, 22 May 1883, p. 4.
- 13 The company included Frank Harvey, Mr Carter-Edwards,  
Mr T.W. Benson, Charlotte Saunders, Eyre Robson, and  
Polly Hunter.
- 14 The company included Mr F.H. Brooke, Miss C. Grahame,  
Mr R.S. Boleyn, Mr C.K. Chute, Mr A.G. Leigh,  
Edward J. George, Miss C. Burton, and Florence Turner.
- 15 Yorkshire Post, 19 June 1883, p. 6.
- 16 The company included C. Ousely, E. Dalmaine, Tom Beet,  
Howard Oakley, J. Dane, Ray Shaw, T. Ward, J. Doorman,  
Mr McBride, Mr Nacey, T. Lambert, James Bland,  
Eugene Stepan, M. Robertson, J. Lowe, O. Elliot, T. Gilmore,  
Neil Solomon, and A. Bland.
- 17 Yorkshire Post, 3 July 1883, p. 4.
- 18 Yorkshire Post, 10 July 1883, p. 3.
- 19 Yorkshire Post, 17 July 1883, p. 5.
- 20 The company included A.G. Stewart, Mr J.W. Erskine,  
Mr W. Treherne, Mr H. Rowe Guy, Helen Creswell, Ada Mellon,  
Blanche Grey, and Enid Hempden.

- 21 Yorkshire Post, 7 August 1883, p. 6.
- 22 The company included John le Hay, Fred Billington, Henry Walsham, Esme Lee, Madge Stavart, Edgar Manning, Richard Cummings, Mr C.M. Blythe, and Marian May. The piece was preceded by a vaudeville called 'Quite an Adventure'.
- 23 Yorkshire Post, 14 August 1883, p. 4.
- 24 Yorkshire Post, 21 August 1883, p. 6.
- 25 The company included Mr J.S. Delaney, Mr L.S. Dear, Mr A.J. Hilton, Alfred Cuthbert, Mr W. McIntyre, George Canning, Carrie Lee Stoye, Agnes Templeton, and Florence Clarke.
- 26 The company included Mr T.P. Hayes, Mr H. Bracey, Clara Merivale, Mr W.T. Hemsley, Mr D. Fischer jnr, Mr J. Ettison, Florence St John, and Mr Marius.
- 27 The company included George Warde, Mr W. Fosbrooke, John Amory, Miss Carlisle, Ethel Herbert, Mr Basset Rowe, Mr W.S. Hardy, and Miss L. Lancaster.
- 28 Yorkshire Post, 4 September 1883, p. 5.
- 29 Yorkshire Post, 8 September 1883, p. 5.
- 30 The company included Rose Roberts, Gladys Howfrey, Edward Beecher, and Mark Quinton.
- 31 Yorkshire Post, 11 September 1883, p. 3.
- 32 The company included Sidney Harcourt, Ruby Stuart, Haidee Crofton, Mr F.H. Laye, James Neville, Mr R.F. Cotton, and James Pierpoint.
- 33 There had been some changes in the company: Maud Milton had returned to it after a year in America, and an

American actress, Helen Leigh, now played Hetty Preece. Mr G.R. Peach had exchanged the role of hero for that of villain, and the company further included Henry Arnold, and his wife, Kissie Wood, Mrs R. Power, Mr W. Grainger, and Rebecca Aarons.

34 Yorkshire Post, 25 September 1883, p. 5.

35 The company included Marie Lindon, Ely Kempster, Eliza Johnstone, Bella Wallace, Miss Sidon, Emily Thorne, John Billington, Lewis Waller, Mr W. Cheeseman, Mr W. Brunton, Mr G. Skelton, Mr H. Westland, and was managed by G. Loveday.

'Auntie' was accompanied by 'The Steeplechase' and 'Ici On Parle Français'.

36 Yorkshire Post, 2 October 1883, p. 4.

37 The company, which had undergone some changes, now included George Grossmith (who had replaced Frank Thornton), Esme Lee, Mr Federici, Fanny Harrison, Mr Marler, Walter Greyling, and Mr L. Cadwallader.

38 Yorkshire Post, 16 October 1883, p. 4.

The company included Mr J.H. Clyndes, Mr A.T. Fitzroy, Mr F. Macdonnell, Mr F. Dobell, Mr A. Syms, Ella Strathmore, and Kitty Tyrell.

39 Carl Rosa's Opera Company included Marie Roze,

Mr W.P. Clarke, Leslie Crotty, Henry Pope, Marian Burton, Ella Collins, Barton McGuckin, Georgina Burns, Mr Leumane, Mr G. King, Mr J. Beale, Clara Perry, Mr Ludwig, Miss Leah Don, Mr B. Davies, Mr G.H. Snazelle, Annie Albin, Mr W. Mockridge, Alice Davies, Mrs Burgers, and Annie Milne.

- 40 The company included Mr Lewis Ball, Mrs Bickerstaff, and Clara Cowper.
- 41 Yorkshire Post, 30 October 1883, p. 4.
- 42 The company included Mr J.W. Adams, Mr H.C. Sidney, Mr M. Kinghorne, Maria Jones, Miss F. Sutherland, and Ethel Castleton.
- The play was accompanied by F.C. Burnand's burlesque 'Robbing Roy'.
- 43 Yorkshire Post, 6 November 1883, p. 4.
- 44 The company included Blanche Cole, James Sauvage, Mr Benson, Mr W. Hillier, Albert McGuckin, Victor Roberts, Charles Lyall, Mr E. Muller, Clara Leslie, and Lucy Franklein.
- 45 Yorkshire Post, 13 November 1883, p. 6, and 14 November 1883, p. 6.
- 46 The company included Mr Vandehoff, Miss Oliph Webb, Charles Arnold, Mr L. Calvert, Mr A. Thomas, Miss M. Glynne, and Mr W.H. Pennington. Pennington was a survivor of the Eleventh Hussars, and this regiment gave Friday's benefit performance their patronage, for which Pennington recited 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', and the regiment's band also played.
- 47 Yorkshire Post, 4 December 1883, p. 4.
- 48 The company included George Walton, Retta Walton, Alfred Hemmings, Mr Lyons Bell, Mr J.W. Rowely (a music hall singer), Charles Ashford, Charles Bruce, the Lauri family, Lizzie Coote, Helena Lisle, and Ella Deane.

49 Yorkshire Post, 24 December 1883, p. 3.

50 The scenery was by Stafford Hall, who painted King Masher's Palace and Grounds, 'a magnificent Moresque pile standing beneath a glowing tropical sky, and surrounded by richly coloured tropical verdure', and the Golden Grotto by the Silver Lake; Bruce Smith, who painted the Haunted Forest; Louis Edouardes, who contributed the Demon Hen Coop and the Brazen Tower as well as the transformation scene; and Walter Hann who was responsible for the Silver City and its effects.

