

The merciless measures adopted towards the Acadians, and the wanton destruction of their possessions, form one of the darkest spots in American history, and is only paralleled by the massacre of Wyoming by the English and Indians, twenty-five years afterward. All that could throw light on this dark transaction was carefully suppressed by the English authorities. But later investigation has discovered that the iniquitous sentence of banishment was carried out with brutal violence. Old men and delicate women were torn from their homes and left all night on the shore, exposed to the cold autumn air, and no roof to shelter, no covering to protect them. And, although Colonel Winslow had pledged his word of honor that families should go on the same vessel, the aged husband was separated from her who had been the partner of his joys and sorrows for fifty years, the young bride of a few weeks was torn from the protecting arms of her husband, widows were separated from their only sons, never to meet them again.

Colonel Winslow received eight hundred pounds sterling from the British Government for driving the Acadians into exile. His portrait in the rooms of the Massachusetts Historical Society represents a man of full face, fair complexion, blue eyes and smiling mouth. He died in 1773, aged seventy-three years. His family were Tories during the American Revolution, and were obliged to seek refuge in Nova Scotia when the British evacuated Boston in 1775.

Only a mournful tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand Pré; a few weeping willows mark the spot where once stood the happy home of Evangeline, and forever sing the requiem of her doomed people, while

Under the shade of their branches
Dwell another race with other customs and language."
—Eugene L. Didier in the American

AT THE PLAY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

The Italian comedians at the Court of France in the reign of Charles IX., Henry III., Henry IV. and Louis XIII., are the subject of a new volume, by M. Armand Baschet, which has appeared in Paris, with the title, "Les Comédiens Italiens à la Cour de France" (Plon & Co.). The author, M. Baschet, is an ornament of that particular and happy class of men who make it the business of their lives to hunt out, group and utilize documents. Five and twenty years ago, M. Baschet received the mission to explore the archives of Venice. He has published a dozen volumes of the highest importance, giving the results of his exploration, and at the present moment he is still exploring the archives of Northern Italy on behalf of the British Government. The archives of the House of Gonzague, at Mantua, have been M. Baschet's richest source of documents for information concerning the fine arts, literature and political life, two hundred years ago. In these archives M. Baschet had discovered precious documents relating to the life of Andrea Mantegna, letters of Aldus Manutius to Isabella d'Este, letters of Rubens, and, finally, the documents relating to the Italian comedians in France.

The reason why the archives of the sovereign House of Mantua offer more documents than any other archives on so special a subject, is simply this. The dukes of Mantua had from very early times a troupe of comedians in ordinary, which they permitted to give performances elsewhere than at Mantua at different times and by previous agreement. Troupes would be formed under a collective name, as the "Accesi," (the inflamed,) the "Fideli," (the faithful,) the "Confidenti," (the confident,) which were and called themselves the comedians of *il Signor de Mantua*. In a word, for nearly half a century, His Most Serene Highness of Mantua was the patron, the recognized protector, master, Maecenas and impresario, of the best companies of Italian players, and the kings and potentates who were desirous of having the Italian comedy at their Courts used to apply to their cousin of Mantua. Piquant negotiations were opened and infinite diplomacy was displayed in order to secure the services of *Arlequin*, *Fidelin*, *Lelio*, *Scapin*, *Rinoceronte* and *Isabella*. The comedians, themselves, were in correspondence with sovereigns, and queens stood god-mother to their children. It will readily be imagined that M. Baschet has found interesting material in the letters, requests, treaties, notes and messages concerning the comedians of the House of Mantua. His new volume is, of course, above all a book of documents, and, therefore, a book for specialists interested in the study of the French stage before Molière; but the story that these documents tell is so full of curious details that I venture to say something about it to the general reader.

The Italian comedy, played in Paris by Italian companies, dates from the reign of Charles IX. The comedy in question was the "*commedia dell'arte*," in contradistinction to the "*commedia sostenuta*," or comedy recited and composed according to the conventional, classical rules. The *commedia dell'arte* was a comedy improvised, developed, furnished with details, by the inspiration and according to the caprice of the actors, on some subject agreed upon beforehand or upon a very summary scenario. The origin of this kind of comedy may be traced to the "*Atellane fabule*" of the ancient Roman Campania; in reality, it was brought into vogue about the year 1526 by the Venetian, Ruzante whose work permits us to regard the *commedia dell'arte* as a muse of the same blood and of the

