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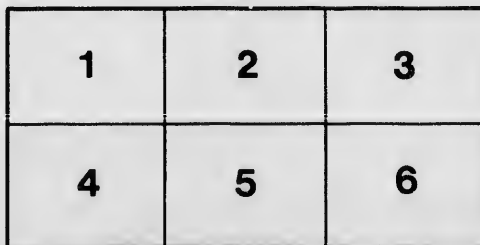
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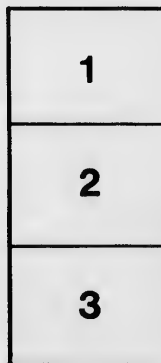
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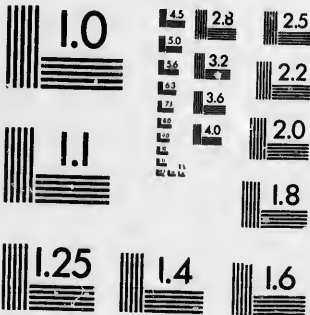
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THEATRICAL THOUGHTS,
" "

BY

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JOHN GAISFORD,
" "

PROMPTER TO THE THEATRE ROYAL, MONTREAL:

AND

CONUNDRUMS,

SENT TO J. GAISFORD, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS BENEFIT
AT THE THEATRE ROYAL.



PN
2305
M665
1848

34

Montreal:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY LOVELL AND GIBSON,

AND

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1848.

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DEDICATION.

TO MAJOR GRANVILLE, 23RD (ROYAL WELCH) FUSILIERS,
AND
THE OFFICERS OF THE GARRISON OF MONTREAL.

GENTLEMEN,

Many of you may perhaps remember, that some twenty years ago, there existed an individual named King, who made a practice of introducing himself with an apology. So repeatedly had he performed the trick of treading upon the toes of his superiors, and then begging their pardons, that he acquired the soubriquet of To-King. I am not envious of such a notoriety, but beg to apologise for the great liberty I am taking, whilst dedicating to you this pamphlet, upon a subject in which I believe you take some interest.

Hoping that you will deal leniently with its many faults,
allow me to subscribe myself,

Your much obliged,

And most obedient Servant,

JOHN GAISFORD.

THEATRE ROYAL,
Montreal, 10th April, 1848.

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A P O L O G Y .

“ ANOTHER WORK upon *Theatricals!* ” will, I have no doubt, be the common expression of all who glance at the cover of this Pamphlet; and with good reason—so many different Treatises are there, now extant, upon the same prolific subject. But, for my exculpation, I shall plead the novel fact of my own production being entirely free from anything approaching to personal abuse, or attacks upon individuals, with which other compilations in the most part abound. The pen which transcribes these sheets, shall merely tickle, where others have thought proper to teaze, the Dramatic Profession. And my excuse for the general charge of writing a Book, shall be “ ’Tis but a very little one.”

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THEATRICAL THOUGHTS.

PART I.

On the Expenses of a Theatre.

I WILL leave the gentle reader to form his or her own opinion as to the exact value, in pounds, shillings and pence, or dollars and cents, (as they think proper,) of any temple that may be dedicated to the service of the dramatic Muse, and confine my remarks to expenses of which they cannot have the remotest idea. Every body who has visited a theatre is aware that, when properly conducted, it must employ a number of artists; but few, except the initiated, know how many derive their support, and that of their families, from the numerous dollars, half-dollars, and quarters, which are nightly paid into the treasurer's hands. I will deliberately enumerate them, expecting nothing less than that the fashionable young man and beautiful lady who occupy the dress circle, and look at Mr. —— or Mrs. ——, while they are performing, will ex-

claim to each other, "Is it possible?" Gentle reader! it is true.

First on the list of expenses, I will place the *Proprietor*. He is of course a Capitalist, and if he did not actually build, at all events, has bought the edifice, and paid for it a handsome sum of money, on the rent of which he depends for the interest on his Capital. So long as that is paid, and everything goes on steadily, he has nothing more to do, for his share of the plunder, than occasionally to disburse a good portion of it in repairs; and whenever he meets the *Lessee*, shake him cordially but patronizingly by the hand. These are all his positive *duties*; but some *Proprietors* think proper to make themselves very agreeable to the Stage Manager and other Officials, who always feel flattered by any notice from such a magnificent personage, and perhaps take a good deal more care of the property on that very account.*

The second person to be considered, is the *Lessee and Manager*—the Magnus Apollo of the establishment—in whom, of course, is invested unlimited power. If he is a wise man, he never embroils himself with any body—but, whilst he directs everything as he pleases, makes a cat's-paw of his Stage Manager, Prompter, or Treasurer, when there is any probability of disturbance.

* "Kiss the nurse for the sake of the child," is an old proverb, and a very trite one.

The Manager is the only party whom the success or failure of an undertaking of this kind can possibly affect to any extent. The failure of a season may entirely ruin him—or a successful one may realize for him a moderate fortune; owing to circumstances, this latter result is not of very frequent occurrence—(but of this anon.) There is one thing which ought to be, though it is not often, strictly observed; the Manager should never, on any pretence, perform upon the Stage; if he discharges his numerous and arduous duties correctly, he does enough for any one system of humanity. With these upon his mind, it is impossible for him to devote much time to study—and the mere fact of his levelling himself with his hired performers, strips him of some part of the authority he ought to hold over them. On the Acting Manager devolves the duty of making all engagements on account of the Theatre. When a Star engagement is considered of advantage, the Manager arranges the terms; and when Stock Performers are necessary, he should invariably be guided by the opinion of his Stage Manager, in whom of course he places the greatest confidence. Should money be required beyond the actual receipts of the house, if it is not at his Banker's, the Manager should be a man of such known

probity and experience, that he meets with no difficulty in raising the needful in a legitimate and economical manner. Indeed, were it not absolutely necessary for the Manager to be intimately acquainted with the smallest minutiae of such a complicated machine, I believe that a man of commercial experience, with his punctuality and regular habits, would form the best model for the Manager of a Theatre. In fact, there are many instances, at present, of mercantile speculators embarking in the undertaking with success.

The Manager must be a gentleman—for he is constantly brought into contact with gentlemen of the very first class. One great secret for him to thoroughly understand, is, that he must never be under any obligation, pecuniary or otherwise, to any person in his employ. In a word, the Manager must be a man of untiring perseverance, of good address and tact, possessed of means sufficient to carry him through his undertakings, without embarrassment; and must make up his mind to devote the whole of his attention to his business. So long as he acts up to these rules, and regularly meets every demand upon him, his position is an enviable one; but, if he be not able to contend manfully with all the difficulties which beset him, no hell can be described more

terrific than the one he encounters upon earth, and the sooner he gives up the speculation, and directs his efforts to some other object, the better.

I have not yet done—*Lady Lessees* are now very common. In this case, my rule as regards acting must be reversed. The Lady must be an Actress of great popularity, and constantly keep herself in a prominent manner before the public, trusting the actual management of her affairs to a gentleman fully qualified for the task.

I will now draw some outline of that very important gentleman, *The Stage Manager*. Perhaps, upon this individual more depends than even upon the Manager himself—for all the tact of the latter would be of no avail, were he not properly supported by his Stage Manager. He should be a gentleman of good education, acquainted not only with the Classics, but able to read and converse freely in the French, German, and Italian languages. Either or any of these acquirements give him such an evident advantage over the matter-of-fact man, who is simply learned in his mother-tongue, that we are almost surprised Managers do not insist upon their functionaries, qualifying themselves for this office with superfluous college diplomas. With these accomplishments, the Stage Manager is enabled to make selections from the literature of foreign countries,

and present his audiences with any of the choice *morceaux* which are constantly produced in them—and which, otherwise, bide their time for translation, and are not known till they become common.

The Stage Manager must be intimately acquainted with every drama which regularly holds possession of the Stage—not only with the text, but be able, unhesitatingly, and beyond dispute, to arrange every situation called for in their representation. It is not so absolutely necessary that he be intimate with all the conventionalities; but his judgment must be such as to enable him to supersede them, if necessary. He has enough to do, and depends greatly upon the assistance of his Lieutenant, (the Prompter,) of whom he should make a careful selection.

The Stage Manager's duties are, to advise with the Manager, concerning all engagements for the Stage, making a very careful selection of the Ladies and Gentlemen he wishes to employ. Not encumbering the salary list with any superfluous talent, but taking great care to secure a sufficiency of performers, that in case of any secession from the Company, the loss of two or three individuals will not be felt seriously; this is his first duty, and much depends upon its execution. Of course, over every body behind the curtain he must hold supreme authority, and he must take care that his deputies,

whilst they are efficient, and behave properly, are never obstructed or baffled in the performance of their respective functions. When they are not able to accomplish this, his easiest and best method of acting, will be to remove them, and place others in their situation, who are more competent.

His Company engaged, the Stage Manager must then arrange his plan of operations for the season; and, having properly digested his Cast-book, so that in the event of his losing the services of any party, he can alter it without much inconvenience, he must, once a week at least, exhibit in the Green Room, the business cast for the week ensuing, and rigidly abide by his first determination, making it understood that the penalty for refusing a part, will be the instant dismissal of the refractory representative of Thespis. This determination, or firmness, on the part of the Official, will save him a great deal of trouble when it is once understood. I do not mention the punishment for drunkenness, as it is presumed the Manager has sense enough not to engage parties who are likely to be afflicted with that vice. It is one of the duties of the Stage Manager to enforce any By-law he may think proper to place in the Green Room, without any consideration as to whom the offender may be. Rank in the profes-

sion, or personal friendship, should never be allowed to interfere with the interests of the Theatre.

