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The Stage

The librettist and theatre manager Alfred Bunn (1796–1860) published these memoirs of his career, giving a view 'both before and behind the curtain', in 1840. He professes not to be fond of autobiographies, is clearly irritated at the not always flattering walk-on role he is given in the memoirs of some of the greatest contemporary performers, and regards this three-volume work as a way of settling a number of scores. His account cannot therefore be said to be unprejudiced, but it is written with a verve which makes it very readable, and – allowing for bias and exaggeration – provides a fascinating account of the period when Bunn was running both the Theatre Royal at Drury Lane and the Opera House at Covent Garden, providing libretti for some of the best known British composers of the period, and quarrelling with almost everyone he worked with in the course of his career.

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The Stage

Both Before and Behind the Curtain, from Observations Taken on the Spot

Volume 1

Alfred Bunn

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THE STAGE:

BOTH BEFORE

AND

BEHIND THE CURTAIN,

FROM

"OBSERVATIONS TAKEN ON THE SPOT."

BY ALFRED BUNN,

LATE LESSEE OF THE THEATRES ROYAL DRURY LANE AND COVENT GARDEN.

"I am (NOT) forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house."
HAMLET, ACT I. SC. V.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1840.

LONDON :
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

PREFACE.

THE postscript to a letter, as being the result of an after-thought, is generally considered the most important part of such communication—the preface to a book is looked upon in the same light. The matter contained in the pages which these remarks precede, would not have required any elucidation of this nature, otherwise so frequently necessary, had it not been for the occurrence of a series of events, during its preparation, which would at first appear almost as incredible as they are unprecedented; and which, from their rapid succession, would not only have deranged, but naturally have delayed the publication of the entire work, if alterations and emendations had taken place, as each event fell in. The deaths of some individuals referred to, and the doings of many yet alive, freely commented upon in the course of its progress, render a particular allusion to them as essential as it is becoming.

If the reader will have the kindness, and at the same time, the patience, to compare the predictions and the observations, as well as the circumstances in connection with them, detailed in these Volumes, with the result exemplified in the preface, he will, at least, be "perplexed in the extreme," to use no stronger term. It is a matter of great gratification to me to perceive the advantage of the plan upon which this production was originally undertaken, and has throughout been conducted—that of relying on facts, rather than trusting to fiction, and supporting argument by document. There is no possibility of refuting the various authorities cited which are interspersed throughout these pages, the records and letters inserted, the opinions quoted, and the judgments delivered, because the *litera scripta* can at any time be seen by all. I have not indulged in any extravagant theory arising out of an overheated imagination; but have preferred backing the calm reflection of a very long experience with the sobered opinions of sundry wiser people than myself. The many impressions opposite to mine own, with which I have had to contend, emanate from persons who, for the most part, prefer giving utterance to the speculations in which inexperience is sure to indulge, rather than listening to the arguments of more practised, and therefore more able disputants; and who stoutly maintain that interest invariably disseats judgment, and sets up prejudice in its stead. A

man interested in theatrical affairs ought to be, to my poor way of thinking, better able to argue upon the construction of them, than those in no one way connected therewith; unless, indeed, he has taken altogether to wearing the cap and bells. Without ever dreaming of being deemed more learned than the generality of my fellow creatures, I nevertheless cannot quite consent to be set down for

"A fool whose bells have ceased to ring at all;"

and what remnant of intelligence, therefore, is left me I have endeavoured to impart to others.

I have repeatedly been questioned, during the progress of my undertaking, as to its general nature; with the invariable conclusion, "so you are writing your life, I find." Thousands in this world profess to "find" what yet was never "lost;" and to that class of people I have invariably and truly replied, "I am dealing with the lives of other people, rather than with my own." It has been as erroneously imagined, that, as I professed to tell "the secrets of the prison house," every one of my leaves would teem with scandal and libel. That any additional prejudices should be entertained against me by those who have already entertained so many, was naturally to be expected;—that was not a matter of much moment; nor was it altogether unnatural to suppose, that with abundant knowledge of the private histories of all I had to deal with, I should take an opportunity of