CHAPTER VIII:1884

In 1884 the company's first board meeting was held on 4 February. Kingston wrote to Kitson that it was desirable to have this early meeting to discuss the 1883 balance sheet. Watson also was invited to report to this meeting concerning extensions to the smoke-rooms of the dress circle and the pit. Wilson Barrett had proposed these extensions, and was willing to pay for them himself.

On 5 February Kingston wrote to Wilson Barrett to inform him that the directors would not permit the extensions, and also to remind him that, though he had forced the deletion of the free admissions clause in the new lease, he had undertaken to provide the directors with passes that would facilitate their moving from one part of the house to another as long as they had paid to enter the theatre in the first place. 'These tickets,' he said, 'had not been supplied and the directors thought it might be convenient to have them as they would doubtless secure special courtesy on the part of the attendants'.

The meeting also discussed the fact that the repayment of the debentures fell due on 1 July 1884, which effectively meant that from that date the company would have a debt of thirty-seven thousand pounds including the mortgage, and the directors were exhorted to devise schemes whereby this might be 'financially readjusted' on

the security of the property, but at a reduced rate of interest. These schemes were to be put before a meeting scheduled for 17 March - immediately prior to the Annual General Meeting. Sir Andrew Fairbairn was specially written to, clearly in the hope that he might contribute a plan.

However, no extraordinarily original solution seems to have been arrived at, and apart from some adjustment in the supervision of repairs and maintenance of the theatre (effectively Watson's services were dispensed with and three directors - Irwin, Harding, and Sagar-Musgrave - constituted a sub-committee to vet complaints and requests from Lee Anderson and Henry Hastings, clearly in the hope of reducing the company's expenditure), the only concrete decision was to borrow a further five thousand pounds on the mortgage, and to issue a second lot of debentures.

This plan was ratified at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 27 May, and by 21 June £6,300 worth of debentures had been applied for. (£4,650 of this was simply an exchange of new debentures for old, and this, together with the extra five thousand pounds raised on the mortgage, left only £2,200 of the old debentures to pay off.) Kingston wrote optimistically to Kitson that there were still £3,550 of new debentures yet to be applied for, and if they were, this would clearly cover the amount.

Though these might seem measures which the company was

somewhat forced into taking, and had an air of the ad hoc about them, nonetheless the company also felt sufficiently secure to be able to pay off the directors' personal loans, and to promise Benjamin Goodman that out of a projected income surplus at the end of the year a fund might be set up for maintenance of the theatre building. (This was in fact said to him as an inducement to withdraw his resignation which he had offered over the matter of adequate provision for maintenance. The issue seems to have affected him strongly, and is likely to have originated at the same time as the decision to dismiss Watson. Goodman must have regarded this move with suspicion, and perhaps rightly so, for the attitude it embodied was clearly demonstrated by the first actions of the sub-committee set up in Watson's place. These were to call for a copy of the clauses in the lease that concerned the company's liabilities for maintenance, and promptly to send an account for repairs from Joe Lindley to Wilson Barrett. Goodman may have felt that laying such charges at Wilson Barrett's door would result in less repair work being done. Certainly the year ended with the reiteration of complaints from Henry Hastings to the company secretary that roof slates loosened by a storm were dangerous as well as allowing water to leak into the painting room, and nothing was being done about them.)

Two other matters exercised the board during 1884: the reinsuring of the theatre, and an accommodation with the

executors of Francis Lupton over 'lights'. The theatre was insured originally through the Liverpool, London and Globe Company, which in fact spread the risk among a number of companies. In 1884 the directors decided that they wished to effect this distribution themselves, thus dispensing with the agents and their fee. Accordingly they sent a circular to insurance companies with which the directors personally had other insurance, asking them to accept portions of the total insurance at a premium of 31s. 6d. per hundred pounds insured. Many of the companies thus applied to declined, but in the end the buildings were insured for £22,500. The companies, however, demanded forty-two shillings premium per hundred pounds insured. The Sun Fire Office sent its district manager to inspect the theatre during a performance to assess the risk, but with the exception of requiring some protection to be provided for the burners and lights in the carpenters' shop and the scene dock, he was apparently satisfied.

Thus the buildings were insured for about two thirds of the cost of their erection, but at the end of the year it occurred to Frederick Barr that the scenery and furnishings within it must by the end of 1884 be worth more than the original insurance taken out on them, and he began to sound out the views of the directors with regard to increasing it.

Lupton had begun his demands for the acknowledgement of

his right of 'lights' to the north side of the theatre shortly after the theatre's erection. The directors, however, had not taken any notice. Lupton again demanded some action in April 1883, and eventually, in April 1884, Kingston composed a letter agreeing to pay him a 'nominal' fee by way of acknowledgement. This letter was not sent, however, but another one composed saying that 'considering the expense he Lupton would be put to in preserving his rights, the company were prepared to acknowledge that no rights of light by user shall be acquired by the company in respect of the lights in the Theatre overlooking the property of Francis Lupton to the north'. The theatre's solicitors were instructed to make this offer formally.

An agreement was come to in early September, but it is perhaps indicative of its importance that Kingston should add to the endorsed paper: 'On returning the agreement to the solicitors of Mr Lupton's representatives I am instructed to ask you to refer to the disagreeable smells in the urinals which have been traced in a great measure to the odours arising from the pond on the premises of the late Mr Lupton'.

Though Kingston had been unable to trace a quoted market price for a share transfer in 1883, he was able in December 1884 to answer the inquiry of Messrs Eddison and Eddison, Leeds solicitors, that at the last transfer the value of a share in the theatre company was £16 13s 4d. This was for a share of which the face value was fifty pounds.

Wilson Barrett's rent was paid throughout 1884 an average of roughly one month late: the first quarter's rent was due on 1 February, and was paid on 21 February; the second quarter's rent was received on 30 May - just under a month overdue; the third quarter's rent was acknowledged on 5 September - five weeks overdue; and the last quarter's rent was received on 25 November - three and one half weeks late.

In 1884 there were ten weeks of pantomime - three weeks less than in 1883, but still within the average since 1879. Comic opera, which had declined to filling only six weeks of 1883, occupied eight weeks of 1884, though this was still below its 1881 peak of eleven weeks. Opera proper occupied its average two weeks, though in 1884 they were both given by the Carl Rosa Opera Company, and only two performances out of the fortnight were of works unfamiliar to the Leeds public. Out of a total of thirty-two weeks of dramas and comedies, only seven were filled by spectacular melodramas (a decline of one from 1883) but there were nine weeks of productions from Wilson Barrett's companies, and these inevitably tended toward the spectacular. There were four fortnightly runs in 1884, and a large number of weeks filled by return visits - in fact thirteen, which equalled the figure for 1883.