On the Stage Manager devolves the task of making out the daily bills, and during the rehearsals and performance, he should invariably be found upon the Stage, ready and able to detect and correct any error or misconception that may occur, and seeing that all parties attend to and do their respective business properly. To accomplish this, (although there is no objection to his being an actor, except, perhaps, the ruling passion,) the Stage Manager should never appear upon the boards, except in a case of great emergency. His leisure hours, with which he will not be much encumbered, should be devoted to the perusal of new plays, and selecting from them such as are likely to suit the establishment, taking care that, whilst he treats the public with every novelty, the dish is properly dressed. He should have the faculty of dramatizing, or, at all events, be able to contract or correct the efforts of any aspirant to a seat on Shakspeare's footstool.

Accomplished in all these various acquirements, the Stage Manager should have a thorough knowledge of all the expenses incident to the Stage, so that he may at once form a correct estimate of the

cost of any piece he may be desirous of producing.

If there is in the profession any one gentleman who comes up to the standard I have drawn, I am ignorant of his name or whereabouts. But I think that, with the exception of being linguists, Messrs. Barry, of the Park, Mitchell of the Olympic Theatre, New York, and my much respected friend, Burton, of the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, are duly entitled to the name of Stage Managers, who properly understand their business. Of the immense number who start for, and claim the honor, these are the only three whom I can place, and they run neck and neck towards the goal of superiority. Of course, it would be wrong to say that others of equal pace could not be picked from the crowd of distanced ones, if they only had a clear field.

Having disposed of the Stage Manager, the next Official I shall notice is the *Prompter*.

Concerning the onerous and responsible duties of this personage, play-goers in general are very much mis-informed—the common opinion of him is, that he is a mere fixture at the first entrance, who has simply to keep himself awake whilst he follows the course of a play, with the book in his hand, throws the word to an actor when it is required—whistles when a scene has to be changed, and rings a bell to lift or let fall the Green Curtain or Drop. Such,

indeed, was my own impression, when I first had conceit enough to fancy myself qualified for the situation. The very first rehearsal opened my eyes, and I found, to my mortification, that I had taken upon myself the most responsible, and at the same time the most unpleasant office in a Theatre, without having the slightest idea of its duties. How I managed to get through my first season as Prompter, I do not know, nor is it possible for me to describe the mental sufferings which I endured for those six weeks. I almost adopted the creed of the Universalists, whose very merry religious belief is, that Hell is fictitious, and all futurity bright and pleasant, whilst all their transgressions are amply punished by their sufferings in this present life. A pleasant belief enough to live in, but it is extremely doubtful to me, whether a man's prospects are so agreeable when he is about to shake off this mortal coil. The Prompter must be a man of very peculiar qualities—he must be well educated, energetic, sober, straight-forward, punctual and systematic,—well gifted with application, perseverance, and endurance. He must also have a thorough knowledge of Stage business, in every particular, as he is liable to be called upon to act as Stage Manager during his superior's absence; moreover, he is frequently consulted upon difficult points, by that dignitary. In

addition to all these, he must be blessed with a temper, which is proof against all excitement or irritation. In the course of his duties, he will be severely tried in this respect; Job was proverbially a patient man, but I doubt whether he ever acted as Prompter to a Theatre.*

The labours of the Prompter commence before the dramatic season, and, continuing without any intermission throughout, do not cease till after it has expired. No matter what difficulty arises, or what mistake is committed on the Stage—no matter who the guilty parties are—the Prompter is sure to be the first to be brought to task, and, if not directly at fault himself, he has frequently to stand patiently under the whipping which the real offenders receive over his shoulders. I can speak from my own experience that the easiest way is to submit to the imposition patiently, and not make the matter worse by grumbling at it; I have frequently by silence pleaded guilty to errors which I never committed, rather than by contradiction force myself into a lengthened argument upon the subject at fault. It is not merely with the Stage Manager that the Prompter gets embroiled, but he is the butt for all the discontented grumbings of every mem-

* The stage coach story of "Three blind nuns and a bolter," will here occur to many of my readers.

ber of the Company, without reckoning the artists employed, or even the Carpenter, who sometimes fancies he has a right to find fault.

With regard to his emoluments, the Prompter generally finds himself at the end of the season not much richer than he was at its commencement. The pittance allowed them, except in Theatres where liberal Stars are constantly appearing, is not anything like a compensation for the amount of labour they bestow in behalf of the welfare of the establishment.

The actual duties of the Prompter are so multifarious, that I cannot trespass on the limits of this work in more minutely describing them, than by stating that, in addition to watching narrowly both rehearsals and performances, he has to make out all the plots for the Carpenter, Property Man, and Call Boy, keep a private account of everything that occurs, make a report to the Stage Manager of everything that is wrong, and be able at a glance to detect any error on the part of anybody, and also be able to rectify it; whilst, though he should never be sent upon the Stage, except in cases of emergency, he must be competent to perform little parts at very short notices, as it will sometimes happen that he must be introduced into the Casts. Under his immediate control is the Call Boy, if he has one;

except in very large houses, I consider this young gentleman a nuisance, and can always get along with a little management better without than with him; and the Prompter has either to do a great deal in the way of copying himself, or see that the copyist (if there is one) of the Theatre attends to his business. But not to enumerate, he has the direction of every auxiliary, artist, and mechanic required for the Stage; and, in well regulated Theatres, his jurisdiction in this respect is never disturbed, or are his orders criticised.

Before I forget the young urchin, I will now describe the *Call Boy*, who, by-the-bye, like a post-boy, is sometimes a man. A model Call Boy should be a young lad, who can read and write pretty well, and being smart, active and intelligent, with a taste that way inclined, promises some day to make an actor. His *duties* are merely to keep at the Prompter's elbow wherever he may happen to be, do everything the Prompter orders him, and, minding on salary days that the Treasurer does not pay him twice over, to eschew the company of all his former dirty-faced companions, who pass their time in playing marbles, overing posts, &c. &c. in the public streets. Some of these Call Boys are funny little rascals, whose frolics are oftentimes very amusing to the full grown children round the establishment.

When I look at the *Copyist* of a Theatre, if he is not a very young man, with talent and energy sufficient to free him from his laborious duties, I sigh for him, and feel sorry at his hard fate. Most likely he is a gentleman, perhaps one who, whilst he enjoyed the sunshine of prosperity, befriended his present employer in some way or other, and is now receiving from his hands, the only return he is able to make him in the way of business ; these cases are not uncommon either in this or the legal profession.

Sometimes the constant task of copying other author's works, begets a taste for the drama, which develops itself in a play written by himself; and I can mention many cases of successful dramatists, who are compelled by hunger to copy productions far inferior to any efforts of their own—and, as a lasting blot of disgrace on the literary taste of America, make more money by copying, than compiling a work.

I grow unhappy whenever I reflect upon my own sufferings, whilst I existed for a long time in this, the grub state of the literary world, and thank heaven fervently, that I am no longer a drudge.

A Theatrical Copyist sometimes has nothing whatever to do, and at others, more than he can possibly accomplish—in either case, his emoluments are not of such an extent as to warrant him in launching into needless expences.

Having treated on the foregoing useful member of a Corps Dramatique, I am naturally inclined to follow up my remarks with an evasion from the direct track in favour of the *Dramatist*, who is not classed in the stock of any American Theatre at present, but upon the efforts of whose genius, more consideration ought to be shewn than there is—the poor devil who, after days, nights, weeks, and sometimes months of mental labour, produces a play, is doomed to more disappointment, vexation and insult, than the public at large are at all aware of. I will presume that he is poor, for were it otherwise, he would not have courage and philosophy enough to pass through the ordeal of torture, which he must submit to before his effort is placed upon the Stage.

It is not everybody who commences a Play, has talent and perseverance enough to complete it. One author may have the faculty of writing freely, but be perfectly unacquainted with Stage situations and effect. Another would-be Dramatist has in his brain a confused mass of striking situations, but is unable to carry out his ideas on account of his deficiency with regard to language. Some who start with prospects of leisure time to complete the task, are often carried from it by unforeseen accidents. Some find that they cannot spare enough money from their little stock to purchase pens, ink, and

paper, (Why don't people say "paper, pens, and ink,")?); and others (fortune's frolics are so whimsical), whose only stimulus was poverty, have ceased from their labours so soon as they have discovered the fact that there is no necessity for them. So that, at the first jump, the number of authors who accomplish the task, is only a small portion of the host of scribblers, who start with the idea that their names will be handed down to posterity with Shakspeare's or Kotzebue's. I will pass over all these, and treat only of authors who are actually Dramatists from the fact of having completed a Drama; that I may not give offence, I will call one simply Mr. ——. Bearing in his hand a roll of paper, which has been previously perused by an indefinite number of critics, he waits upon the Lessee, who receives him politely, and introduces him to his Stage Manager. This gentleman is very civil, and promises to read the manuscript without delay, appointing a future day and hour on which he will give him his opinion of it. That day arrives, is postponed, and postponed so often, that, if the author has perseverance enough to follow, he must at all events feel disheartened as to the fate of his play, and be fully prepared for the answer which nine times out of ten he is sure to receive. "This is an excellent play, Mr. —, an excellent play, and does your genius great credit; but

“really, my dear Sir, the business of the Theatre
“is arranged for so far a-head, that it is impossible
“for me to give you any further encouragement at
“present.” This small box of ointment rather ir-
ritates than soothes the itching sore for dramatic
honors with which the poor fellow is tormented, and,
after a great deal of delay and trouble in recovering
his manuscript, he repeats the application to another
house, only to be tormented with the same result.