paying back the unblushing falsehoods, and countless calumnies, many of them have from time to time heaped upon me. But, in the first place, such a proceeding would proclaim myself to be almost as shameless as themselves; and, in the next place, it would be introducing unworthy matter, amongst what, I hope, will be found to be useful information. There will be plenty of time, should they afford me plenty of opportunity, to resort to acerbities and personalities; at present they could not further my object. At the memorable interview between His Majesty George III. and Doctor Johnson, the King, referring to the controversy between Warburton and Lowth, asked Johnson what he thought of it; the latter remarked, "Warburton has most "general, Lowth most scholastic, learning; Lowth "is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of "them calls names best." The King was of the same opinion, and added, "You do not think then, Doctor "Johnson, that there was much argument in the case;" and when Johnson said he did not think there was, the King observed, "WHEN ONCE IT COMES TO 'CALLING NAMES,' *argument is pretty well at an end!*" On so much more humble a subject than the learned disputation here alluded to, I have presumed to act upon the judgment of the good old King; and shall, therefore, undoubtedly disappoint those who, being scandalous themselves, delight in the scandal they hear against another.

I might have made a very diverting book, as far as the power thereof within me lies, had it consisted solely

of green-room *cancans*, or had it related only to the private indiscretions of public people. I might have told the whole truth to those who have only dealt in falsehood with me; but I prefer leaving them where they are—it will be time enough to take up such a traffic as that, when the dealers in it have recourse again to its practice.

The first circumstance to which I would direct particular attention, indeed the great object which I struggled so long and so hard to attain, and for the attainment of which I devoted so much time and paid so much money, has been accomplished—the abolition of the absurd restrictions, during Lent, placed upon theatres within the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain. Letters not a year old, with documents and controversies of the same date, will be found in the ensuing chapters, giving a full detail of the indignation of the Ministers of the Crown at the idea of that boon being asked for, which, since I recorded it, those self-same Ministers have conceded. Mr. Duncombe, the honourable mover in the House of Commons, was, session after session, assailed for his sacrilegious attempt to disturb the sanctity of the season, or rather his desire to make the enjoyment of it general. As for the unfortunate Lessee, some idea of impaling him alive was entertained—nothing else could be thought of for such an offending varlet, who had carried his attempt at reform in this matter so far, that he had set at nought the prerogative of the Crown, and hurled defiance in the face of Her Majesty's Ministers.

"Seeing what I have seen, seeing what I now see," it would be a matter of some amusement to him, if the Noble Secretary for our Colonies would have the kindness to compare his Parliamentary oration of the 12th of March, 1839, with the documents I shall now have the pleasure of introducing. As the period of Lent, in this present year, 1840, was nearly at hand, Mr. Duncombe, bent upon carrying the object of his former solicitude into effect, took a course somewhat differing from his first, but in reality only preparatory to, the one he had in previous sessions adopted. He addressed the Lord Chamberlain direct, and the answer he obtained from that noble functionary, which reflects such honor on his Lordship, was so satisfactory as to render any further observation unnecessary. The letter, and the reply to it, are herewith subjoined:—

"The Albany, Feb. 4, 1840.

"My Lord,

"The numerous and respectable applications that have been made to me, in consequence of the part I took in the House of Commons during the last Session of Parliament, upon the subject of theatrical performances in Lent, will, I hope, be a sufficient apology for my troubling your Lordship upon the present occasion.

"It is stated to me, that although it was universally understood, and agreed to last year, '*That no greater restrictions ought to be placed upon theatrical entertainments during Lent within the City of West-*

minster than are placed upon the like amusements at the same period in every other part of the Metropolis,' yet, it is apprehended, no alteration will take place. I have uniformly represented to parties expressing such fears, that I felt confident their apprehensions were unfounded.

" Your Lordship would, however, confer a great favour upon those who originally did me the honour to place their cause in my hands, if your Lordship would, at your earliest convenience, inform me if I am correct in the conclusions to which I have come, in order that all doubts and misunderstanding upon this subject may be removed.

I have the honour to be,
Your Lordship's obedient, humble servant,
THOMAS DUNCOMBE."

To the Earl of Uxbridge, &c.

" Windsor Castle, Feb. 13, 1840.

" SIR,

" In answer to your letter, which I had the honour of receiving last week, on the subject of the Theatres being closed during Lent, I beg to inform you that I have sent letters to the managers, stating that it will only be necessary to close them during Passion-week and on Ash Wednesday.

I have the honour to be,
Your obedient servant,
UXBRIDGE."

Thomas S. Duncombe, Esq., Albany.

