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LONDON MINOR THEATRES.

SEVENTY MONTHS AGO AND NOW.

It is all very well to dabble in the great art of aristocracy, and to endeavour by a speciousness and plianciness, to all reading words with a belief that the London Stage—such as is occasionally described in the correspondent of "the Spirit of the Times"—is and was the great mark of attention for every grade of society in the metropolis. The writer of those articles is, without doubt, convinced of the correctness of his position, and probably never entered a London Theatre without paying 7s. sticking his seat in the dress circle; a sum which he bought for as a free admission for the evening, at a Minor Theatre. It is true, we allow, that Kemble was not in the stock company; Macready could not be persuaded to perform for three nights only, it would have been labour in vain to attempt to negotiate with young Keen; still there was a theatre, with boxes, pit and gallery, orchestra, a music-box, two large lights, and a green curtain. It was situated near Lisson Grove, and presided by all the shop-keepers, traders, and mechanics in the neighbourhood. We shall describe our aristocratic friend in the "Spirit," as not a particular night. We shall describe him when the upper part of the audience called a *deux*, a female *deux*. Some excitement existed in the street, several apartments were surrounded by patrons of the theatre, members of the *Ragocracy*, who displayed earnestly, and somewhat fiercely, the name of the fair candidate for their favor.

"I say Bill," remarked an individual with a ragged coat, to another individual who was in coat-of-arms, "not in the name of hard could he put this freak into *Sophia's* hands, to leave up doll, hoysters and spout in a cigar?"

"No," replied Coates, "she says as hoc and water makers give next to nothing for the shells, and them's her only parkers appearance. A hundred is too small, consider as how they pumps 'em out to the public's acceptance a glass."

"Well," said Rags, "I think *Soph* 'ell she can come it strong if she likes, and if she tips 'em two or three of her hand up by looks, it's all right, but we must pull through; how does them butcher boys go to her?"

"They're all right," quoth he, without an argument; "Jim milk'd the list last night out of just enough to push right into the cry, and three into tip, then there's the grinder and five omnibus cards, who'll grin on 'em vot dars to come opposition a dead sarting?"

"I can see the edifying dialogue, which had shed its counterpart in different streets of the scene of action. The posters on all the dead walls in Paddington, the notices shops displayed the bill, and the sides of all the gin-palaces in the vicinity attracted the attention of the customers to the instant announcement, of which the following is a literal copy—

THEATRE, PADDINGTON.
This evening will be performed Shakespeare's play of *Fazio* in the part of Bianca, by a lady—(her first appearance on any stage.)
Mr. Effingham—Aldabella, Miss Ridgway, of the first set a *MOULAN FIANC*, by the lady and Mr. Effingham. To conclude with the drama of *THE INJURED FIG*, or the story of *RECONCILIATION*, with a new catastrophe, expressly for the Theatre. For characters call bills.—Doors to be open at six, and begin at seven.—Boxes, four pence.—Pit, two pence.—Stalls, one penny.—on half price in the Gallery. Seats allowed in the Boxes.—Gentlemen who sit in the Gallery are requested not to spit into the street.

two and twenty shillings in copper and eight in silver, besides a queer sixpence or two, and I'm blowed if I think you can scrounge in any where; but you may try sir, you may try!"

We took the *pass-check*, and being pretty respectably dressed, the box-keeper thought we should make a decent audience-show, and put us into a side box near the orchestra, the only unoccupied seat in the theatre. Two lamps, one at each end of the stage, were flaring at an awful rate, to say nothing of the delightful effluvia which a compound of the fat and kitchen grease diffused through the arena. It was a bumper—decidedly a bumper, without the assistance of a single newspaper puff—it was a thirty shilling house!

The weather was exceedingly hot, and the lady treasurer not coming within the meaning of the Plurality Bill, held two offices, viz: money-taker for admission, and money-taker for cigars, apples, and ginger-beer, more generally known by the martial name of Wellington Pop. Dorothy Clabbs, (her name sometimes shortened into Dolly, or snipped into Doll, was a most industrious person for her size (250 lbs. the just); she kept a fruit and green shop in Church street, Paddington, plac'd by eldest daughter with a "libel-barrow of apples and oranges in Edgeware Road, sent four of her boys to hawk and peddle the same commodities through various streets of the Metropolis, and in the evening she was occupied as above stated. Dolly had an extraordinary memory, she kept no book or memorandum, but she knew every debtor, and the amount he owed;—she never opened a new account until the old one was squared, and it was therefore difficult to get into her debt more than sixpence. On the night in question we saw her carry out a little of her system of finance. A young scoundrel about 15 years old sidled up to the singer saying "Doll, can't you trust us a cigar?"