Of the number of Mr. ——’s who start in the
race but few come within the distance post, or
(dropping the language of the turf) actually have
their dramas placed upon the stage, so many events
occur to baffle their arrangements that scarcely one
in twenty of them ever have the pleasure of reading
their names upon a playbill. Mr. —— whose indo-
mitable perseverance has carried him through all
opposing difficulties, just at the moment when *he* is
about to give up the task in despair, is astonished
by a friendly note, informing him that, with some
curtailments and alterations which will improve it
amazingly, his play will be produced at the ——
Theatre. His faint hopes are now revived stronger
than ever—he goes to bed that evening dreaming
all sorts of things, and wondering what kind of
appearance he shall make when, as a matter of
course, he is called to the footlights,—and gets up in

the morning to read in the newspapers that the Theatre was burnt down during the night.* Mr. — is now more convinced than ever that he is a shining light and is destined to illuminate the dramatic world ; his previously mentioned perseverance prompts him to make another effort, the result of which is, that, after the curtailments and alterations, and amidst sneers and remarks of a host of envious spirits, something, which he is hardly able to swear to as his production, is placed upon the stage ; and if there is any applause, either the Manager remarks that he has made some interpolations, or the actor claims the round as one intended for the superior manner in which he delivered the successful passage. Mr. — not being hitherto known, his drama does not meet with unprecedented success. Perhaps he gets some small (very small) † remuneration.

*Something similar to this was my own fate when, in 1845, the Bowery Theatre was reduced to ashes, and my own attic, next door to it, formed part of the conflagration. The whole of my effects, including books and MSS., made fuel for the flames. No, I am exaggerating, I did not lose *everything*, for two shirts and one pocket handkerchief happened to be at the washerwoman's, or rather at an establishment which then existed in the Bowery, where gentlemen's clothes were washed and torn to pieces by steam. I knew the proprietor well; he was a 'cute Yankee, but had some good points. One was, that he always considered one of my jokes an equivalent for sixpence; which was very convenient to me. He gave active employment to about fifty strapping Hibernian women, and, for the accommodation of the owners of solitary garments, beds were laid upon the premises, in which the happy man might repose for half an hour, whilst his shirt was in the mill. No smoking was allowed though.

† Two dollars was the amount I received for the first farce of mine which ever was played. This included piece and parts; and an opposition copyist who had reduced his charge for labour, might have demanded five dollars.

ration from the Manager, and, if he is not so disgusted with the manner in which he has been treated, as to vow never to write any more, he still goes on, persevering and plodding, till some lucky chance again brings him into notice. He finds, as he ascends the ladder of fame, that the steps get gradually shorter and less difficult, as, one by one, he mounts them; till, after years of toil, the society of the dramatist is sought instead of avoided, and he is solicited, nay entreated, to place his efforts on the stage of the very Theatre in which he had been previously considered as a maniac adventurer. In the midst of his misery, there is one bright prospect for the poor dramatist, based upon the fact, that, in the most palmy days of the Drama, he was not only deservedly considered as an essential part of the machinery of a Theatre, but, viewed by society in his proper character, an ornament to the literature of the country which gave him birth. He lives in the hope that the prosperity of times bygone, may, before long, be revived; when men will regain possession of that stage which has been wrested from them by monkeys; when audiences will be attracted by the play and its merits, instead of the players and their peculiarities. This effected, as it only can be, by a liberal inducement being held out to authors for the production of new pieces, will be

the only step which can ever save the British stage from inevitable destruction.

Returning to the description of the parties more immediately connected with the stage, I will mention the *Scenic Artist* as an important personage. This branch of the business must be entrusted to the management of an artist whose proficiency is peculiar. His knowledge and faculties cannot be acquired by intuition, like other branches of his art; the knack of making unseemly daubs appear at a distance like beautifully delineated pictures, is only possessed by predeliction. Put the scene painter to any other branch of his profession, and the product of his labours would have a very unseemly appearance, but, viewed as they are in a distant perspective, the eye is at once struck with delight at the scenes which are portrayed upon the canvass.

View him at his work, you would hardly believe that it lay in the power of soap and water, and a few clothes, to transmogrify him into a gentleman, from the dirty looking ruffian he appears in the paint gallery. Only imagine an athletic looking man, with a nautical shirt and duck pantaloons, which have never been washed since the day they were made, his feet encased in worn-out boots or slippers; thatch this individual with a straw hat, and daub him all over with streaks of different colored ochres, and

you have a correct idea of the Artist of — Theatre. Yet these are, all of them, well educated, well behaved men, and are liberally paid for their labours. Next in the ranks stands the *Carpenter and Machinist*, who, in addition to being an able workman at his craft, must be able to invent or contrive all the numerous machinery connected with the stage. In melo-dramatic establishments, much dependence is placed upon this individual; not only must his work be so substantial, as not to jeopard the lives and limbs of the actors, but oftentimes the success of a piece depends entirely upon the manner in which the necessary machinery works when brought into play. At night the carpenter has numerous auxiliaries for shifting the scenes, &c., and in the day time he has quite enough to do to keep the whole in repair.

Another very useful member of the Company, who is never seen by the audience, is the *Property Man*, to whom is entrusted the duty of providing all the necessary furniture and properties for the use of the stage; he must be a genius of a peculiar nature, a sort of Jack-of-all-trades, and master of them all; no matter what is required, he is expected either to beg, buy, borrow or steal it, and oftentimes, has to display his taste in the manufacture of inanimate animal objects, from a mouse to an elephant.

I can assure you he has a busy time of it, and good ones are scarce.

In addition to all the foregoing, there are numerous auxiliaries, whose services are absolutely necessary, and whose respective appellations at once describe their duties. The Wardrobe Man, the Gas Man, the Dressers (male and female), the Watchman and the Stage door Keepers, have each their departments to attend to, and frequently the additional labour of others not enumerated is necessary.

I must not forget to class amongst the Officers of a Theatre that very important gentleman the *Treasurer*—he is the man with whom the public at large are most intimately acquainted. He does not properly belong to the profession, although from his intimate association with the actors, he is sometimes considered as one of them—indeed it costs you just as much to see this £. s. d. man, as you pay for the whole exhibition mentioned in the bills. Go to the Box Office in the morning if you would see the cool indifference with which he invariably treats you and your money—there is the Box sheet; if you want any seats that are disengaged, you can secure them by paying the money; or take a small coin between your fingers at night, and watch through the little circular hole how he examines it before he gives you the equivalent. He has no

time for compliments, so never thinks of paying them to you. Every body knows what a Treasurer is, so I will pass him over and conclude the list of employees by mentioning the Door-keepers, Box-keepers and Policemen, all of whom may be seen at their various vocations, by any body who is inclined to patronize

THE ACTORS.

“Oh! there be players, and I have seen them play.” Very true, friend William, and there are many I never want to see play again. I will not dwell upon their faults. Books enough have been already written upon the subject of the Drama, which, in my opinion, indulge too freely in personal censure. The careful reader will at once perceive that in no one instance are individuals even hinted at throughout these pages; neither are the virtues of the influential Star painted in glowing colors, nor his private character probed, for the discovery of blemishes—names are not mentioned. The pen, taken up in a spirit of good nature, shall inflict no wound upon any one, my object being to amuse all and distress none.

A Company of Actors requires a great deal of care in the selection—the wants of the Manager should be satisfied in such a manner, that, whilst he

is enlisting into his ranks a variety of talent of different degrees and denominations, the parties should, each of them, possess sufficient intrinsic merit to qualify them for a higher rank in the profession than they at the time occupy—as no season ever passes over without some accident occurring, which enables the industrious and well conducted young man to prove to himself that he has not reached the highest rank he is qualified for.

Those who have only seen them upon the Stage, can have but a very remote idea of what an Actor really is. Viewed from the benches, with a row of strong foot-lights reflecting upon him, the Actor appears to the very best advantage. See him emerge from the Stage-door and quietly walk to his lodgings, you do not thank any body who informs you that the care-worn, shabby-genteel young man, he points out to you, is the same, who, on the previous evening, made you hold your sides with a very agony of laughter, at his merry looks, and still more merry doings—the paint is washed off, and you are disappointed in the reality; there is no poetry in his appearance. Struck with amazement, you follow him with your eye, and watch his entrance into some second or third rate tavern—he boards there, and if he is a prudent man, setting some value on his professional reputation, is not to be found tarrying

in the bar-room, but secretes himself in his own chamber. This is my candid advice to all Actors,—do not mix too much with the Citizens! Your society may be courted by some of them, but, depend upon it, 'tis to your prejudice, and not your benefit, you cultivate their acquaintance! An Actor should only be seen upon the Stage—when he is familiarly recognised off it, the charm is spoilt.