Now mark the monstrous incongruity too frequently committed by people possessing more means than mind, of which such a glaring instance as this has rarely occurred. No one has ever supposed that the Sovereign knows a tithe part of all that is done in the Sovereign's name; and, in this particular respect, no one *could* suppose that the gracious mistress of this fair land, with noble and expansive views upon all subjects brought under her cognizance, could, for a moment, retain one vestige of a system of bye-gone absurdities*. No one ever dreamt that the prohibitions fulminated year after year against the dramatic performances of only some half-dozen theatres out of twenty, all within the boundaries of the metropolis, could have even been known to, much less have received the sanction of, that illustrious Lady; who, in many instances, has manifested to those by whom she has been surrounded and counselled, the vast superiority of youthful attainments over aged prejudices. That such was the fact, and that our gracious Queen would never have sanctioned a continuance of regulations, equally unwholesome and

* As a proof how rooted has been the determination to carry out the position which I laboured so long, but in vain, to maintain, it may be mentioned that when an attempt was made, a few days prior to the last Passion Week, to prohibit a continuance of the astronomical lectures then in course of delivery at Her Majesty's Theatre, by Mr. Howell, Mr. Duncombe brought the matter before parliament, and defeated the Government opposition by 73 to 49.

contemptible, when once brought under royal consideration, may best be ascertained from the statement of another fact, *viz.* that on the very first night of Lent, when the prohibition was taken off, Her Majesty was pleased to visit Covent Garden Theatre, and to sit out the evening's entertainments. It can hardly be believed, were it not a matter of such recent occurrence, that the advisers of a Sovereign could be found to denounce the adoption of a measure, which, *on* its adoption a few months afterwards, their Sovereign set the noble example of countenancing.

Dismissing this subject, I take leave to refer to another, fully dilated upon in the course of these Volumes, in which I was then much more responsibly interested, than I am now. A mass of correspondence which passed between the Lord Chamberlain's Office and myself, upon the re-introduction of a German Opera in this country, will come under the reader's attention. It was an entertainment which, by the admirable manner in which it was sustained in Drury Lane Theatre, in the year 1833, had become extremely popular; and, in addition to the approbation of the people, had obtained the sanction and patronage of the Court. I had been desirous, season after season, of bringing it again before the public, but no favourable opportunity presented itself until the arrival in this country of the Chevalier Spontini. The musical reputation of that composer was a sufficient guarantee

for the manner in which the undertaking would be carried on; without going over the ground a second time, the reader will perceive that I was prohibited from giving any such amusement; but, at the very moment I am writing these remarks, I am the acting manager of the German Opera, under a licence from the Lord Chamberlain's Office, given to another! I can, however, so far solve two such apparently contradictory problems, by stating that the prohibitions were issued against me by the Marquis Conyngham, at that time Lord Chamberlain, while their repeal was effected by the liberal policy of his Lordship's enlightened and distinguished successor, the Earl of Uxbridge. To the courteous consideration of this noble Lord the public are now indebted for the enjoyment of some of the best operas of the German school; and by the same timely aid was Madame Vestris fortunate enough to have the power of availing herself of eleven nights in an earlier part of her season, towards the number she proposed to play, by which she has been enabled to close so much earlier, and thereby to escape the fearful odds against a patent manager, as the London season approaches its height*.

While on the subject of "luck," let me record such an instance, in this lady's management, as none of her predecessors ever had the good fortune

* It is impossible to withhold a smile at the nonsensical tirades which have appeared in print against the supposed premature close of

to meet with. Mr. Charles Kemble, who, theatrically speaking, was inurned in the year 1837—to whom a public dinner, all sorts of honors, and, finally, a superb piece of plate, were given on his retirement from the stage, to take upon himself the uninterrupted fulfilment of the duties devolving on "the Examiner of all theatrical entertainments,"—having effected a transfer of that office to his son, suddenly made his re-appearance on the stage he had so long adorned; not, of course, in the expectation of another dinner, any more honors, or any more plate falling into his lap, but in obedience to a wish of his gracious Sovereign, and at the same time to show her how a few characters in the drama *ought* to be acted. While some parties maintained that *he* had been "dug up," and Macready had thereby been "buried," others regretted that his first retirement was not his final one;—and while the *Montagues* declared that he acted finer than ever, the *Capulets* looked upon him as having gone altogether to decay. Be this as it may, I keep my own opinion to myself; being contented to record the most important part of the matter—*id est*, THE ISSUE. Mr. Kemble performed six nights, on each of which he filled most of the crevices in Covent Garden Theatre; and if his acting had no other effect, it possessed the very useful and salutary one of bringing other performers to their