"No!"

"I owes you nothing."

"Perhaps you don't."

"What?"

"This night three weeks, my covey, two Haywainers and a Pop."

The applicant sneaked off, and by the time he had resumed his seat in the pit, the Paddington clock was striking seven. This was a broad hint to the audience—seven o'clock and nothing done—then commenced a clapping of hands, stamping of feet, cries of "music," "tip us the cat-gut," "let's have scrape," accompanied by whistles and penny trumpets—at length the sound of a violin, in a state of *tune-tion* was heard, and presently the music made its appearance. What a sight! A half-starved ragged blind fiddler, led by a quite starved, squallid child, was placed on a stool in the orchestra. He commenced an overture of his own, an *ad libitum Fantasia*, but it was too deep for that public, and they called out for a lively tune; at length every one named an air of his own fancy, and had the unfortunate violinist complied with all the demands upon his talents, he would have had to continue playing for three weeks! All we could catch in the din was a duetto (with variations of course) between *sen Der Freischutz* and *Donnybrook Fair*; the confusion was ended by the sudden ringing of a bell, and up went the curtain.—"Fazio and Bianca discovered!"—so runs the text book. A burst of vociferation greeted the new aspirant; she (a great little person) swaggered to the front, put herself in a fencing attitude, drew back her left foot and right arm, became perpendicular, and hobbled a something between a bow and a courtesy. The swell manner in which this manoeuvre was perpetrated put her supporters upon their metal. Shouts of "go it *Soph*," "a tip it 'em," "well done oysters," were mingled in delicious harmony. When quiet was restored the dialogue commenced—the dialogue!—the dialogue between Fazio and Bianca! Shade of Milton!—(is he dead?)—Gentles of Kemble and O'Neill! It was a common place jabber, a *Proteus* sort, betwixt the two—not a word of the original, not a syllable. After a little bye-play, she looked savagely at some

one in the pit, and in an under-ton said—"Bill, if you don't keep still o' winking at me you'll put me out." "Turn him out," cried a hoarse voice—"Sh! his windpipe," pit ditto, "chuck him over," gallery idem, followed by twenty "siences" and twelve "shares" promiscuous. The scene closed—Enter Aldabella, followed by Fazio—she said nothing, and walked off, Fazio after her. End of Act 1st—Fidler—Curtain rose, Bianca in her night cap waiting for Fazio, who entered and rolled his eyes about and himself into a chair. She sprang up, caught him by the throat, and screamed out, "You vagabond, you've—you've—seen Aldabella!"—she dragged him to the front, he fell on one knee, she raised her arm, and struck the astonished Fazio with such violence that he lost his balance, tumbled into the orchestra, carrying the music with him in his downward course. This was a *Medea touch*—it was unorthodox, the audience rose en masse, and gave *Soph* three tremendous cheers, which she acknowledged by many thumps on her left side, meaning thereby everlasting gratitude. Exit Bianca—End of Act 2nd.

The dance as per bill was demanded—Mr. Effingham limped forward and declared, that in consequence of the fall he had suffered, it would not be performed, but if the audience would permit, he would substitute a song. Instantly bravos proclaimed the general acquiescence, and he achieved that delightful cavatina, "If I had a donkey you would not go" to a double encore, which was received in full payment for the Highland Flieg.

The third and fourth acts did not seem to come off at all, for the curtain rose and we saw Bianca and Fazio in prison. She cried—seemed—toe her hair, and said some thing about love and madness—a bell toll'd—Fazio started, looked at Bianca, and stalked off. She of course followed.

Scenes the last, a churchyard with tombstones, &c. Enter Bianca, and she fell upon one of the graves, and a gun was heard—she started, a tomb opened—the ghost of Fazio rose—she rushed upon him, fell in his arms, and they both sunk together, amidst the deafening shouts of an admiring auditory.

Thus was the celebrated tragedy acted by three performers, there was no *Bastelo*—no *Duke*—no nothing else. We did not wait for the "Injured Fig," considering we had a pretty good fourpen'orth.