A very talented individual, who has written many *critiques*, under the signature D. G., writes, in his digest of "Wallace," that "Actors are made by accident." It is a true remark, as far as entering upon their profession is concerned, and bears somewhat upon the chances which occur to cause their promotion. Some of the best Actors in existence, are those whom the misfortunes of life have driven to the lowest depths of poverty, and who, by some accidental occurrence, have adopted the Stage as a means of existence. Actors of this class are generally well educated, and if their talents are dramatically inclined, at least speak grammar at their first outset, and, by perseverance and hard study, soon acquire the rudiments of Stage business. Some little probation in one Theatre will give them the great desideratum, confidence, and enable them to assume a respectable position in the next one they enter, and it lies with themselves to secure

their own advancement. The most approved method of making a good Actor is to place the aspirant in the lowest ranks, even amongst the supernumeraries, and, as his talent develops itself, raise him to parts of more importance; there is no disgrace attached to any man who, by his own exertions, has established his own position, and it must be a much more pleasant reflection to himself, than the idea that, as time rolls onwards, he has been dropping astern in the ocean of life.

Another class of Performers consists of young men, who, in the heyday of life, are struck with the Quixotic idea of at once ranking as first rate Performers. It is to this very common *monomania*, in the mind of youth, that we are indebted for Amateur Theatrical Societies, (of which anon), at which the young gentlemen hold forth very much to their own satisfaction, and having formed an intimacy with some Manager or Actor, tease them until they succeed in obtaining permission to make a failure upon the more public boards. The manner in which the tyro sets to work, to accomplish his wishes, is not at all uninteresting. Go upon the Stage he is determined to, at all hazards, and recognizing some member of the *corps dramatique* in his street costume, plots how he can scrape acquaintance with him. This accomplished, the aspirant (whom we will

designate Smallfish) takes a lively interest in the welfare of the Actor, (suppose we call him Bunce), who is not a very rich man, and does not reject the civilities offered, thinking that he has more money than brains, and that the connection of a reputable member of society will be of great advantage to himself. So soon as Smallfish can muster courage sufficient, he tells Bunce, confidentially, that he is conscious of having some histrionic talent himself, and that, if properly encouraged, he might be induced to go upon the Stage. Bunce, well knowing the wonderful effect of flattery, at once discovers, in his young friend's physiognomy, a strong resemblance to some Performer, who has been dead and buried long enough to defy anything like a personal comparison ever occurring. Jenkins, of the Theatre Royal, always ate his oysters from the shell, exactly in the same manner that Smallfish does at present. Smallfish's stride across the bar-room, when he has finished his repast, is precisely the same as that of the late Mr. Tomkins, when he exclaimed "Bring me no more reports." A greedy enjoyer of all these little remarks, Smallfish believes them to be true—*he is Bunce's best of friends*—the contents of his purse are at Bunce's disposal—all that he asks in return, is, that he may be allowed to show how strong his affection for Bunce is, by playing for his

Benefit. With a good deal of apparent reluctance, Bunce consents, well knowing that the verdant one's friends will flock to witness his performance. The point is settled—Smallfish has gained his object—he is to act—and Bunce, who was not thought much of before, immediately rises in the opinion of the public—so vigorously does Smallfish labor in his behalf, asserting and proving that his friend Bunce is, at once, the best Performer at present in existence, and equally to be respected for his private virtues and jovial companionable qualities. “Bunce says this,” and “Bunce did that,” is the constant expression of Mr. Smallfish—no Actor ever existed like Mr. Bunce. The next important matter to be settled is, “What character would Mr. Smallfish like to appear in?” He has seen in his time at least a dozen Hamlets, but he does think that either of them embody *his* conception of the part. In fact, he is determined to treat the public to Shakspeare's Hamlet. Bunce, who considers that his friend is not qualified for anything beyond Marcellus or Bernardo, tries to dissuade him from the attempt, but being overruled by some pecuniary advantage, which is offered to him, at length looks at the matter in a different light, and does his best to perfect Smallfish in a *rôle* he is not too intimate with himself. The

rehearsals are strictly private and very tedious, but highly amusing from the absurdities the novice introduces. Time wears on, and the important night, after the longest week the aspirant ever passed, at length arrives, and the mere announcement that "the part of Hamlet will be sustained by a *Young Gentleman*, (his first appearance upon any Stage,") has drawn into the Theatre a number from the curious public, in addition to the friends and supporters of "the young gentleman." The audience are on the tip-toe of expectation, and in the regular course of time up goes the curtain—very little attention is paid to the first scene, and the public are glad to see it brought to a conclusion, that it may draw and discover the Court of Denmark, with Hamlet in the midst of it. Now, Mr. Smallfish's trouble begins. Dazzled by the sight in front of him, which he is foolish enough to meet full face, he has lost the nerve of which he thought he was possessed, and cannot open his mouth when his cue is spoken; seeing his difficulty and feeling for him, the good natured people who are upon the Stage, continue their parts, and the audience fancy that Mr. Smallfish's voice is not quite sufficient for the size of the house—then comes, "Seems, madam! Nay, it is," &c.; this cannot be shirked, and with the last effort of desperation, the poor devil speaks

the lines and feels much more at his ease; he then goes regularly forward with the part, his fidgetty movements at once betraying his entirely novel situation, and, after the usual three hours and a quarter, the curtain descends amidst the loud applause of Mr. Smallfish's friends, who almost wish to call him before them as a successful champion in the cause of the drama. Smallfish is a dangerously rich man,—that is, if we make the same proverb for a little property as a little knowledge; having a small independence of his own he has at present no occasion to resort to the Stage, but the habits he has acquired whilst courting the society of his friend Mr. Bunce, soon make his money disappear, and by a curious coincidence his credit has kept company with his cash. He is now thrown upon his exertions for a livelihood, and at once determining to turn actor, is engaged by a Manager, who values him for his wardrobe, and casts him for easy *walking gentlemen's* parts. He has gained his object at last—he is an Actor, and likely to be one for the remainder of his existence. So long as his clothes are in repair he is able to maintain his position as "*Walking Gentleman*," but, when they decay he falls back into the ranks, and is merely an "*Utility Man*" engaged to do anything or everything. . Poor Smallfish!

I cannot refrain from here making an extract from Wemyss' "Twenty-six years of the life of a Manager and Actor." At page 22 of the first volume of that work will be found a letter from an affectionate uncle who has been unable to divert his nephew from a determination to be an Actor, but gives him the following advice:

"Now that you are embarked in your profession, and feel so certain of doing well, I trust you will spare no pains to make yourself as respectable as you can, and of all things, as a player, avoid ever looking at your audience, but always at the person who addresses you on the stage, and whom you have in your turn to address. I consider this fault the greatest a man can be guilty of, and we find it only practised by vain, weak-minded men, who, fancy that their persons and their attitudes are alone the source from which they are to derive applause, instead of learning that it is the style of delivery, added to the feeling that the player portrays in his wish to impress his audience with the meaning of his author, that alone gives delight. You will be sure to discover this if you pay strict attention to good performers, such as John Kemble, Charles Young, &c. &c., and as you have had an excellent education, and are supposed not to want ability, I hope we shall find that you excel in whatever you undertake; for a man must never think of half measures,—his very soul must be full of whatever he engages himself in, whether it be in acting, or whether it be in amusement; whether in the counting-room, or behind the counter; whether as a sportsman in the field, or as a private gentleman enjoying the social conversation of his friends, it is alike in all; and the man who succeeds best, is he who is never absent, and only taken up with what he has immediately before him. I hope you will also see it is impossible to please without first studying and well understanding your author; therefore, before you play any

"new part, you ought to make a point of reading over the
 "whole play with studious attention, at least three times before
 "you attempt to commit to memory your own part, for you will
 "often find points that ought to fix your attention, in a second
 "or third reading, which would have been overlooked in a first
 "perusal, which should be considered only as a cursory review.
 "Think particularly of this, and always bear in mind that you
 "are playing for reputation, which will prompt you to act as
 "well before half a dozen people; as before a crowded audience,
 "The actors with whom you are playing, are sure to give a
 "right estimation to the line of conduct which is pursued in
 "this way, and must acknowledge it to proceed from a superior
 "mind. Try also to improve yourself in your temper, for it
 "often occurs on the stage, in cases of unruly displeasure on
 "the part of an audience, without the cause being in the Actor,
 "that a man who wants moderation and sense, is apt to show
 "spleen towards the company present, which must spoil his
 "style, be he ever so good a player."

Aspirants! consider this letter as addressed to each of you individually. Ponder over it, and profit by its advice; and if you wish to read some account of the checquered life which is in store for you, buy my friend Wemyss' book—not that this puff will benefit him, he having sold the copyright for a mess of porridge.

Another class of actors are to the manner born. It is needless for me to particularize them in any other ways than by remarking, that nature acts upon them in the same way as on the rest of the human family; firmly imprinting upon the mind of youth a determination to copy and emulate their parents, in whatever walk of life they may be

placed. Everybody must have noticed this *penchant* in children; and, in the dramatic world, it has the effect of securing for posterity a succession of talent of the very first class. Accustomed from their infancy to the ways of the Drama, in whatever branch of it we find these gentlemen, they are easily detected as more efficient than their compeers.