Covent Garden Theatre. By virtue of these said eleven nights in Lent, and by the previous advantage of having opened in September, Madame Vestris has extended her season to the same length as many of her predecessors did, who played through the month of June.

proper level; for while *Hamlet* by Mr. Macready failed to attract much more than half a house at the Haymarket, *Hamlet* by Mr. Charles Kemble filled Covent Garden Theatre to overflowing. This is a circumstance which redounds to the honor and renown of Mr. Charles Kemble; and another is, that in a determination that his performance should be solidly useful to the lessee of a theatre of which he is a considerable shareholder, no persuasion, and no offer, however tempting, could induce him to accept one farthing for his six performances! Such conduct as this is so totally without precedent amongst the theatrical community, that it is a duty to record it, a duty which is quite equal to the pleasure of doing it. Mr. Kemble's re-appearance must have contributed at least FIFTEEN HUNDRED POUNDS to the treasury of the theatre, which, without such aid, it never would have seen; and as that contribution arrived at so ticklish a period of the season as that of Lent, it must have been doubly acceptable. Heaven forbid that, as an old manager, I should grudge Madame Vestris such a piece of good fortune as this!—On the contrary, I rejoice at it, and repeat, that there is no meed too great for so much talent and beauty as she personally subscribes to her present perilous undertaking; but I cannot help adding, that it is an instance of such extraordinary and timely "luck" acceptable as it would always have been, as never fell to *my* lot. Having so fully given my opinion on the utter impossibility, under existing circumstances, of making money, or rather barely avoiding ruin, by the

management of the patent theatres, and having adduced so many instances in favour of my argument, I regret to make the further addition to the list of sufferers of this delightful lady. I have been told, and I believe it to be true, that Madame Vestris has received 10,000*l.* more than was taken in the best of Mr. Macready's two seasons; and I have moreover heard, which I sincerely trust is *not* true, that notwithstanding such great receipts, she has lost considerably. That she has suffered *some* loss admits of no dispute, for she honestly confessed as much in her parting address: and if, therefore, with her acknowledged attainments, her admirable tact and taste, her professional station, her indefatigable labours, her popularity, and the all powerful charm her sex carries along with it, *she* has not been able to "put money in her house;" WHO *can* be expected to do so? There are several points, in the past season's management, open to objection, in my humble opinion; still this is only a matter of opinion between two persons of experience: but that any management characterized by so much liberality and industry should not be highly prosperous, is a disgrace to a civilized country.

This, however, is not the last instance of the manner in which some of my arguments have been borne out, nor of the advantages enjoyed by others that were denied to me, nor of the doings that were approved of in others, while they were condemned in me. When, after years of severe trial and severe loss, after the introduction of all attainable talent, foreign and native, after

the representation of some of the most popular pieces ever known, I was advised, *after* THE SEASON HAD ALREADY EXTENDED TO 142 NIGHTS, to give a few promenade concerts to enable me the more effectually to return to the usual dramatic performances, the yell from one end of the theatrical part of the metropolis to the other was enough to make the welkin ring. I was denounced as a common mountebank, and my respected vituperator, George Robins, mustered up an extra quantity of senatorial language to astound the listeners to his harangue, at the General Annual Meeting of the Proprietors. At this said General Meeting, the delight of the body, at having secured such "a catch" as the *then* new Lessee, amounted almost to fits—they had all sorts of visions of dividends floating before their eyes, shares were set down at once as at a premium, and it was not doubted that there would be a scramble in the market, even to get a peep at one. Halycon dreams! what a pity it is the beauties should ever have awoke from them! I have more than once come to the conclusion, (after reading this report of their past and their present, and this anticipation of their future fortunes,) that if I had happened to have entered the room in the midst of their disappointments on the one hand, and their ecstacies on the other, they would have thrown all the looking-glasses in it at my head. It is really distressing, if you come to think it over, that all the flow of language displayed at this memorable meeting, should have been distributed, however gratuitously, in vain, and that the

vocabulary of slang and slip-slop should have been exhausted to no earthly purpose.