'Humpty Dumpty' closed on Saturday, 9 March 1884.

It had been, said Lee Anderson, addressing the audience at the end of the final performance, 'the greatest financial success that Wilson Barrett had ever secured at the Grand Theatre'. It was followed by another of Wilson Barrett's companies, which brought a third return visit of 'The Silver King'. After the popularity of the pantomime, it could only muster a 'good, though not crowded house'.<sup>1</sup> Its impetus did not seem to be running down, however, for, though there had been some changes in the company, the reviewer thought that these were an improvement.<sup>2</sup>

Wilson Barrett's company was followed by D'Oyly Carte's company in Gilbert and Sullivan's then most recent comic opera, 'Princess Ida'.<sup>3</sup> (This was a reworking of Gilbert's earlier dramatic version of Tennyson's 'The Princess', which was first performed at the Olympic Theatre, London, in 1870.) In its turn 'Princess Ida' was followed by another visit of Barry Sullivan in his familiar repertoire: 'Richard III' which he gave on Monday and Wednesday, 'The Gamester' on Tuesday, 'Henry IV' on Thursday, 'Hamlet' (for his benefit) on Friday, and 'Macbeth' (followed by 'a popular farce') on Saturday.<sup>4</sup>

Barry Sullivan's 'old' and 'muscular' style of acting attracted but a 'thin' house on the Monday night, though he was given a warm reception from pit and gallery on his first entrance. The Yorkshire Post reviewer thought that the contemporary generation of playgoers went out of

curiosity to see this 'relic' of an old school.<sup>5</sup> An illustration of the theatre that he represented was perhaps given by his interpretation of Richard III, whom, according to the reviewer, he played as 'a villain of the very deepest dye, without the remotest vestige of a redeeming feature'.

Though Sullivan's Richard might have been heavily, and one-sidedly melodramatic, an interesting sidelight on his style of performance is shown by the fact that his playing of Falstaff in 'Henry IV' surprised and delighted the reviewer by keeping the audience roaring with laughter.<sup>6</sup> The humour was 'thoroughly Shakespearian', said the reviewer, who added that Sullivan's Benedick in 'Much Ado about Nothing' on his previous visit had shown him to be as good in the comedies as in the tragedies, and he hoped that Sullivan would be seen more in comedies in the future. Sullivan's Falstaff was 'the best the English stage can now boast of', he enthused.

Barry Sullivan was succeeded by a further return visit of Wilson Barrett's company in 'The Lights o' London'. This company had, with the exception of breaks for pantomimes, been touring constantly since it was formed, though there were now some changes in the cast. Gertrude Irving now played Bess (and her voice was too weak to fill the Grand Theatre, averred the reviewer<sup>7</sup>), and Alfred Bucklaw now played Harold Armytage.<sup>8</sup>

'The Lights o' London' was followed by Fanny Joseph and Mr Garthorne's company<sup>9</sup> in a play new to the Grand Theatre, 'Impulse', by B.C. Stephenson (it had first been performed by the Kendals and Mr Hare at the St James's Theatre, London, when it ran for two hundred and fifty performances).

The play's subject was the familiar conjugal infidelity; or rather, the suspicion of it. The heroine, in the long absence of her husband, was alternately wooed and threatened by a former lover, in the end agreeing to elope with him, but the plan was frustrated by an older woman who functioned as the heroine's rather conventional 'guardian angel'. ('A Scrap of Paper' provides a perhaps more inspired paradigm for this role.)

The husband was informed, and persuaded his wife to remain in his house for the sake of her reputation. An unhappy ménage endured until, in a hotel in Paris, the former lover (whom he had unknowingly befriended) again pressed his suit. On this occasion the wife rejected it, exclaiming that she only loved her husband. All was then clear for a happy reconciliation, and the guardian angel was married off, too.

'Impulse' was followed by a spectacular melodrama by G.R. Sims and Henry Pettitt, called 'In the Ranks'. (It had first been produced at the Adelphi Theatre, London.<sup>10</sup>) Sims contributed his skill in character drawing, and Pettitt dramatic structure. The play was written with

great economy of dialogue (such that almost every line was applauded, said the reviewer<sup>11</sup>) and plenty of fast moving action. To help this general speed of playing Bruce Smith and Louis Edouardes had painted scenery that was changed quickly, and in front of the audience.

This general tightening up of the presentation of the play might seem at variance with the plot which was complicated and rather rambling. It was based on the fact that the hero, Ned, was brought up as an adopted son by a Colonel Wynter, a former suitor of his mother, after his natural father, 'a fraudulent banker', had absconded to Australia.

In fact the father died in Australia, but this was not known by his family, and his partner in crime returned to extort money from Ned by pretending to be his father. Colonel Wynter tried to expose the impostor, but the latter shot him. Gideon Blake, the Colonel's agent, was keen to dispossess Ned of his title to the Colonel's estates, and exploited the fact that Ned and his foster-father had rowed over Ned's engagement (to Ruth Herrick, whom he later married) to suggest that Ned did the shooting. Ned was arrested, but found not guilty. However, he was ostracised, and joined the army.

Ruth now worked at making artificial flowers to save money in order to purchase Ned's discharge. The impostor sought her out, and began to extort money from her. He learned of the sum she had saved, and drugged her in an attempt to get it. At this point Blake entered, and in

the ensuing scene discovered the impostor's identity. Both he and Blake attempted to strangle Ruth. However, Ned suddenly entered and saved her.

It then transpired that the Colonel was not really killed, as everyone had thought, but had merely been abroad for a while. He returned and denounced the impostor, who in turn denounced Blake. Ned's discharge was then purchased, and all ended satisfactorily.

'In the Ranks' was followed by Frank Harvey and the Mdlle Beatrice company in 'A Mad Marriage' with 'A Silent Woman' which they gave from Monday to Thursday, and 'The Wages of Sin' on Friday and Saturday.<sup>12</sup> 'A Mad Marriage' was an adaptation of a French play which Frank Harvey had made, and it centred upon the attempts of the villain, Oscar Beauvard, to get hold of the fortune of his ward, Marguerite de Verne. He first wished to try offering marriage, but, discovering that Marguerite loved the 'weak minded' Maurice, Comte de Carnac, drugged them both and carried the latter into the former's boudoir. When they awoke, Oscar rushed in to 'discover' them in this compromised position, professed indignation for his ward's honour, and offered to marry her in order to save it.

Marguerite, however, would not agree, preferring to marry the 'mad' Maurice. Thus Oscar was driven to his next ploy, which was to have a commission of inquiry into Marguerite's and Maurice's mental health set up. However,

a Dr Antoine mesmerized Maurice who then became quite lucid, and both he and Marguerite were pronounced sane.