same nobility as the muse of Shakespeare and of Molière. Ruzante's improvisations found excellent interpreters and imitators. Companies were formed, and some crossed the mountains and visited Vienna and Spain. The first regular and well-organized company of Italian comedians came to Paris in 1571, on the occasion of Charles IX.'s entrance into Paris after his marriage. It was of this company that Lord Buckhurst wrote to Queen Elizabeth: "The 4th of this month, the King procured the Duke de Nevers to invite me to dinner, where we found a sumptuous fete and of great honour, adorned with music of a most excellent and strange concert, and with a comedy of Italians that for the good mirth and handling thereof deserved singular commendation." This company appears to have spent a considerable time in France, where the improvised play and the acrobatic feats were quite new.

Henri III. took particular pleasure in the Italian play, and even in the midst of the Huguenot troubles he sent for the famous "*Gelos*" troupe, which arrived at Blois in January, 1577, in the midst of the great company attracted to that town by the session of the States-General. The journey of the comedians had not been without accident. When almost at their destination, the Huguenots took them prisoners, and the King had to ransom them. The night of their arrival, they played before the King in the splendid state-room of the Chateau de Blois, which was "hung with a rich tapestry with figures and interwoven with threads of gold." Napoleon, with his "pitiful of kings," did not give Talma a finer audience or so fine a stage as the Italian comedians had when they played before the nobilities of the States-General. The "*Gelos*" played with immense success at Blois, until the spring, although "the preacher had said in the presence of the King that it was wicked to go to see them." Then they went to Paris, where, according to a temporary chronicler, they attracted "such a concourse and affluence of people as the four best preachers in Paris had never had together when they preached." And yet the preachers preached against the players, and the King's Parliament declared that the comedies were only "a school of debauchery for the youth of both sexes of the town of Paris." But the "*Gelos*" did not fear anything so long as they enjoyed the favor of the King, and consequently the favor of the Court.

It would be interesting to find out whether this company of "*Gelos*" is the same which we find at London in the following year, 1578, of which Payne Collier mentions: "There was an Italian *commediante*, named Drusiano, and his company, in London, in January, 1578." Elsewhere, Payne Collier says: "A company of Italian players, one of whom was evidently a tumbler or vaulter, attended the Queen in her progress and performed at Windsor." M. Baschet has not yet discovered sufficient documents as to the composition of the company to enable us to identify Drusiano. I mention the conjecture simply as interesting to those who are curious in the history of the English drama.

Henceforward, companies of Italian comedians were constantly playing at Lyons, at Paris, and wherever the Court happened to be. It would be tedious in this place to refer to each individual troupe and each individual visit. Let us rather see the footing on which relations were established between the Italian players and their royal patrons. At the very end of the sixteenth century, a super-excellent troupe of comedians had been formed under the auspices of the Duke of Mantua. The *Arlequin* of this company had in particular acquired the esteem of many sovereigns before whom he had played, and some of these sovereigns did not think it beneath their royal dignity to write to *Messire Arlequin*. Amongst this number was Henri IV., who wrote to invite *Arlequin* and his company for the *fetes* to take place in 1600, on the occasion of his marriage with Marie de Medici. The arrangements for the journey were made by the French ambassador, and the comedians finally arrived with letters of recommendation to the most noble lords of the French Court. Tristano Martinelli, the famous *Arlequin*, immediately went to salute the King. Tallemant des Reaux relates the interview: "The King rises from his chair; *Arlequin* promptly sits in it, and, as if the King had been *Arlequin*, says: 'Well, *Arlequin*, so you have come here with your company to divert me. I am well pleased. I promise to protect you, to give you a salary of so much,' etc., etc. The King did not dare to dissent, but at last said to him: 'Hold! you have played my *role* long enough; let me play it now.'"