With regard to the Actresses, much the same remarks will apply to those who are *born* in the profession, who have a decided advantage over others, who adopt it from choice or accident. They all have to struggle through a course of life which the fastidious and saint-like have been pleased to term immoral. Faugh!!! All allowances being made, I do really believe that the charges laid at the doors of ladies of the profession are made without any reasonable foundation. My own experience has brought me in contact with many who, whilst their talents have secured for them the highest rank in their profession, conduct themselves in such a manner as to dumbfounder the most sarcastic, and whose private virtues might well be upheld as patterns for the imitation of the sex of which they form bright ornaments. I will mention no names; but I am personally acquainted with the circumstances of many families indebted

for their entire support to the unceasing exertions of some juvenile female, who keeps on the even tenor of her virtuous way, without regarding the sneers and insinuations of the babes of grace, who are pleased to term the stage immoral and all its accessories lewd.

In a respectable dramatic corps, qualified to represent the usual run of acting plays, there is, of course, a great diversity of talent. In many instances, a Manager does not consider his numerical force sufficiently strong with less than twenty male and female *artistes*, without reckoning novices and small-utility people. But full pieces are often produced, and very well performed, by a much smaller number; and the Stage Manager is often put to his wits' end how to double one part with another so as best to display the extent of his company, which he keeps limited, with a view to economy sometimes, and from necessity at others.

Among the adjuncts to a Theatre, the Leader of the Band and the Musicians in the Orchestra must be included as expensive items.

The reader may now amuse himself or herself by reckoning the expenses of a Theatre for one night, forming for its base the rent, lighting, firing, insurance against fire, salaries of manager, officials, actors, actresses, musicians, artists, and supernu-

meraries,—license, printing, advertising, wardrobe, wear and tear, lumber, paint, canvass, and other materials. When he or she has calculated this, and made some allowance for incidental expenses, they will be astonished at the amount, and agree with me that nothing but clever management and the strictest economy, combined with good luck, can make a profitable season for the Manager.

The regular Drama, as it is called, is just now in a rather unhealthy state. The aim of lessees is to fill their coffers, and they can only do so by pleasing the eye and the ear; the mind of the public cannot be attracted, till some very bold man risks his fortune in an attempt to foster a new school of dramatic literature; something in the piquant style of Sheridan, adapted to circumstances of actual existence at the present day; not that I wish to see the old authors entirely shelved, but the best of their productions will not bear repeating too often. Another thing which is essential to the welfare of Manager and Actors, is the total expulsion of Stars of every description, and this can only be accomplished by the production of a series of new plays.

I will now leave this subject, and enter upon one of more importance.

THE MORAL EFFECT OF A THEATRE.

A steady reflection has convinced me, that, in spite of all arguments to the contrary, a well conducted Theatre has a good moral tendency in any community amongst whom it may be located. It not only affords an agreeable and instructive amusement, within the reach of almost every body but, by the mere fact of its existence, distracts the public mind from baser pursuits. Who can have lived any time in a manufacturing town, in which no rational amusement is to be found, without having noticed scenes of debauchery which disgrace humanity, drunken men squandering their health and money, and (the natural consequence) their families starving; in places like this, the gin-shop, the pawnbroker's, and the jail, are amongst the most thriving public buildings. Let but some speculating Manager erect a Theatre there, and before long, the gin-shop will be turned into a library, the pawnbroker's into a Savings Bank, and the jailor's situation become a sinecure, together with that to the lawyer and the doctor. It is notorious that young men who are thrown upon their own resources, actually save money by passing their evenings in the pit of a Theatre, instead of a public bar-room—the price of admission is nothing in compa-

riſon with the ſums of money they would otherwiſe ſquander.

So much are they approved of by the Legislature of ſome countries, that Theatres are actually foſtered and ſupported, in ſome meaſure, by the Government itſelf, it being no mean ſtroke of political economy to tickle the people, who, for want of ſome ſuch method of employing their time, would perhaps diſcover their bondage and attempt to break its chains.*

A Theatre not only does good indirectly, by keeping its viſitants out of harm's way, but its advantages to ſociety are more manifeſt. Can anybody read the works of Shaksperc, Kotzebue or Sheridan Knowles, and ſay they have reaped no advantage from their ſublime ſentiments? Often have I heard from the pulpit, long extracts from the works of theſe authors, avowed as written by Dramatiſts, and commended to the Congregation by their ſpiritual Paſtors. In fact, many gentlemen of the clerical profeſſion, have actually *written* plays—aye, more than that, have had them acted. Need I ſay much more in favor of the Stage, to prove that I am right, in aſſerting that a Theatre has a good

* The French Government actually provide penſions for thoſe, who, in ſome old Engliſh Act of Parliament, are called, unceremoniouſly, "*Rogues and Vagabonds.*"

moral tendency. To back my assertion, I will quote from the *Montreal Pilot* of 31st August, 1847:

"*Theatre Royal*.—The task of noticing the transactions of this establishment has become to us a pleasant duty, from the conscious knowledge of the fact that by so doing we are calling the attention of our readers to that which whilst properly conducted, as it certainly is, becomes at once the source of refined amusement, and moral instruction. Innumerable volumes have been written upon the subject of Theatres and their tendencies, both *pro* and *con*. We take that side which maintains that their influence upon society at large, tends much towards improving its tone.

"*Ingenuas didicipe fideliter artes*

"*Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.*

"Ovid was right—we have noticed the fact in many communities like our own, that whilst some rational amusement has been spread for the entertainment of the public, the gross excesses of debauchery which would otherwise exist are entirely lost sight of."

Errors, it is true, may from time to time creep into the system, but their correction lies in the hands of the public themselves. Let them do their duty, and expel from the stage anything which has an immoral tendency, the moment it appears. No, better than that, let them desert the building whilst such exhibitions are going on, and the error will very soon correct itself.

PART II.

THE DRAMA IN MONTREAL.

THE history of the Drama in Canada, previous to 1847, I am totally ignorant of, and will confine my remarks to a subject which I am well acquainted with,—the history and progress of the present Theatre Royal, Montreal.

Whilst in Savannah, Georgia, in the month of February, 1847, I was engaged by Mr. Skerrett, as Prompter for his Theatres in Canada, and was to join him so as to commence operations at Hamilton on the 3rd of May. A deficiency in the circulating medium prevented me from fulfilling this engagement; and, in consequence of a subsequent one, I arrived in Montreal about the middle of June, to make myself useful, whilst Mr. Jones, of the Park Theatre, was here, and then to assume his situation. I found the Theatre in a state of forwardness rapidly approaching to completion; and, on the 10th July, Mr. Skerrett opened to the public this magnificent Temple of the Muses, which, in my opinion, although it has some faults in its construction, stands unrivalled on this side of the Atlantic as a

Provincial* Theatre, and reflects a great deal of credit upon Mr. M. J. Hays, the proprietor, for his enterprise, and the various artists for their several exertions. For a full description of this building, I recommend my readers to pay a dollar each for a view of its interior, which is calculated to accommodate comfortably about five hundred persons in the Boxes, eight hundred in the Pit, and eight hundred in the Gallery; the greater part of whom can have a good view of the stage, which is furnished with a moderate stock of very good scenery, painted partly by Mr. Hillyard, of the Park Theatre, but principally by my respected friend, the practical joker, Lamb.

A Montreal gentleman (whose name I am not acquainted with), who travelled Lake Champlain in company with me, will recollect telling me that Skerrett had refused one thousand dollars for the receipts of the first night. Ambitious, but misguided Skerrett! on no occasion, excepting during the engagement of the Viennoise Children, did the receipts of your Box-office amount to half that sum. The opening was postponed from the 3rd to the 10th July, when the public were feasted with an Opening Address by the Lessee,—the National

*The word "Provincial" is here meant to imply nothing more than it would in England, where it is understood to allude to cities remote from the Metropolis.

Anthem,—“Much ado about Nothing,”—a dance by Miss St. Clair,—and the farce of “Tom Noddy’s Secret.” J. Wallack (the veteran), by far the best actor I have seen for many years, was the *Benedict*, and Mrs. Skerrett, the *Beatrice*, of the evening. The performances went off with so much *éclat*, that, on the following Saturday, His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to countenance the establishment by a visit, to witness a repetition of the Comedy. These two houses, and Mr. Wallack’s second benefit, were the only ones worth recording during his engagement. Many of the other nights, the doors were opened at a loss; and it was only by the production of “Don César de Bazan,” that Skerrett was able to say that he made anything by introducing to the Montreal public the best Star he could command, properly supported by a talented company, many of whom were members of the leading Theatre in the United States. Wallack played for three weeks, and J. R. Anderson reigned in his stead.

This gentleman, though born upon the stage, is not so well known as his predecessor; but I have no doubt that time, and perseverance upon his part, will in due course place him, where he ought to be, at the head of a host of performers. I consider his *Othello* one of the most perfect pieces of acting I

ever witnessed (excepting the costume, which I do not admire, spite of all said to the contrary); and when the reader has an opportunity of criticising his *Hamlet*, he will be equally pleased with myself, —none the less for knowing, that it is not a made-up mass of old age, and cork, and cotton paddings, which personates the character. Anderson's success was not very great, certainly not equal to his deserts; and, at the end of a fortnight, he, with the Park Theatre Company, vacated their dressing-rooms for the accommodation of Madame Weiss's large family of Viennoise Children, who certainly did the Theatre good, and redeemed the fortunes of the Manager. They played for ten nights, when Skerrett took them to Quebec. None of them went to the bottom of the St. Lawrence, on either voyage down or up the river; and, whilst they were away, the Theatre was occupied by the Seguins (the only English operatic *troupe* who have ever been successful in America); they did not get many dollars in exchange for their notes, and, at the end of a fortnight, departed. The Viennoise Children again danced for a week, but not to such crowded houses as during their first engagement. A few struggles were then made by the skeleton of a company which still remained; and, after a losing business of about two weeks, during which some names were

announced for benefits, the season closed; and I resolved to ascertain whether there was any truth in the assertion, that Montreal was a cool place in the winter season. It is a well-known fact, that the number of pleasure travellers who visited Canada last summer was very limited; and this, with some ugly commercial difficulties which caused the citizens to keep their purse-strings closed, may account in some measure for the badness of Skerrett's business in his new Theatre. Let me hope that a better season awaits him for 1848.