They married and went to live in Naples where they had a son. Oscar's third attempt to get the money was by stealing the son and demanding access to Maurice's bank account as ransom. Maurice managed to get back his son by signing such an agreement, but still contrived to foil Oscar, who, challenged to a duel, fled, but was shot in the process.

'A Mad Marriage' was followed by a third visit of D'Oyly Carte's company in 'Iolanthe'. It seemed not to have lost any of its popularity, but with the sole exception of George Maler, the cast had entirely changed, and the reviewer<sup>13</sup> thought that the minor parts were 'scarcely so well-filled' as they were before.<sup>14</sup>

'Iolanthe' was followed by a new spectacular melodrama from Wilson Barrett's Princess's Theatre - 'Claudian', written by W.G. Wills and Henry Herman, with scenery painted for it at the Grand Theatre by F. Fox and Louis Edouardes.<sup>15</sup>

'Claudian' was not greeted with critical favour when first produced in London, but had lived down this set-back, and had received the approval of John Ruskin. It was 'unprecedentedly popular',<sup>16</sup> both in London and in the provinces where it had begun to tour at Hull at the beginning of February. The play was received with enthusiasm by a large audience at the Grand Theatre.

The central character was Claudian, who, in a prologue, was seen as a rich, powerful, and selfish 'voluptuary'. He was smitten with the attractiveness of the slave Serena, whose sculptor husband was trying to buy her out of servitude. Claudian, however, outbid him, and Serena fled to seek the protection of a Christian hermit called Clement, who lived in a cave. Claudian pursued her there, and killed Clement, who, with his dying breath cursed Claudian to eternal life, and to bring destruction and misery to everything that he touched. First proof of the efficacy of the curse was that Serena, when Claudian tried to arouse her from her swoon, was discovered to be dead.

The action of the play proper took place a hundred years later. Claudian, chastened and wretched, wandered from village to village, blighting each one in turn. He arrived at one village at harvest time, where the beautiful Almida was about to marry a blacksmith. Claudian's presence must ruin this happiness, and Almida instantly fell infatuatedly in love with him. At the same time she was also stricken blind.

Led by an old beggar woman, the villagers expelled Claudian, and Almida followed him. Later, she was pursued by Thariegulus, 'the tetrarch', with 'unholy affection', but Claudian rescued her from him, and this inspired a genuine affection which grew between Claudian and Almida.

Thus it seemed Claudian had been suitably punished, and learned his lesson. A spectacular earthquake then split

rocks and wrecked temples to initiate the resolution of the play. Claudian was left standing in the midst of the devastation, crying, "But I shall live on!". The ghost of Clement, however, appeared to offer to release him from his wretched life. Claudian accepted this offer believing that Almida (whose sight had returned) would then go back to her blacksmith and live in happiness.

Clearly the play managed to contain visual effects of great eastern splendour and excitement with an unrigorous moralising.

'Claudian' was followed on 2 June by Charles Sullivan's company<sup>17</sup> in 'The Peep o' Day' by Edward Falconer. This was a piece which managers often liked to present at the Whitsuntide holiday, said the reviewer,<sup>18</sup> and indeed, this performance fitted such a pattern at the Grand Theatre.

Charles Sullivan's company was succeeded by that of William Duck in four familiar pieces by H.J. Byron: 'Our Boys', which was given on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, 'The Girls', which was given on Tuesday, and 'The Money Spinner' with 'Uncle', which was given on Friday and Saturday.<sup>19</sup>

'Our Boys' must have been familiar to every regular theatre-goer, opined the Yorkshire Post reviewer,<sup>20</sup> but this did not discourage a 'fairly large house' from going to enjoy it again.

William Duck's company was followed by a return visit of

Minnie Palmer in 'My Sweetheart'.<sup>21</sup> For the season of the year, said the reviewer,<sup>22</sup> there was an unusually large house to see Minnie Palmer, who 'electrified' her audience with her 'sparkling gaiety, her rapidity of movement, her extraordinary changes of expression, her charming dancing, and her sweet little ballads'. Indeed, he went on to say that she had lost none of her naivety, and even 'juvenility' of performance, and it seems that she acted, and was enjoyed in the style of a precocious child.

The plot was slight. The play was set in Pennsylvania where Tina (played by Minnie Palmer) was in love with Tony, a youth of German extraction, who, however, treated her as a sister. Tony received news that his German uncle had died, and that therefore he inherited a title and a fortune.

He moved to town, and set up a 'grand establishment', having been 'captivated' by an adventuress. He was deprived of a great deal of cash, lost his sight, and was on the point of proposing marriage to the adventuress when it was proved that she was already married to a 'broken-down gambler'.

Tony was thus released from his bondage, and he then discovered that his uncle was not really dead but had nonetheless sent him enough money to be 'comfortably off'. He then went back to the farm and Tina, and his sight returned.

Minnie Palmer was followed by the fifth return visit of the D'Oyly Carte company in 'Patience',<sup>23</sup> and at last the audience seemed to be tiring of the piece, for it was but 'thin' - "even toffy becoming monotonous", quoted the reviewer.<sup>24</sup>

There were to be two more weeks of performances before the theatre closed for a three-week summer vacation: Alfred Cuthbert's company performed J. Wilton Jones's 'Haunted Lives' for the week beginning 30 June, and Kenneth Lee's company performed Savile and Bolton Rowe's adaptation of Sardou's 'Nos Intimes' - 'Peril' - for the first half of the following week, and a play called 'The Hunchback' for the rest of that week.<sup>25</sup>

The summer-like weather of May and June may have been the cause of a rather poor general attendance during the spring season - people not liking to sit in a stuffy auditorium on a sultry evening, in the reviewer's opinion.<sup>26</sup> But he also attributed this fall-off to a dearth of new pieces during the season, and said that poor houses were general in London and throughout the provinces.

Nor was the remainder of the year to be remarkable for new productions, though the Grand Theatre did reopen on 4 August with a new play from Wilson Barrett's Princess's Theatre. The piece was an adaptation of a Spanish play, 'La Passionaria', by Leopold Cano y Massas, and was called 'Woman and the Law'. (It came to Leeds after a 'very successful' week at Hull.<sup>27</sup>)

The piece was 'very powerful', appealing particularly to the pit and the gallery, for whose benefit, it seemed to the reviewer,<sup>28</sup> several 'preachy' passages had been included. And although the play appeared to be concerned in a fairly conventional way with (a perhaps novel) domestic trauma, the play was introduced to the public by an interesting programme note:

This is a play with a purpose. The scene is laid in Madrid, and the piece is founded on an infamous Spanish law, which decreed that a man might legitimise his illegitimate child without marrying the mother, and might deprive the mother of all access to the child, and inherit all property left to the child. This law has been repealed, principally through the instrumentality of 'La Passionaria', which brought the infamy of the decree home to the Spanish people.