In 1603, Francesco Andreini and his wife, Isabella, the most famous comedians of the time, came to Paris with their company, at the invitation of the King and Queen. This Isabella was a very remarkable woman, who was honored just as if she had been a woman of condition, as the term was. There is no laudatory expression that her contemporaries did not employ in her praise. High and low applauded and declared her triumph. At Rome, Cardinal Aldobrandini lavished upon her the greatest honors of his table, and Ariosto and Tasso the still greater honor of their sonnets. Academies admitted her amongst their members and crowned her for her poetry and her plays, which she dedicated to the King and to the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the Court; for, besides being an actress, Isabella was an exquisite poetess. And, when Isabella and her company returned to Italy, the King and the Queen gave her private letters to the princes of Mantua, testifying to

their esteem of the lady and to the pleasure that her company had given them. But then, suddenly, in 1604, while on her way home, Isabella died at Lyons. The town of Lyons honored her funeral by homage that was rare, indeed, for an actress, and, what is still more remarkable, she was equally honored by the Church, although the Church in after years, refused burial to the actor and author, Molière. Nevertheless, in the register of the Church of the Holy Cross, at Lyons, may be read this entry: "Friday, June 11th, after vespers, was interred the body of the Dame Elisabeth Andreini, defunct, native of Padua, in her life wife of Francesco Andreini, of Florence, comedian. She died with the common report of being one of the rarest women in the world, both for learning and as speaking fairly in several kinds of tongues. They gave for the fees five crowns, and five for permission to place a stone with her name and arms near the pillar of holy-water vessel."

Pierre Mathieu, the contemporary historian of Henry IV. and the best historian of his time, mentions Isabella's company, her talents and her death. "If she had lived in Greece," he says, "at the time when the comedy was in vogue, she would have had statues erected in her honor and received on the stage as many crowns of flowers as the bad players received stones." In default of a statue, Isabella had a splendid medal engraved in her memory. There are two copies in the National Library in Paris. The medal bears her effigy, her name, her quality of *commediante* in the "*Gelos*" company, and these two words: "*Eterna fama*."

M. Baschet prints many letters and documents which go to prove that the nature of comedians was the same two hundred years ago as it is now; the only difference is that in those days it was the ambassadors of kings who were charged with appeasing jealousy and applying soothing balms to wounded vanity. *Arlequin* and *Isabella* *Florinda* intrigued against each other with *Macchiavellian finesse* to have the direction of the company. The Queen-Regent writes letter after letter. Cardinal de Gonzague is called in to settle difficulties between the actresses, *Flaminia* and *Florinda*. *Arlequin* writes to the Queen, addressing her as "*com-mère*," and the Queen actually holds one of *Arlequin*'s children over the baptismal font. In short, it required two years' continual negotiations before the regent, Marie de Medici, could get the famous *Arlequin*, Martinelli, and his company to Paris, where they were handsomely treated and richly paid. This *Arlequin*—"Dominus *Arlechinorum*," as he signed himself,—became very rich, both in money and in land, as may be seen from his will and codicils, cited by M. Baschet. But for capriciousness and vanity no modern *diva* can be compared to him. Doubtless, in their travels the Italian players were not the players of Scarron's "*Roman Comique*," but they lived in adventurous times and had their share of the mishaps that befall wayfarers in the old days. A hundred years later, Goldoni gives us a little sketch of some Italian comedians starting on their travels on board a boat. There were, he tells us, twelve actors and actresses, a prompter, a scene-shifter, a property man, four chambermaids, nurses, children of all ages, dogs, cats, monkeys, parrots, birds, pigeons, a lamb. The boat was a veritable "Noah's ark." "The boat," he continues, "was very large, and divided into compartments so that each woman had her cabin with curtains before it. . . . The leading lady asked for some beef tea; there was none; she flew into a passion; we had all the difficulty in the world in calming her with a cup of chocolate. This lady was the ugliest and worst-tempered of the company." It was ever thus.

The documents of the Gonzague archives come to an end in 1624, as far as concerns the proceedings of the comedians. After the death of Duke Ferdinand, the House of Mantua was ruined in the war known as the "War of the Mantuan Succession." A few years after this date, the Italian comedy was established at Paris, at the Palais Royal, on the same stage where the troupe of Molière performed. M. Auguste Vitu, the eminent dramatic critic, has recently shown in the journal, *Le Moliériste*, in what close familiarity Molière lived with the Italian actors of his day, who were the direct successors of the companies whose history and performance at the Court of France M. Baschet has so ingeniously reconstituted. The influence of the Italians on Molière is not one of their smallest titles to homage as persons of exquisite wit and talent. It is true that in the France of the present day *Pierrot*, *Arlequin*, *Leander*, *Cassander* and *Columbine* in the pantomime are the only Italian types that have survived. But, as Théophile Gautier has very justly observed, the pantomime is the true hum in comedy, and, although it does not employ two thousand personages, like that of M. de Balzac, it is not less complete. With four or five types it suffices for everything. *Cassander* represents the family; *Leander*, the stupid and well-to-do top who pleases the parents; *Columbine*, the ideal, the flower of wealth and beauty; *Arlequin* with his monkey's face and serpent's body, his black mask, his multicoloured costume, his spangles, represents love, wit, mobility, boldness, all the brilliant qualities, all the brilliant vices; *Pierrot*, pale, lean, clad with pale-colored garments, always hungry and always beaten, is the slave of antiquity, the pariah of modern times, the proletarian, the passive and disinherited creature, who assists, gloomy and sly, at the orgies and follies of his masters.