The building did not remain closed long, before it was occupied by Alexander the Necromancer, who was able to do almost anything by slight of hand, but did not draw much silver from the pockets of the citizens. His tricks were really wonderful. One little circumstance connected with Alexander may be properly termed funny. He upbraided me for deceiving him into the belief that it would not be necessary for him to pay any kind of tax to the City of Montreal. Captain Wiley of the City Police, however, made him understand that unless he paid the sum of five pounds to begin with, and five dollars every night, his performances would not be allowed by the authorities. I have before me the schedule of taxes which can be legally levied by the Corporation, and the only ones which

I can at all apply, as concerning public amusements, are:—

Theatres.—An annual duty of £15 (above the assessment) on the Proprietor:—

Proprietors of Caravans of Wild Beasts.—To obtain permission of his Worship the Mayor, and pay £10 therefor, and five dollars for each subsequent day that the same is open."

The sum of fifteen pounds was paid by Mr. Skerrett in my presence, and what pretence they had for taxing the Herr I cannot conceive. He certainly was not a *Wild Beast*, much more a *Caravan*, unless indeed civic wit could construe the word in its literal sense "Caravan or Vehicle," and consider Alexander a vehicle of amusement. Spite of remonstrance the City funds were enriched by \$500; whilst Alexander was out of pocket considerably more by his visit to Montreal.

Since then the Theatre has been opened by various parties of Amateurs on fourteen different occasions, six times by the Officers of the Garrison—four times by the Garrison Amateurs—twice by the Canadian, and twice by two different parties of Gentlemen Amateurs. With the exception of a few benefits to individuals, these parties avowed as playing with the intention of placing their surplus funds at the disposal of the different charitable institutions of the

City. Their intentions were good. But the public of Montreal did not think proper to support them in their laudable enterprise. I am willing, from my own limited means, to provide bottles for every drop of medicine or cordial which is purchased with the nett proceeds, and I do not think that my exchequer will be much embarrassed; it however leads me to treat upon

AMATEUR THEATRICALS.

Upon Amateur Theatricals and Private Theatricals, I have two or three very different ideas; some of my opinions are favorable, and others averse to these exhibitions. I will get rid of my gall at once, by declaring that, as a professional man, I object to them, whenever they have the least tendency towards reducing the incomes of my brethren, which, in some communities, might be the result of a too frequent repetition of them.

Audiences are too apt to make comparisons, without considering that the same part, upon which the Amateur has spent three or four weeks' study, is often undertaken by the professed Actor at a very short notice, even whilst his attention is distracted by other study—this does harm—it lessens the attraction; the talents of the Actor are not thought

so much of as they ought to be—moreover, the Amateur himself, who, until he is initiated in the trickery of Stage effect, is a constant visitor to the Theatre, loses his sense of enjoyment, and can no longer be depended upon as a firm supporter of the establishment. Of course, I object to Amateurs playing with the idea of profit, and whilst I commiserate with them upon the losses which they incur, I laugh in my sleeve at the same time, thinking it quite right that they should be obliged to pay for their amusement, the same as if they rode any other hobby than the public Stage—'tis after all a vanity!

To speak more favorably of Amateur acting, I have, this winter, had a good opportunity of considering the subject, and I firmly believe that its tendency is good. The Theatre-goers, resident in Montreal, are not very numerous, and these amusements may be considered as setons, judiciously pushed in under the ribs of society, by Dr. Skerrett, to keep alive whatever little itching there is for dramatic entertainments, till he returns to feel the patients' pulses in the summer. Most of the performances, during this winter, have been conducted by Mr. De Walden; the use of his experience has been of great benefit to them, and any persons who visited the Theatre with an idea that they would be amused by some monstrous absurdities on the

part of the performers, were agreeably disappointed—none such occurred—in fact, there are few *Dramatic Corps* at present in existence which are able to compete with the Gentlemen who performed in the *Heir at Law*, *London Assurance*, and *The Rivals*, that is to say, take them as a body—in the two latter Comedies, particularly, the characters are mostly so essentially those of gentlemen, that the polished drawing-room manners, and easy unassumed behaviour of the Performers told to great advantage—they wisely eschewed anything of a heavy tragic character, confining their labors to these comedies, and farces within scope of their abilities. I can account in no other way, for the success of these gentlemen, than that their profession of arms is almost dramatic—in fact, it is impossible to hear the officer of the night challenged at the guard-house,

Sentry.—Halt! who goes there? (*bringing his musquet to the charge.*)

Officer (immediately halting).—Rounds!

Sentry.—What Rounds!

Officer.—Grand Rounds! (*taking a pinch of snuff with a good deal of sang-froid.*)

Sentry.—Stand, grand rounds, advance one and give the countersign.—Guard turn out.

without reflecting that much such a scene occurs on the ramparts of Elsinore, every time *Hamlet* is performed at the Theatre Royal. These

constant exhibitions, in the course of their duty, must have the effect of entirely freeing the Military Officer from anything like stage fright, which jerks the heart of the Amateur into his throat the moment the novice meets the public gaze, unless he be case hardened in this manner, or is otherwise accustomed to being exposed to the observation of strangers as a Lawyer or Divine—either of the three professions furnish good materials of which to make Actors. The Officers of the Garrison were under the special patronage of His Excellency the Governor General and his Countess, who (with one exception) witnessed all their performances, and by the expression of their countenances, as they left the Theatre, were very well pleased with them, if I am anything of a physiognomist—the increased amount of the receipts on the later evenings, is reference enough to satisfy any enquiries as to how the public in general relished these amusements, and must always be gratefully remembered by Mrs. and Miss Hill, and Mr. De Walden, who took benefits under these auspices.

The corps of Garrison Amateurs consisted of stage struck Sergeants, Corporals and Privates, whose performances had this peculiarity that, with all their unavoidable effects, the funds of this party were a little more than sufficient to meet their

expences, whilst their superior Officers had to subscribe a respectable sum to liquidate their liabilities.

The two different companies of Gentlemen Amateurs both failed in meeting with encouragement; and as for the Canadian Amateurs, I have no data by which I can ascertain what their receipts were; on each occasion they were countenanced by His Excellency.

To each of these Dramatic Societies I have to return my thanks for the favors I have received at their respective hands whilst officiating as their Box book-keeper.

I may perhaps be allowed here to make a few

DRAMATIC CONFESSIONS.

The reader must not suppose that I am about to do penance; the only white sheet brought into requisition will be the paper on which these lines are transcribed.

A Dramatist has generally to confess himself guilty of plundering ideas from other authors. In fact, half my own reasons for reading any book are that in perusing it I may stumble over some new situation available for the stage, and which may be serviceable to me on some future occasion—'tis all very well to say that my studies are men and manners, but it is in reality new materials that I am in

search of. The human brain is not like the conjuror's bag from which he can produce an egg whenever he pleases, without accounting to his audience for the manner in which it entered, nothing emanates from the mind of a Dramatist but what is the fruit of a studious observation, brought to maturity partly by watching living follies and realities, and partly by reading works of imagination and fiction by other authors—hence comes the charge of plagiarism so frequently made, although some allowance ought to be made for the truth of the old proverb "*simila similis agit.*" - Take the City of Montreal, there is not a street within its limits which I have not at one time or another visited, for the express purpose of discovering matter for local farces or Pantomimes; the spot which appears to me capable of stage effect is visited continually, at all times, in the middle of the busy day, and in the quiet stillness of night, in all weathers, whilst the sun is blistering human nature, and whilst the thermometer is ranging below zero; these visits are never made in company, the Dramatist must be solitary, he returns from his walk and locks himself up in his room, jumps into bed (in the winter) to save the expense of firing, and there with a pencil, a few scraps of paper, and a volume of Shakspeare for a desk, dashes off those funny scenes which

the public suppose cannot be written except whilst the author is under the control of Bacchus; this is not the case as far as I am concerned, nothing tends to lower me so much in *my own* opinion as the morning conviction, which has sometimes, but not very often, told me that I was inebriated the night before. It's no use denying the fact; who would believe a Citizen of the World when he asserted that he never was drunk? I will spare my readers the infliction of a temperance lecture; but assert that it is impossible for any man who is a slave to liquor to write anything worthy the public perusal. The poor Dramatist is more liable to complain of fasting than feasting, and dyspepsia is a complaint he is never troubled with, nor are his dreams nightmares. Oftentimes the glories of the early morning which a poet rejoices in depicting, are unknown to him except by recollection, for the same economy which urges him in the winter to creep between the blankets for warmth, and to cook his solitary supper by the blaze of a rushlight, also compels him to keep between the sheets till long after the world at large have eaten their breakfasts, not merely to avoid the expense of that meal, but also to spare himself the mortification of appetite. He gets accustomed by degrees to the sliding scale of subsistence, and does not much care whether he is dieted

three meals a day or one in three days; oftentimes he thinks himself fortunate enough in realizing the latter luxury.