The plot was uncomplicated. A flower-girl, Petrella, was seduced and made pregnant by Justin, one of two cousins. For the purpose he had assumed his cousin, Marcos's name. He would have nothing to do with Petrella after the event, and so she made representations to the cousins' uncle. The latter, believing the good cousin to be the father, and certain that he would marry the girl, willed his fortune to Petrella's child.

Justin invoked the 'infamous' law, but had to wring from Petrella an admission of the child's paternity. This he did in an 'exciting' scene, but Petrella's passion was so aroused in the process that she stabbed Justin to death.

It is interesting to observe that here we have not only emotion, moralising, and excitement in a play, but also a claimed social purpose. The house was 'well-filled in the popular parts', and received the play with enthusiasm. H.A. Jones's comedietta, 'A Clerical Error', was given as a curtain-raiser, and the scenery was by Walter Hann and Stafford Hall.

'Woman and the Law' was followed by a return visit of A. and S. Gatti's company in 'In the Ranks', and following on the social purpose of the former play, the Yorkshire Post reviewer<sup>29</sup> added to his earlier assessment of 'In the Ranks' that 'sentences of miscellaneous moralising and criticism of existing institutions follow one another in quick succession: so the production tickles the popular ear.'

'In the Ranks' was followed by a new play, but a variation on a distinctly old theme.<sup>30</sup> The piece was an adaptation by William Muskerry of a French play, 'The Gascon', by M. Barriere, and bearing the same name. It was based on a number of incidents in the life of Mary, Queen of Scots. 'Remarkably picturesque' scenery,<sup>31</sup> 'considerably in advance' of the wonted style of melodramas was painted by Mr Brunton, for a production by Charles Dornton's company.

The Gascon was a lover of Mary Carmichael, one of the Queen's maids of honour, and a friend of the poet Chastelard,

'a sentimental poet of a kind proper to romantic melodrama'. The Gascon succeeded in 'playing a prominent part in the stirring events which chequer the life of the Queen', while 'forwarding his own affairs of love or intrigue'. The Queen was shown in both her state and private roles, switching from one to the other 'easily and naturally', and enjoying an affectionate relationship with the poet that permitted of a balcony scene reminiscent of 'Romeo and Juliet'.

'The Gascon' was followed on 1 September by Lytton Sothorn in 'Our American Cousin' for the first half of the week, and 'Sam, Dundreary's Brother-in-law' for the second half. Lytton Sothorn had revived both plays and imitated in them the parts that his father had made famous. He resembled his father physically as well as in his style of acting (though in 'Sam, Dundreary's Brother-in-law' particularly the reviewer<sup>32</sup> noticed that he lacked his father's 'airiness and unconsciousness' and played more 'boisterously'), and even the scenery was painted in imitation of the original productions.<sup>35</sup>

Lytton Sothorn was followed by Laura Villiers in 'Fedora',<sup>34</sup> a play originally written for Sarah Bernhardt, of which an English version was done by Herman Merivale. In it Bernhardt's convention of dying in the last scene was maintained, again by poison, but this time deliberately self-administered.

Fedora was a princess who was about to marry Count Vladimir, the son of the Russian chief of police. At the beginning of the play the Princess was seen waiting, anxious because of Vladimir's prolonged absence, in the Count's rooms, when suddenly he was brought in mortally wounded. Count Loris Ipanoff (who was supposed connected with a Nihilist conspiracy) was suspected of inflicting the wound. Fedora confronted him, but he betrayed no sign of feeling guilty - instead he declared himself in love with Fedora. She pretended to reciprocate his love in order to extract a confession, and in this she was successful. She thereupon turned on him 'with all the hatred of which she is capable', and denounced him to the Russian Embassy. But before he was arrested she got further details of the incident from him, and learned that Loris was motivated by the discovery that Vladimir had been carrying on an affair with his wife.

Fedora then instantly changed sides and strove to impede Loris's arrest, marrying him in the course of this. However, her denunciation had caused the death of Loris's brother, and his mother had consequently died of grief. When Loris learned this he determined to kill Fedora. She, however, prevented him by downing a draught of deadly poison.

Laura Villiers suffered the conflicting moods that affected Fedora in her consuming passion for revenge, and in turn remorse, excellently, in the Yorkshire Post reviewer's opinion,<sup>35</sup> and she had a large audience.

Laura Villiers was followed by Edgar Bruce's company in 'the original version' (there were others) of 'Called Back'.<sup>36</sup> This piece was an adaptation by Comyns Car and Hugh Conway of the latter's popular novel of the same name, and had reached its one hundredth performance at the Prince's Theatre, London, at the time of this performance at the Grand Theatre. It was a 'powerful' play of 'the romantic school', and revolved round a murder conspiracy which was finally broken by a blind witness.

'Called Back' was followed by Hollingshead and Shine's company supporting Fanny Leslie in 'Dick', a new 'burlesque opera' by Alfred Murray (who wrote the libretto), and Edward Jacobowski (who composed the music). It was based upon Dick Whittington, though the story was somewhat modified to give it a sexual interest, and to make it more realistically plausible, though Fanny Leslie, in the pantomime tradition, still played the title role.

This was a touring company (stage managed by Robert Brough, with W.J. Lancaster as acting manager)<sup>37</sup> and the piece was first produced at the Globe Theatre, London, in April 1885, and then transferred to the Gaiety Theatre, London, where it had a 'very successful' run. The house which watched its first night at the Grand Theatre was better than had been seen for many weeks.<sup>38</sup>

'Dick' was followed by a second visit to the Grand Theatre

by Mrs Langtry who had, since her previous visit, been touring in America. In this time she had gained in experience and professionalism (though managing to maintain her 'artless ... chaste simplicity'<sup>39</sup>), and had been able to extend her repertoire to a small extent. On Monday and Thursday she gave 'Peril', on Tuesday and Saturday 'She Stoops to Conquer', and on Wednesday and Friday 'The School for Scandal'.<sup>40</sup>

There was a large house for 'Peril', on the Monday night (even though the play had been seen at the Grand Theatre only two months previously), and the performance which it saw indicated the extent to which Mrs Langtry's skills had now developed. For, though the 'innocence' and girlish purity which led her almost to fall into the villain's trap were right for the part (in the Yorkshire Post reviewer's estimation, at any rate), her denunciation of the villain lacked the necessary force. This no doubt could to some extent have been due to Mrs Langtry's rather aristocratic interpretation of a part which other actresses had made 'hoydenish', but it must also suggest that the society beauty had not learned the melodramatic necessity of righteous scorn that was part of Bernhardt's indispensable armory.