THE EMPRESS CATHERINE.

At the time of Jegur's embassy at the Russian Imperial Court, in the reign of Catherine II., a stranger of the name of Suderland filed the office of treasurer to the empress. One morning he was informed that his house was surrounded by soldiers, and that the commanding officer requested an audience.

This officer, whose name was Belien, came in then with an appearance of the utmost consternation: "Mr. Suderland," said he, "it is with indelible grief that I see myself called upon to perform on you an execution of the most horrible nature, oh! horrible in the extreme! and I am totally ignorant of what crime you can have guilty, to have incurred the mighty displeasure of her most gracious majesty." "I! what have I done?" replied the treasurer in amazement, "What in the world do you mean? I know no more than you do, what I can have done. And what is that dreadful execution you speak of?" "Sir," answered the officer, "it is to be hanged, and I really have not courage to mention it—is it fearful?"

"Have I then lost the confidence her majesty trusted in me?"

"Oh, if that were all, you would not see me so afflicted. Confidence may be regained, an office may be restored."

"Well," asked Suderland, "am I to be banished—banished to Siberia; oh, tell me if my dreadful fate?"

"It might be possible for you to return from there. That is not it."

"Am I then to be cast in a dungeon?"

"That were preferable."

"Gracious heavens I am I then to suffer the knot?"

"It is a dreadful torture; but you might recover—it is not that."

"Oh! for the mercy of heaven, no longer keep me in doubt—am I then to die?"

"My gracious sovereign," replied the officer, trembling with emotion, "ordered me to have you—good heavens! how dreadful—to have you—stuffed!"

"To be stuffed!" exclaimed the astonished treasurer, "to be stuffed! Either you must have lost your senses, or her majesty must be in a dream. Surely you never received this order without remonstrating on its barbarity?"

"Alas! my poor friend, it was all to no purpose. 'Go,' said her majesty, 'and recollect it is your duty to execute what orders I assign to give you!'"

It would be impossible to depict the amazement, the anger, the fear, the despair, of the poor treasurer, that one short quarter of an hour was granted to put his affairs in order; and it was with extreme difficulty that permission was given him to write a short note to Earl Bruce. His Lordship having read this note, stood transfixed, as may be supposed, with astonishment; he lost to time in requesting an audience with the empress, to whom he revealed the contents of Suderland's note.

Catherine, hearing the strange recital, was at a loss to imagine what it could be that could have given rise to this extraordinary circumstance. "Good heavens," she exclaimed, "run, oh, my lord, and be in time to deliver my poor treasurer from his terror!"

The earl hastened to Suderland's house, fortunately, in time to save him; and on his return found the empress laughing to her heart's content; her majesty had discovered the cause of this strangeness. "I see now," said she, "how it is: my poor little favorite dog, that I had christened Suderland, after my treasurer, who had made me a present of it, lately died, and I gave orders to have it stuffed this morning."

To impale and to stuff are expressed by the same words in the Russian.

Miscellaneous.

The Queen and Lady Peel.—Many stories have been told about the recent ball given by the Queen. We have heard her following from an eye witness, viz, that Her Majesty made a point of giving a most cordial shake of the hand to Lady Peel, as if anxious to prove that her political sentiments did not interfere with her private feelings. We mention this little incident, first, as an amiable trait in Her Majesty's character, and secondly, as an example generally to the ladies of the United Kingdom, who have lately allowed politics to obtain much too great an influence over them, even to the imbibing of private life, the poisoning of friendship, and the souring of the very best feelings of the human heart. This is a hint which is much wanted.—*Liverpool Chronicle.*

In the course of an inquest held in London, the Coroner, Mr. Wakley, M. P., made the following observations:—"Gin is the best friend I have; it causes me to have annually a thousand more inquests than I otherwise should hold. I have reason to believe that from 10,000 to 15,000 persons die in this metropolis annually from the effects of gin drinking, on whom no inquests are held. Since I have been Coroner I have seen so many murders and suicides by poison, drowning, hanging and cutting the throat, in consequence of drinking ardent spirits, that I am confident the Legislature will, before long be obliged to interfere with respect to the sale of liquors containing alcohol. The gin-seller will be made as responsible as the chemist, and I think it is right that publicans should know that even now they are to a certain extent responsible in the eye of the law. If a publican allows a man to stand at his bar, and serves him with several glasses of gin and sees him drink it