It was not very long after they had indulged in the brightest of all possible prospects, that the new lessee, who had been promising to *them* (for he knew better than to promise any thing of the kind to himself) a most auspicious opening, began to waver in the fulfilment of such promise. As the introduction of all such expensive expedients as Mr. Bunn had resorted to was voted quite out of the question, and as the sole reliance was to be placed on a good, and not too expensive, a working company, it was reasonably expected that an effective force would be collected together for the opening of the campaign. When, however, it became manifest that the aforesaid "working company" consisted principally of the *dramatis personæ* recently figuring at the Strand Theatre, and that with themselves they imported the additional treat of the pieces they had been playing there, their faith in the "pet" began to waver, and shares subsided at once to par. Confidence was not altogether shaken, because a strong impression prevailed that something in reserve was coming out to astonish and delight mankind. When, however, the panic in the Drury Lane money market became known, shares fell at once to a deplorable discount, and from that moment until the final close of NINETY-NINE NIGHTS, between the 26th October, 1839, and the 28th February, 1840, all was "like a phantasma or a hideous dream." What! A Drury Lane season, the first of a new lessee, to extend but to

four months, and in those four months not to a hundred nights of performance! I feel assured my worthy friend, Mr. Hammond, will not be weak enough to suppose that my aim is to turn *him* into ridicule; for, though it may not be of much use to him, I have a very high opinion of him. My object is to throw into the ridicule which they so justly deserve a meddling set of people, who, without a particle of information or experience, consider themselves to be theatrical judges, and by obtruding their advice where it is neither wished nor asked, lead to the involvement of a man, in schemes which, without such counsel, he never would have dreamt of. When the doors of the theatre were finally shut, the wretched shares which had been fluctuating between premium, par, and discount, turned sulky, and were heard no more of, until all of a sudden a tangible offer was made by Mr. Beale. Unluckily for the good of the concern, Beale did not happen to *be* "a pet," and an alteration in the terms accepted at the first meeting having been insisted on at the second, Mr. Beale "took up his bed and walked."

But as Mr. George Robins said of my effort last year, "the worst remains behind," for the building "which had been consecrated to the genius of Kemble "and Mrs. Siddons" (not that either of them ever played in it!) "has been turned into THE SHILLING THEATRE!" What the devil will Robins say now, when THE VERY ACT into which I was *forced* but for a short time as a matter of expediency, is now adopted

as a deliberate letting from the body of the proprietary to a new tenant? The shares which, under George's hammer, stood little chance of realizing a shilling a piece, would not now, I should say, be taken as a gift! and all this has been the result of "weeding" the old committee (almost every one of whom was a practical man of business, generally conversant with theatrical affairs, especially with those of Drury Lane) and substituting in their place two gentlemen as deliciously ignorant of theatrical affairs as a young sucking pig. If I mistake not, there will be some capital FUN at the NEXT General Meeting; but, in the mean time, it is quite fun enough for me to see the commission of the deeds for which I was so impudently assailed, now carried out by the indirect means of the parties who assailed me.

The howl about legitimacy, so fully commented upon in the ensuing pages will, I suppose, soon cease to be heard. It is dying in the distance daily; for while the miserable pretence of plays "from the text of Shakspeare" has failed of drawing an extra shilling, *the Merry Wives of Windsor*, in its altered OPERATIC FORM, has drawn to Covent Garden Theatre some of the best houses of the past season. So it did in the season of 1823-24, when I was stage manager under Mr. Elliston. I placed it for the first time in that shape, upon the stage of Drury Lane Theatre, supported then in a manner which I very much doubt to see supported so soon again—Dowton, Wallack, Harley, Braham, Gattie, Browne, Miss Stephens, and Madame Vestris, sustaining the principal parts. The

concocters of humbug must not suppose that people do not see through all this. Stuff! they may be gulled at first, but they very soon see through the deception which has been practised upon them*.

Other circumstances, more painful than all the rest, have rendered a proem to the following pages absolutely necessary; for since the completion of the major part of them, several melancholy deaths have occurred—of those same personages in whose lives is mixed up the subject-matter of them all. When these volumes were more than two-thirds on their journey towards completion, intelligence was received of the death of Mr. Stephen Price, my predecessor in the lesseeship of Drury Lane Theatre. Then James Smith, the humorous, the intelligent, the agreeable—one whom society in general, and more especially the society of letters, could