Mrs Langtry was succeeded by a return visit of D'Oyly Carte's company in 'Princess Ida'.<sup>41</sup> After a six months absence the opera had a good reception from a 'comparatively good house'.<sup>42</sup> In its turn 'Princess Ida' was followed by

a visit of Wilson Barrett's company in 'Claudian' after an interval of five months.<sup>43</sup> It was to run for a fortnight, even though the first night of the run attracted a 'rather smaller' house than could have been hoped.

In trying to explain this the Yorkshire Post reviewer claimed that Wilson Barrett's management of the Grand Theatre had cultivated 'a taste immeasurably more fastidious and discriminating than there had existed in Leeds before'<sup>44</sup> — presumably intending to suggest that the audience was smaller because those who were not 'fastidious and discriminating' stayed away from the theatre (or frequented the Theatre Royal). He did offer an alternative explanation, however, which was that perhaps the public taste for Princess's Theatre successes (of which there had been a lot at the Grand Theatre in the last year) was over-satisfied.

Talking of the play itself, the reviewer again stressed that the scenery and mechanical effects greatly contributed to the impression that the play made on the audience.

After 'Claudian's' fortnight, the Carl Rosa Opera Company filled a further two weeks. In the first week all the works were quite familiar to the Leeds public: 'Carmen' on Monday, 'Bohemian Girl' on Tuesday, 'La Favorita' on Wednesday, 'Maritana' on Thursday, 'Mefistofele' on Friday, and 'The Beggar Student' on Saturday.

Only Donizetti's 'La Favorita', which had not been seen in Leeds for some years, could have presented any novelty

to the audience. In the second week there were again five perfectly familiar operas: 'Carmen' on Tuesday, 'Esmerelda' on Wednesday, 'Faust' on Thursday, 'Mignon' on Friday, and 'Il Trovatore' on Saturday. But on Monday Carl Rosa did venture a new work, 'The Canterbury Pilgrims', written specially for him by Gilbert & Beckett, with music by C. Villiers Stanford.

The opera had first been performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in April 1884, and for this performance at the Grand Theatre the company was the same, with the exception of Leslie Crotty, who took Barrington Foote's role.

Chaucer's tales were much modified. Geoffrey, the keeper of the Tabard Inn, had an attractive daughter with whom Hubert, an apprentice, and one of the pilgrims, was in love. Geoffrey disapproved of the friendship, and resolved to send his daughter to stay with a man-hating aunt in Kent. To this end Geoffrey and his daughter travelled along with the pilgrimage. However, a lecherous old beau who became infatuated with the daughter (and supplied the villain of the piece) hired a band of cut-throats to abduct her. But he reckoned without Hubert, who was invited to join the band by one of the cut-throats, and his own wife who, in disguise, became the daughter's chaperone. Thus was the plot given a melodramatic basis for some rather heavy handed humour. It is clear that Chaucer's poem was little but a starting point for the

librettist. Though the work might be rather uninspiring for devotees of opéra-bouffe, averred the reviewer, nonetheless, for the more refined opera audience it was humorous enough.<sup>45</sup>

After the fortnight of opera proper, three weeks of comic opera followed. The first of these constituted the fourth visit of D'Oyly Carte's company in 'Iolanthe', which still attracted a large audience, and the second was a new work to Leeds, Planquette's 'Nell Gwynne'.<sup>46</sup>

Though Planquette's reputation was good, the reviewer thought that he was let down by H.B. Farnie's libretto which was so dull and heavy that the piece rarely seemed to manage much humour, and the actors were driven to 'gag' in order to enliven it.<sup>47</sup>

The plot revolved round the escapades of Buckingham and Rochester when exiled from Court after the Restoration — the latter banished for refusing to marry the King's ward, Clare (who was secretly in love with her cousin Talbot anyway), and the former had been banished for not giving Nell Gwynne a particular role in a mask which he had just written thereby angering both her and the King.

Nell importuned the King on Clare's behalf, with the result that the King agreed that she should marry her cousin on condition that Rochester was humbled, and Buckingham forced to give Nell her part in the mask. By disguising herself in turn as a country dame, a cook at

an inn, a fortune-teller, and a milkmaid, Nell succeeded in bringing about these objects.

The reviewer thought that the music was melodious and generally pleasing (more reminiscent of 'Les Cloches de Corneville' than 'Rip Van Winkle') but that these two previous works were superior to 'Nell Gwynne'.

The third week of comic opera saw Mr Henderson's company from the Comedy Theatre, London, in 'Falka', billed as 'the great operatic success of the season' by M. Chassaigne, with an English libretto which, like that of 'Nell Gwynne', was by H.B. Farnie. The plot was stronger than was frequently found in such works, and quite complicated too, although it did not involve any particularly novel elements.<sup>48</sup>

Falka and Tancred were sister and brother (though they did not know each other), and their uncle, Folbach, was the military governor of Hungary. He was looking for an heir, and since he had never seen his niece or nephew, he sent for the latter. On his way, however, Tancred was captured by a band of robbers and bound to a tree. He was set free by a gipsy, Edwige, on condition that he should marry her. However, once free, he absconded.

Meanwhile Falka had eloped from her convent with a shy young man named Arthur. In fear of detection she disguised herself as Tancred, and Arthur disguised himself as Falka. Folbach saw them thus, and made his disguised niece his heir.

Now Tancred, having learned that an impostor had taken his place, disguised himself as a footman and went to work in his uncle's palace, and, when Falka was forced to give up her deception because Edwige's brother challenged her to a duel, he emitted a shout of joy that at once gave him away. Eventually Tancred married the gipsy, and Folbach made Falka his heir.

There remained of the autumn season only two weeks of comedy before the pantomime. These were filled by Edward Terry's company, and the Compton Comedy Company. Edward Terry performed a new, 'broadly farcical' piece by A.W. Pinero on Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday, accompanying it with the 'musical farce', 'High Life below Stairs', and 'The Rocket' which he had given on his visit to the Grand Theatre in 1883, and which on this occasion he performed on Wednesday and Thursday.<sup>49</sup>

Pinero's new piece was called 'In Chancery', and its plot revolved round a commercial traveller who lost his memory when he was involved in a train crash. He was carried, with the wrong coat, to an inn, where he assumed the identity of the coat's real owner (Montague Joliffe), not knowing who else he might be.

The landlord's daughter conceived a 'violent affection' for him, and she and her father were very keen that they should be married. A wedding was arranged accordingly.