Necessity teaches the Dramatist a number of useful avocations; he is in general able to mend his own clothes, some are even so accomplished as to be able to wash their own shirts, (that is if they are pluralists in that respect which is not always the case;) Mr. Peter Snout may be quoted as an instance of happiness derived from the possession of a solitary shirt.

This is the best picture I can draw of a Dramatist struggling through life, but the pet Poet whose sublime works find their way to the boudoirs of the fashionable world is as different an animal as a lap dog is to a turnspit. (What has become of the breed of turnspits, and where have all the pug dogs of our infancy gone to?) He lives in clover, his sitting room, not connected in any way with his sleeping apartment, is well furnished, and at a magnificent table, groaning under the weight of literary matter, and articles of bijouterie, the Dramatic lion, robed in a many colored dressing gown, with glove cased hands, grasping the stem of an enormous Turkish hookah, sits enthroned in an easy chair which rather induces laziness than activity. He does not remain long in need of com-

pany, his levee commences with the fashionable morning, and ends with the fashionable promenade hour; his first visitors are those upon business, that is to say, his humble brethren (whom he employs to copy his MSS., or with whom he is in treaty for new ideas); his publisher, and, I was going to add, his various tradesmen, but that would be erroneous, the great creature can never spare time to treat with them, and the intercourse is carried on through the medium of a diplomatic footman.

The first aristocratic knock at the door is the signal for dismissing the men of business till the next day; and then come the real pleasures of the rich Poet's life; I have never enjoyed these myself, so can only imagine that the bewhiskered Sir Swellington Pump, who does not see the poor Poet whom he meets upon the stairs, visits the rich one with an invitation to dinner for that day three weeks, all the intervening time of the author being pre-engaged in a similar manner. I never heard of an author keeping a cook, or of his house being burnt down by a fire which originated in the kitchen chimney. No doubt Sir Swellington proposes a lounge, but most probably the Poet objects to this upon principle: it would never do to let the world know that such a genius as himself could afford to walk. He has a prior engagement,—a carriage

ride with a party of ladies; blue-stockings, who are afraid that the dear creature will either suffer from want of fresh air, or be a victim to damp feet, and so take him a ten-mile ride in a close carriage, with a warm brick wrapped up in flannel for each of his understandings. His toilet for this journey is a serious affair, everything depending upon the fall of a collar or the position of a curl, and, before it is completed, the carriage containing the happy females drives up to the door, and is criticized by the servant maids, who admire the calves of the footmen from their attics,—the young ladies who flatten their noses against the drawing-room windows of the neighbouring houses,—and the damn-all dandy young gentlemen, who pass their remarks upon the horses and the three different descriptions of females. After a proper pause, out steps the lion. He quite overlooks his tailor, who happens to be passing at the time, and enters a machine, which, although used by men of delicate constitutions, was certainly only invented for the accommodation of the softer sex. A man in a close carriage, faugh! I would rather ride in the wooden luggage-trough which used to swing below the slow-and-sure family coaches which formerly travelled the Brighton road, at the safe rate of nine miles an hour, not including stoppages. In this respect perhaps I am

singular, considering as I do that the essence of enjoyment of phætonic pursuits is the danger which ought to accompany them.

Many of my readers may perhaps ask, What has all this to do with the subject of the Drama? and beg of me to confine my remarks to the Swans of Avon, &c., without any deviation in favour of the *Bird with Two Necks* which is recorded as having been situated at the dangerous confluence of Lad Lane and Aldermanbury, London. This well-known hostelry no longer exists, having been pulled down by the Civic Vandals, who seem determined to destroy all *traces* of the former glory of the house of Chaplin. The Swan with Two Necks may be treated as classic ground, and a proper subject for the pages of this work. No drawing could convey a better idea of an ancient Theatre. Every writer upon the subject confirms me in my assertion, that, previous to the reign of Elizabeth (of ruff recollection), the players who strolled through the country invariably selected such a spot as this inn yard to perform in. And as Shakspeare's house is so interwoven with the best feelings of our nature that it is religiously preserved, I think that the Swan and some other inns have identified themselves so much with the early Drama, the stage, and mail-coaches, and their influence upon

society, that some steps ought to be taken to keep them from falling into oblivion. The good old days of coaching are gone by, never to return; although, wonderful to relate, the breed of horses is not yet extinct in Great Britain,—nor is it likely to become so, for facts have proved that horses are now of more value than before the railroads were commenced. This, combined with the advanced price of fodder, argues that the demand for them must have increased. I believe this to be the case; and that for one who accomplished a journey twenty years ago, at least ten travel upon the railroads, calling for the assistance of branch conveyances which did not previously exist. The proprietors of public conveyances have also learnt another secret, which has multiplied their business amazingly: I mean to say, experience has taught them that twenty men will pay six-pence for a ride, when, formerly, they could only persuade one or two to give a shilling for the same distance; they have not been slow in taking advantage of this development, and the only thing now necessary to promote the comfort and increase still further the demand for horses, is an amendment of Mr. Martin's Act properly enforced. I have no fear that a horse will ever be exhibited as an animal of curiosity, but must once more descend from the sublime to the literary butterfly, who bides his

time and is in due course buried in Westminster Abbey, when his works, bound in red morocco, are placed upon the upper shelves of fashionable libraries, and only referred to as specimens of the binder's skill, whilst stray leaves of his writings get into more general circulation through the medium of the buttermilk and trunk-maker. He has lived his *day*, whilst his less fortunate brother has also existed. Poor devil! he has suffered much—his whole life has been a struggle—sickness perhaps overtakes him, and he becomes the inmate of an hospital—there he lingers till death drops the curtain upon his mortal melodrama—there is no funeral pomp connected with his remains—if not enquired for by his friends, within a few hours after his decease, the body becomes a subject for dissection—and peradventure the Manager of a neighbouring Theatre claims his head, for which he has previously paid a consideration,* speculating that a future Hamlet will be able to ejaculate. “Alas, poor Yorick!” with much more effect if the skull, in his hands, is recognised by the audience as formerly belonging to the fellow of infinite jest, who so often amused them.

My advice to parents and guardians, is never to commend the pursuit of literature to their children

* I have devised my own to Mr. Sherrett, should he outlive me.

or wards, or, at all events, should they show any symptoms of the *furor scribendi*, try and disperse it by painting the dark side of the picture darker if possible than I have shaded it.

Whilst chewing the cud of this subject, I noticed in the papers, that one of its members intended delivering a lecture upon an interesting subject—and first ascertaining its whereabouts, I paid a visit to

THE SHAKSPERE CLUB.

Striking the average of all the clocks, whose hands I had an opportunity of inspecting, I entered the lecture room about three minutes before the advertised time of commencing and, finding it nearly empty, amused myself by making some quizzical remarks (to myself of course) upon the establishment, wondering, amongst other things, to what purpose the number of little desk-tables could be devoted, unless indeed, on the off-nights of the Shakspeare, the room was occupied by a Beef-steak Club, which boasted of six lecturers, each of whom discussed their subject, and a bottle of stout, upon these same tables; I was soon undeceived in this respect, for, one after the other, these tables were occupied by the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Club; not that I mean to insinuate that these gentlemen actually sat upon the tables, but upon

comfortable chairs in their vicinity. About a quarter of an hour too late to be called punctual, the lecturer of the evening arrived, and after skinning (or rather unskinning) himself from his fur habiliments, and making a few recognitions among the audience, produced from his pockets an edition of Shakspeare, a gold watch and a pearl-handled pen-knife, together with a very limited piece of writing paper—all of which assured me that I should not be entertained as I expected; for I went there prepared to hear *read* from a paper a well digested lecture upon the subject advertised (the various insane characters in Shakspeare's Plays) instead of which it was quite evident that we were to be treated to some extemporary remarks merely.

The lecturer was a very juvenile man, in appearance, with evident marks of intelligence and education. It really was delightful to find "so wise a head upon such young shoulders." His method of delivering his sentiments was elegant in the extreme, and well calculated to rivet the attention of an audience—in fact, he was eloquent.—But his style of reading quotations did not please me so well—to those accustomed to a proper delivery of dramatic literature his efforts were insipid, and did not give half the force and meaning of which the text was capable. He commenced with an apology for being

late, and another one for not having previously studied the subject as carefully as he should have done, and, after running the gamut of Shakspeare's virtues in the usual manner, at once jumped into the details, by mentioning a great number of characters throughout the poet's writings, each of whom he asserted was insane—the small fry were soon disposed of, but he dwelt much longer upon the sayings and doings of Lear, Lady Constance and Ophelia—in all of his remarks upon these, I coincided with him perfectly, but it was as much as I could do to control my amazement when he stated that Macbeth, Lady Mac and Hamlet were all partially insane—on these points, I most respectfully beg to differ with him. Macbeth, I consider, was an aggrandizing villain, and I will not allow the plea of lunacy to acquit him of the crimes he committed, even though the invisible dagger and raw head and bloody bones of Banquo are enlisted in his defence. With regard to Lady Macbeth, the lecturer must have remembered the defence of somnambulism, lately made by the Boston murderer, when he proclaimed her mad—and as for Hamlet, the whole tenor of the play will convince the careful reader he was perfectly sane, although to gain a purpose, he feigned insanity—after dilating upon the Prince of Denmark's character, and erroneously

charging him with wilful rudeness, towards Ophelia, whilst under the influence of real insanity*—the lecturer glanced at his gold repeater and rapidly brought his labours to a termination. I must here apologize to my readers for introducing this and some other extraneous matter. Yet, I still cannot close the subject without commending the Shakspeare Club, for their laudable design, and I have no doubt that a repeated visit to their soiree, will prove very much to

MY OWN BENEFIT.