* Then, look at one of the very last attempts at a little bit of legitimacy, that has met with as signal and melancholy a discomfiture as can be well imagined or believed. The Theatre erected by Miss Kelly in Dean Street, Soho, opened its portals on Monday, May 25th, and closed them four days afterwards, on Friday, May 29th. Does not this speak volumes to those silly people who will not understand the national character, nor learn that there is no such thing as cramming down the public throat doctrines that are not palatable to the public taste? I rank myself amongst the foremost of Miss Kelly's admirers, and was gratified in affording her the use of Drury Lane Theatre to take her farewell (as I conceived it to be). But how, on calm consideration, this gifted actress could reconcile to herself, if it be her speculation, the outlay of the gainings of a long theatrical life, on the erection of an additional theatre to the eighteen, or twenty, already in existence in an untheatrical city? where almost all the others are on the verge of bankruptcy, and above all in such an outlandish part of the world as Dean Street, Soho? I regret it deeply for the sake of the fair *artiste*, but I rejoice at it for the sake of the art.

ill afford to lose! Then Sir Thomas Mash, so much of whose official correspondence is herein interspersed. Then, again, one of the principal devotees at the shrine of the dramatic art, popular in all circles, and beloved in his own, General Lincoln Stanhope, has been suddenly torn from the enjoyments of this fragile life! And the unpretending, anxious, industrious, willing little actor, and confidential friend and servant, John Hughes (whilome the factotum of the gifted Kean, and Secretary to the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund) has gone, as I heard one of the world's wags say, to give an account of that fund to Garrick, the founder.

To these may be added the name of a gentleman more devoted to the stage, during the greater part of his long life, than most of those whom he has left behind him—Mr. Const. He was known to, and respected by, almost every one of the great spirits who lived in his own enlightened times, and was a permanent friend and patron to artists and to art. When Mr. Const, acting for Mr. Harris, concluded the engagement with Munden (detailed further on) by offering him £.4, £.5, and £.6 per week, Munden positively replied, "I can't think of it, sir—it is too much—it is indeed—I shall never be able to gain you as much." The community at large owe an expression of deep regret for the death of this venerable gentleman, had he done nothing more for the public good than the introduction of such a performer to their notice as Munden. Mr. Const died in possession of a private box at Covent Garden Theatre, which, at his death, fell into the hands of the Proprietors, and his large

fortune—the result of an honourable and distinguished professional career—he bequeathed to a host of friends who, with a few exceptions, had little claim upon him, and, consequently, are not particularly grateful for the bequest.

But the mournful list is not, alas, filled up. The death of Mr. Waldegrave, not a year after his marriage with the amiable daughter of my respected friend, Braham; and the demise of Mr. Francis Bacon, not a year after his marriage with the daughter of Mr. Horace Twiss, are sad bereavements indeed, and especially in the instance of the latter, where the literary world has lost one of its contributors, in addition to the injury society has sustained by the departure from it of so noble a fellow. And then, who is there who will not lament the fall, in a foreign country, of that popular officer, Colonel Lyster, to whom my Canadian letter (page 215, vol. iii.) was addressed? one of the best-tempered, best-hearted, and agreeable men that ever adorned the society of *any* country!

These are all mournful records to make, but there is one more to render it complete, the account of which death only reached me as I was winding up this tale of sorrow:

> "The harp that once through Tara's halls
> "The soul of music shed,
> "Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls
> "As if that soul were fled!"

Paganini died at Nice, on the 27th of last month, and in making such a memorandum, I may be pardoned the substitution of a harp for a fiddle; for a

man who caused a sort of musical revolution in every part of the globe which he visited, may certainly be supposed to have "the soul of music" at his very fingers ends—which was where Paganini had it! Little did I think, while proceeding with my toil, and chronicling the doings of those I had concerted with, I should so soon have to date their demise! It is, indeed, a mournful duty, but being one, I have performed it.

Thank Heaven I have been spared the record of more than the sanguinary and incredible attempt made upon the sacred life of England's Queen. Her Gracious Majesty had signified her intention of honouring the German Opera with her presence on the evening of the day (Wednesday, June 10, 1840!) when this appalling act was committed. It is sufficiently recent for every one to have drawn their own conclusion—I only herald mine:—

What can that heart be made of, that would seek
To canker in its bud,
And turn the current of, fair England's cheek
From beauty into blood?

None but the demon art, which first prevailed
O'er woman's guileless breast,
And, stalking over earth, has now assailed
Its brightest and its best!

But though it scatter its envenomed darts
Around our Regal Shrine,
Their shafts must pierce through millions' subjects' hearts,
Before they can reach thine!

One thing the deed will prove—all else above—
Though steeped in crime it be,
How deep, and fond, and lasting, is the love
Thy people have for thee!