However, the real Montague Joliffe now turned up. He had run away with, and married, a ward of Chancery, and

they were being pursued by a private detective. All three arrived at the inn, where Joliffe, afraid of detection, pretended to be his wife's footman. The amnesiac traveller, meanwhile, was delighted with the pretty young wife whom he seemed to have married, though he was a little nonplussed at her cold reception of him. (And the real Joliffe had to stand by in impotent outrage while his wife was embraced.)

The situation was intolerable, and the Joliffes fled to Gravesend whither the commercial traveller followed them, escaping from his bedroom window. In Gravesend, however, the latter stumbled upon his own wife, and the plot was happily resolved.

Edward Compton gave a selection of plays from his repertoire, all of which would have been familiar to the Leeds public. On Monday and Friday he performed 'Davy Garrick', on Tuesday 'The Rivals', on Wednesday 'The Comedy of Errors', on Thursday 'She Stoops to Conquer', and on Saturday 'The Road to Ruin'. Generally his audiences were larger than they had been in 1883.

Compton's Comedy Company closed on Saturday, 13 December, and the theatre did not reopen until Tuesday, 23 December, when the first performance of the pantomime, 'Bo-Peep', was given.<sup>51</sup>

The pantomime was written as usual by J. Wilton Jones,

who had on this occasion to work into his script an unusually large number of artistes. The story began in 'The Glow Worm Dell' (painted by Louis Edouardes) where the fairies were discovered in their 'al fresco moonlight revels'.<sup>52</sup>

It was revealed that Bo-Peep was in fact a countess and heir to estates that were held by the villainous Count Korfdrop (though she did not know this and worked as a shepherdess on the farm of Dame Durden). Count Korfdrop was determined to marry Bo-Peep and thus secure his hold upon the estates, and to this end called in the assistance of the Demon, Abbadun, who, incensed at Bo-Peep's virtuous ways, brought with him Envy, Hatred, and Malice, with which he intended to infect her. Robin Goodfellow and the fairies, of course, intended to guard her from temptation.

There was an instantaneous change from the dell to the village of Happy-go-lucky (also by Louis Edouardes) which was 'a charming pastoral set' which roused the audience to such enthusiasm that Wilson Barrett had to take a call. There was then a ballet 'relieved by clog and country dances' given by children, before a further element of the plot was unveiled. The hero of the piece, Prince Irolite, was wandering in search of 'rustic perfection' to make his wife. He instantly fell in love with Bo-Peep, but exchanged identities with his valet, Alidor, so that he might be sure of being loved for himself and not his position. He took a job as a cowherd on the farm to further this plan.

Now the demons arrived in the village and 'a remarkable chase takes place through the solidly built rustic house which occupies nearly the centre of the stage'. The demons chased Bo-Peep's sheep into the dismal ruins of an old castle.

The demons were able to change the seasons at will and in one scene (painted by Walter Hann) a snow covered landscape thawed, the snow disappeared, 'rich foliage' appeared on the trees, and the whole scene 'glowed' with sunlight.

Robin Goodfellow assembled some insects to search for the missing sheep, and this gave rise to an insect ballet 'danced' principally by butterflies and glow-worms — the effect heightened by the use of electric light (here introduced to the Grand Theatre's stage for the first time as a novelty, the lights were 'invented' by Mr F. Mori, and manufactured by the Yorkshire Electric Company). Lee Anderson arranged the ballet, and he received a call.

The next scene was a landscape by Louis Edouardes in which the Count and a posse of demons were on their way to the Dame's house to steal a document that would prove Bo-Peep's title to the estates. On the way the Count sang the pantomime's 'topical song' which 'lent itself most whimsically to mentioning Mrs Weldon a celebrated vexatious litigant of the time7, the Fortesque case, and other of the current topics of the day'.

The house, when they arrived, was haunted, and 'surprisingly agile business is gone through'; 'Grotesque faces start

out from the walls; and the furniture becomes endowed with life'. The set was 'ingeniously contrived' by Freddie Fox, and the scene acted by the Walton family, the Jarratt Troupe and Mdme Zante. The enthusiasm for this scene was so great that the front-cloth which descended for the next scene was raised to allow the artistes to take a call.

The Count was foiled in his plan, and so he announced a tournament with Bo-Peep as the prize. The tournament scene was painted by Stafford Hall and was 'bright' and 'effective' and highly comical — the protagonists riding horses of increasing size. Prince Irolite, disguised, of course succeeded in vanquishing all comers.

The following front-cloth, 'The Castle by the Sea', by William Telbin, was 'so admirable in its perspective that there was the perfect vraisemblance of enormous distance, and the phosphorescent effect of the light on the waves was marvellous. Were it not rank heresy to say so,' said the Yorkshire Post reviewer, 'it seems almost a degradation to put such a painting in a pantomime'.

The Count's plot had again failed, but the Demons now infected Bo-Peep with their vices. She was about to be tempted by Alidor's offer of a casket of diamonds, when the distant bleating of her sheep broke the spell.

The Count and the Demons then carried off Bo-Peep to the Demons' den, 'there to witness the goblins sacrifice their tails'. The Demons were discovered carousing in a cavern the mouth of which overlooked a 'dismal, dismantled, moated

grange'. But 'martial strains' heralded the approach of the fairy army, and after a long struggle the Demons were vanquished. Not before, however, they had imprisoned Bo-Peep in a rock. The victorious fairies, however, split the rock, and this began a transformation scene which turned the dismal cavern into a fairy palace (painted by Stafford Hall).

This scene was clearly designed to capitalise on the successful battle waged in 'Humpty Dumpty', the 1883/4 pantomime, between fairies, demons, and heraldic emblems, and it was well received again, Wilson Barrett, Stafford Hall, and Lee Anderson ('particularly') being called by the audience.

Thus Bo-Peep was rescued by her Prince, and everyone was suitably married off, save the Count who was cast into his own dungeons where he took poison and died three times - firstly in the manner of Sarah Bernhardt, then as Barry Sullivan in 'The Gamester', and finally as Henry Irving in 'The Bells'.

The transformation scene which constituted the end of the pantomime was a departure from convention:

A seamstress is toiling in a garret, she is aroused by strains of music, the walls of the chamber open, and an angel passing over the city summons her to a feast in the Halls of Christmas, and these two scenes are followed by a third, emblematical of the opening of the new year.

(It was a joint creation of Stafford Hall and Louis Edouardes.)