I can only repeat that M. Baschet's researches have brought to light a vast quantity of facts

and details relating to the history of the Italian drama in France and indirectly bearing upon the general history of dramatic literature. His volume will take its place beside Maurice Sand's admirable work on the characteristics of the Italian comedy, "*Masques et Bouffons*," as a standard documentary word on this interesting subject.

In conclusion let me refer to a point which interests Shakespearean students. M. Baschet mentions some English actors who were giving performances in Paris in the year 1598, and again in 1604, in the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. As long ago as 1864, M. Endore Soulié referred to this English company in the French *Notes and Queries*, or *Intermédiaire des Chercheurs et des Curieux*. The question is: "Who were these actors, and what pieces did they play? Did they play any of the pieces of Shakespeare, then in the prime of his genius?" The chief of the company, in whose name the lease or the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne was signed, was called "Jehan Schais." Who was he? Was it he and his company who returned to Paris in 1604 and played at Fontainebleau, in the new hall, before the King and the Court, on Tuesday, September 18th? Can any American Shakespearean throw light on this mystery? THEODORE CHILU.

CHEAP POSTAGE AT LAST, AND POSTAL NOTES IN ADDITION.

The late Congress passed a law which will be hailed with general satisfaction by the people, namely, the reduction of the rate of postage on letters to two cents. The United States may now be considered as standing at the head of the nations in the matter of cheap postal facilities. They are indebted to Mother England for teaching us the A B C of popular postal transmission; for a score of years her rate has been two cents. But no such costs, difficulties and distances have had to be overcome in carrying the mails in Great Britain as in the United States. Her postal routes are short, her total area being only about one hundred and twenty-two thousand square miles, while ours is not far from three and a half millions of square miles.

Many important American towns are from one to four thousand miles apart by the postal routes, over which we have been long carrying letters for three cents. Under the new rates of two cents, the quantity of letters to be carried will doubtless be greatly augmented.

The new two cent rate goes into operation October 1st. The post office authorities are engaged in preparing a brand new two cent stamp, with which to inaugurate the happy event.

Another accommodation for the public will also soon come into vogue, namely, the issue of postal notes for small sums. By payment at any post office a postal note for the amount is to be given, which will be payable on presentation at any other post office.

The post office authorities are making preparations as rapidly as possible for the issue of the new postal note. It is to be engraved with great care, the work upon it to be equal to that on the national banknotes, in order to protect the holder. It is expected that this note will prove of great benefit to all who desire to use the mails to purchase books, newspapers and merchandise. The authorities admit that it is an experiment, and do not expect that the system will any more than pay expenses.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

GEN. SIR C. HASTINGS DOYLE is dead.

THE French Chamber has adjourned for a month.

SITTING BULL is to be released from military custody and placed on a reservation.

MORMON missionaries are very active in Tennessee, and claim large numbers of converts.

WALLACE ROSS has issued a challenge to Hanlan for a four or five mile race for stakes of \$1,000.

THE London police force is to be increased by 500 men and public buildings will be guarded by military.

PROMINENT Irishmen in New York state their disbelief in Ross's stories of his connection with the recent outrages in London.

THE London Morning Post expresses the belief that the "Invincibles" have transferred the field of their operations to England.

REPORTS from all sections of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec report heavy snowfalls, the railways in many places being blocked.

THE Archbishop of Tuam denounces the action of the Government in regard to the relief of the distressed people of Ireland as an outrage.

NUMBERS of men from the vicinity of Kingston and Belleville are being engaged for work on the British Columbia sections of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

THE Queen met with a slight accident on Saturday by slipping on the stairs at Windsor Castle, but was sufficiently recovered to hold a Cabinet Council yesterday.

A HEAVY gale and snowstorm did much damage in Great Britain, trains in Scotland and Wales being blocked, and the heavy frost being expected to do much damage by retarding agricultural operations.