With reference to the tendency of my animadversions, and the freedom of my remarks, upon a few persons, in the course of the following pages, I wish it to be distinctly borne in mind that I have assailed no one who was not the first assailant. I have had the misfortune to fall under the vituperative lash of some of Sir E. L. Bulwer's harangues; and as he thought proper to disparage my management *of* the stage, I have thought proper to disparage his writings *for* the stage; and both of us, no doubt, have been regulated by a strict regard to truth and justice. Then "my learned friend," Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, having thought fit to hold me up to ridicule in a public court, I have retaliated upon him in a publication—*tit-for-tat* may not be a legal definition, but it is a worldly one. Mr. Forster, a person of whom I knew nothing, and who knew about as much of me, attacked me week after week, through the medium of a public journal, with the two-fold object of debasing me, and of upholding my antagonist and his particular friend, the lessee of the rival theatre. It was not likely that I should spare *him* the first time I got a pen in my hand; and although I have not bestowed upon him a tithe part of the chastisement which the vituperation that he heaped upon me, without *any* reason whatever deserved, I have furnished him with sufficient mate-

rials to enable him to chaunt the good old ballad of "remember *me*," for the rest of his natural days.

As far as regards the performers, it must naturally be supposed that I should deal freely with *them*, and above all with one of the principal amongst them. I cannot be supposed to have any particular devotion for a person who committed upon me the outrage that Mr. Macready did; nor any great degree of admiration for a system of management arrayed, personally as well as hostilely, against my own. I hope it is unnecessary to say that I have made no references whatever to private life; my comments are entirely of a professional nature, and as both of us are public characters—as both have been managers of the two first theatres in the empire—as he has personally, as well as professionally, attacked me, and as I do not happen to think him as great an ornament to his profession as I willingly admit and know him to be to private society, I have not hesitated to record my opinion of his performance, and of his management. Of my worthy friend, Farren, I have not said more than I should have wished him to say of me, had our positions been reversed; my observations having reference solely to what I consider to be the high and ruinous nature of his remuneration; beyond that, either as an actor or as a man, he is above the reach of malice, though within the pale of envy, and one whom I admire and respect in his relative situations. In the Introduction to Mr. Hazlitt's "View of the English Stage," I remember his saying, "my apolo-

" gies are particularly due to Mr. Bartley, for having " accused him of being fat;" and if that gentleman found it necessary to make an apology on such a point, it is still more incumbent on me, for I have stated that although Bartley is even fatter than myself, he is easily seen through—so he is!

The main drift of the following observations is to clear myself, and vindicate my management, from the reckless misrepresentations that have been made of both, and the further purport of them is to point out to those professors who should be the support of their art, how frightfully they have conduced to its downfall—but it requires a voice of louder warning than mine, I fear, to bring them to conviction. When *Matilda* sought to dissuade her son, *Fitzharding*, from a continuation of the bandit's life he led, she directed his gaze to the carcase of a murderer, suspended from an adjoining tree,

" Where every blast to memorize his shame
" May shrilly whistle through his hollow bones,
" And in his tongueless jaws a voice renew,
" To preach with more than mortal eloquence."

Some such awful demonstration as this is before *their* eyes, if they will but turn their head to look upon it. Do not the tenantless halls of Drury Lane Theatre "preach with more than mortal eloquence," to those who lent their best assistance to render them such a desert? The nature of that assistance, and what I conceive to have been my own long struggles

to avert so lamentable a consummation, will herein be unfolded. My remonstrance has chiefly been directed against the head offenders; not merely from the enormity of their offence, but from the example their proceedings have held out to those beneath them in talent, pretension, and expectation. It would have been an almost endless task to anatomize many puny, yet at the same time, mischievous efforts of the secondary class of the histrionic community; notwithstanding, while sailing with the under current, they are comparatively as important as those who are afloat on the broader and bolder stream. In this respect, as in the instance of many others rather associated *with* theatrical people than theatrical people themselves, I have preferred adopting the principle of *Junius*, by "not attracting public attention to those who will only pass without censure, when they pass without observation."

London, June 22, 1840.

In the following Work will be found certain remarks upon the Garrick Club. As a Member of that Society, the Publisher thinks it right to say, that the opinions therein expressed are those of the Author,—not his own, and are adopted, as he conceives, on misinformation.

8, *New Burlington Street*,
June 25, 1840.

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