Notes

- 1 Yorkshire Post, 11 March 1884, p. 8.
- 2 The company now included Mr E.H. Brooke, Maud Milton, Maud Clitheroe, Mr E.J. George, Mr R.S. Boleyn, Mr A.G. Leigh, Helen Leigh, and Mr Dalton Summers.
- 3 The company included Fred Billington, Mr Courtrice Pounds, Charles Bowan, Mr F. Federici, David Fischer jnr, Mr Prescott, Arthur Hendon, Leonard Roche, Esme Lee, Fanny Edwards, Minna Louis, Beatrix Young, Evelyn Carstairs, Christine Wilson, and Miss Heart.
- 4 The company included George Warde, John Amory, Mr Bassett Rowe, Mr W.S. Hardy, Mr W. Fosbrooke, Miss Carlisle, Lilian Lancaster, Miss Glynne, and Miss Elton.
- 5 Yorkshire Post, 25 March 1884, p. 6.
- 6 Yorkshire Post, 28 March 1884, p. 4.
- 7 Yorkshire Post, 1 April 1884, p. 4.
- 8 The company further included Agnes Knight, Mr and Mrs H.C. Arnold, and Mr J.S. Haydn.
- 9 The company included Helen Creswell, Fanny Enson, Marie Daly, Mr P.C. Beverley, Mr C.W. Garthorne, Mr J.H. Darnley, and Mr A. Chevalier.
- 10 The touring company included Henry George, Sidney Charteris, James Chippendale, F. Terry, Mr A.R. Fitzroy, Edward Beecher, Mary Rorke, Annie Irish, and Elinor Aicken.
- 11 Yorkshire Post, 15 April 1884, p. 4.
- 12 The company included Frank Harvey, Annie Baldwin, J.C. Edwards, Mr C.M. Yorke, Lizzie Baldwin, Miss Eyre Robinson, Nelly Lingham, and Mr T.W. Benson.

- 13 Yorkshire Post, 6 May 1884, p. 6.
- 14 The new company included John Wilkinson, Mr Hervet d'Egville, Haidee Crofton, and Marion Grahame.
- 15 The company included Leonard Boyne, John Dewhurst, Mr C.K. Chute, Mr A. d'Esterre Guinness, Richard Dalton, Mr W.E. Blatchley, Mr W. McIntyre, Maggie Hunt, and Miss C. Grahame.
- 16 Yorkshire Post, 20 May 1884, p. 5.
- 17 The company included Alice Finch, Amy Rogerson, Charles Sullivan, Mr C. Guilfoyle Seymour, Charles Beveridge, Mr T. Falconer, Mr H. Glenville, and Mr Louis Egerton.
- 18 Yorkshire Post, 4 June 1884, p. 5.
- 19 The company now included Mr T. Bolton, Ernest A. Douglas, Reginald Harte, Mr J. Wallace Erskine, Margaret Soulby, Emily Leveretz, Mrs C.A. Clarke, and Lena Chesterfield.
- 20 Yorkshire Post, 10 June 1884, p. 6.
- 21 The company included Charles Arnold, Mr J.S. Wood, Mr J.T. Hawkins, Graham Wentworth, Mr L. d'Orsay, George Wray, Elsie Carey, and Jane Grey.
- 22 Yorkshire Post, 17 June 1884, p. 4.
- 23 The company included Mr W.E. Shine, Walter Greyling, Mr Byron Browne, Elsie Cameron, Josephine Findlay, Rose Husk, and Blanche Symonds.
- 24 Yorkshire Post, 24 June 1884, p. 4.
- 25 The latter company included Mr and Mrs Alfred Maddick, George Beville, Mr Bassett Rowe, Mr F.M. Paget, Mr R. Kenneth Lee, Charles Macdona, and Pattie Bell.

- 26 Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1884, p. 4.
- 27 The touring company included Mr J.G. Grahame,  
Mr R.S. Boleyn, Mark M. Mellor, Mr Cannings,  
Miss Cavalier, Fanny Brough, and Maud Clitheroe.
- 28 Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1884, p. 4.
- 29 Yorkshire Post, 19 August 1884, p. 4.
- 30 The company included Mr F.H. Macklin, Ethel Murray,  
Mr H.M. Clifford, Mrs Edward Saker, and Arthur Fenwick.
- 31 Yorkshire Post, 26 August 1884, p. 5.
- 32 Yorkshire Post, 2 September 1884, p. 5.
- 33 The company included John Owen, and Patti Blanchard.  
'Sam, Dundreary's Brother-in-law' was preceded by  
'Freezing a Mother-in-law', a 'brisk and diverting',  
but 'crude' farce by T. Edgar Pemberton.
- 34 The company further included Charles Cartwright,  
Mr M.A. Denison, John Annandale, and Marie North.
- 35 Yorkshire Post, 9 September 1884, p. 5.
- 36 The company included M.A. Lubinoff, Leonard Outram,  
and Alma Murray.
- 37 The company included Mr C. Mowbray (who substituted for  
Robert Brough who was ill), Fanny Leslie, Ethel Pierson  
(who was engaged for the next pantomime at the Grand  
Theatre), Wilfred Shine, Harry Martell, and Mr F.H. Laye.
- 38 Yorkshire Post, 23 September 1884, p. 5.
- 39 Yorkshire Post, 30 September 1884, p. 4.
- 40 The company included Charles Coghlan, Joseph Carne,  
Fred Everill, Percy Everard, Mr Courtney Thorpe,  
Henry Crips, Mr Weatherby, Fanny Coleman, and Miss A Hardinge.

- 41 The company included David Fischer jnr, Mr Courtice Pounds, Mr F. Federici, Fred Billington, Charles Prescott, Arthur Hendon, Leonard Roche, Esme Lee, and Fanny Edwards.
- 42 Yorkshire Post, 7 October 1884, p. 5.
- 43 The company had undergone two changes, but was not impaired by them: George Sennet had replaced Mr J. Dewhurst, and Laura Lindon had replaced Miss C. Grahame.
- 44 Yorkshire Post, 14 October 1884, p. 5.
- 45 Yorkshire Post, 4 November 1884, p. 6.
- 46 The company included Laura Clement, Georgie Grey, Marie Doltra, Lionel Rignold, Horace Bolini, and George Coventry.
- 47 Yorkshire Post, 18 November 1884, p. 5.
- 48 The company included Miss Wadman, Horace Lingard, Mr J.G. Taylor, Mr Lytton Gray, Walter Wright, Walter Marnock, and Giulia Warwick. The chorus was 'strong and efficient' though Herbert Taylor, the conductor, had difficulty keeping them in time with the band on a number of occasions.
- 49 The company included Mr C.H. Stephenson, John Adams, Lizzie King, Alice Yorke, Mr J. le Hay, Mr Forbes Lawson, Angela Cudmore, Mr C.P. Amalia, Mr J. Clelow, Julie Pearce, and Amanda Aubrey.
- 50 The company included Virginia Bateman, Elinor Aickin, and Mr Ball.

51 The company included Alice Aynsley Cooke, Mr Hemmings,  
the Walton family, John Wainwright, and Ethel Pierson.

52 Yorkshire Post, 24 December 1884, p. 5.