Will my readers here consult their dictionaries, and, after duly defining that trisyllable, imagine its meaning quite the reverse. They will then know what a *lucus a non lucendo* a Theatrical Benefit often proves.

It is within the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Montreal that I did, last Christmas, take a Benefit at the Theatre Royal. The facts of the case are these: I was compelled by circumstances to winter in Montreal, and, scarcely knowing which way to turn to raise the wind,

* A little attention to the scene in which Hamlet upbraids Ophelia, will convince the reader that he does so merely with a view of hoodwinking the King and Polonius, whom he has detected watching their interview. I do not wish to run a muck with more learned commentators, but this is my opinion.

that element giving me no very gentle hint that it was absolutely necessary I should either change the climate, or—my coat, as neither of them was in accordance with the other; some evil demon persuaded me to take a Benefit, and I put my wits to work in devising the most probable method of making it a good one. In addition to the only theatrical exhibitions of which I could avail myself, I saw that it was absolutely necessary to offer the public some novel attraction, in order to secure their patronage. I did not owe enough in the city to warrant me in the idea that I could fill the boxes with grateful creditors, taking tickets as a sort of discount on the perspective payment of their respective accounts; and, after duly considering the propriety of a variety of schemes, such as,

1st. A Committee of Gentlemen detecting my merit, and presenting me with a Silver Snuff-box, inscribed, "Virtue its own reward";

2nd. A Raffle, in which every eligible maid or widow who purchased a Pit ticket should be entitled to an interest, myself the prize as a husband, provided the party winning could produce a pecuniary qualification;

3rd. A Ten-dollar Bill to the purchaser of the 200th Box ticket sold at the doors;

I resolved upon issuing the following Poster:

THEATRE ROYAL.

JOHN GAISFORD,

Prompter to Mr. Skerrett's Company, and Box Book-keeper for the Amateur Societies, most respectfully informs the Nobility, Gentry, and Public of Montreal, that his

FIRST ANNUAL BENEFIT

WILL TAKE PLACE

ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23RD,

Under distinguished Patronage;

On which occasion he will present, for the amusement of his Patrons, a Bill which, he flatters himself, *will meet with their approbation.*

Amongst other Attractions, he will present a

SILVER GOBLET

TO THE PERPETRATOR OF THE

FIRST ORIGINAL CONUNDRUM,

Which must be sent in to him, in writing, before 12 o'clock on the day of Performance. The various Enigmas will be read upon the Stage, and the applause of the Audience will announce the successful Competitor.

FULL PARTICULARS IN FUTURE BILLS.

This was the subject of general conversation for some time; and, at twelve o'clock on the eventful day, I had received about a hatful of Conundrums,

which, with their answers, are published at the end of this work; and, during the day, I employed myself in thinking how I could advantageously invest the balance of the proceeds, after satisfying the claims of my creditors here and elsewhere. A variety of channels suggested themselves for the disbursement of the anticipated plunder. Cottages had been looked at by a critical eye,—the respective value of various horses and dogs had been ascertained to a nicety; and great was my disappointment at finding that all my castles were without foundation; and, with the printer of the small bills looking down upon me from the Boxes in an ominous manner, it was as much as I could do to accomplish the task of reading the Couundrums. The cup was offered to the successful competitor, who did not make his appearance, and, at the suggestion of the audience, I appropriated it to my own purposes, and disposed of it by raffle on the following evening.

I must now draw this pamphlet to a conclusion, thanking sincerely the gentlemen who played for my benefit, the public who supported it, the readers and purchasers of this, and the public in general, for the many kindnesses I have received at their hands, and for any which they may afterwards be inclined to bestow upon me.

CONUNDRUMS.

Why is a pretty girl like venison?—Because she's a dear.

Why is a bug like a bosom friend?—Because it's very often a back-biter.

Why is an inn sofa like a Bible?—Because rogues lie and swear upon it.

When is a flirt most at home?—When she's gadding about.

Why are riches and beauty equally dangerous?—Because they are both man-traps.

Why is a queen-bee like a barber?—Because she cannot do without a comb.

Why is a man's head like an incurable disease?—Because he has it for life.

Why is the House of Assembly like the lips of a pretty woman?—Because it often encloses an unruly member.

Why are all theatrical professionals like drunken men?—Because they consider their best benefit a bumper.

Why is Charles Kean like one of the martyrs of old?—Because he is attached to a Tree.

Why is a shallow part in a river, with a party returning from a wedding, like a Prompter?—Because it is gay's ford (Gaisford).

Why is Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria like a fruitful olive tree?—Because she has a number of young olive branches around her.

Why is the beautiful and accomplished Miss Rosalie Hill like an eagle?—Because she mounts into the regions of

poesy with the same ardour that an eagle mounts into the air.

Why is John Gaisford like the proprietor of Dolly's chop-house?—Because he provides a splendid entertainment for his friends, and occasionally gives them a cup gratis.

Why are politicians like swine?—Because they must take up with the refuse.

Why are the present Ministry like the worldlings described in Young's Night Thoughts?—Because

“ Party-colored shreds of happiness
Make up for them a madman's robe;
Each puff of fortune blows the tatters by,
And shows their nakedness.”

What is the best illustration of *infra dig.*?—Two Doctors of Divinity digging at each other under the short ribs with their shovel hats.

When is a man's weight not equal to an ounce?—When he is not able to keep his balance after his sixteenth dram.

When may a maid be said to be under the influence of a curb and rein?—On her bridal day.

Why may every man in Scotland stand a chance of next year being Mayor of a city, or at least of being certain of being next in rank to that officer?—Because he is sure of being an alderman (Alderman).

Why is a dog getting its tail cut off like the feathers of a goose's wing?—Because it squeals (it's quills).

Why is Mr. Gainsford like a scarifier?—Because he's going to cup some one.

Why is Lord Elgin like an English banker?—Because, for the accommodation of his friends, he spares no expense, he takes notes on the sterling value of the Crown, and never permits an English Sovereign to be depreciated in either worth or currency.

Why is the keeper of a well-known chop-house in Montreal like Jacob's brother?—Because he is Isaacson.

Why is the Theatre Royal a fact worthy to be recorded in Starke's next Almanack?—Because, although there was a haze at its commencement, the stars were never obscured, and everybody said it was beautiful, whether or no.

The bees in summer make my first;
My second's the insect you hate the worst;
And I am the whole. Gents, are you burst?

Answer, Humbug.

What science does a cow in a dilemma remind you of?—Acoustics.

Why is a stone thrown from the hand like one of the performers of this evening?—Because its a missile (Miss Hill).

Why is a rejected lover like beef *à la mode*?—Because he is in a stew.

Why is an Actor re-called by the audience like a ship in a bay?—Because he is anchored, (encored).

Why is the proprietor of a certain newspaper like Sir Charles Napier?—Because he has a Fleet under his command.

Why is the proprietor of one of the Montreal newspapers like an extensive wheel-wright?—Because he keeps a Turner constantly employed.

If a river in Wales was fenced round with stone, why would it be like one of the Montreal performers?—Because it would be Dee walled in (Dewalden).

Why is the tail of a dog, when pleased, like old Driscoll?—Because it is waggish.

Why is a dancing-master like a clock?—Because he keeps the true time, duly crosses hands, is correct in his

minutes, marks his figures, and passes his hours amid pleasant sounds.

My voice was heard, ere yet the world began,
 And still I love to look on fallen man!
 'Twas mine to usher in the glorious day,
 That man shall bless when time hath pass'd away.
 I'm far more brilliant than the brightest eye!
 I'm far more gentle than the softest sigh!
 I'm lovelier far than is the poet's dream!
 And softly pure as is the limpid stream.
 I'm not the sun—I shun his rays divine;
 I'm not the moon—her light outdazzles mine.
 Then guess, fair ladies, nor impute the blame
 To me, if you cannot find out my name;
 And you, kind gents, nay, do not give it up,—
 Give me a chance to gain the silver cup.

Answer, The Morning Star.

Why is the mouth of the gentleman whose benefit it is this evening, like the adjoining store to Lyons' the tobacconist, in Notre Dame Street, Montreal?—Because at all times there's some snuff in its immediate neighbourhood.

Why is an East India elephant, three years old, of a light grey color, with the full quantity of teeth, and tusks two feet eight inches, like a piece of chalk with the ends cut square?—Because he can't climb a tree.

Why is Mr. Gaisford's silver cup like true love?—Because, though designed to attract the attention of many, it can only be bestowed upon one.

Why is a loud kiss like a lugger?—Because it is a smack.

Why are unpleasant truths like prison bars?—Because they are grating.

Why are the Mexican prisoners like the remnants of a newly-made coat?—Because they are specimens of a Taylor's cabbage.

Why is a soldier throwing away his weapons in the face of an enemy, like a waltz?—Because 'tis a *waisting* (wasting) of arms.

Why is a dried-up mill stream like a crownless hat?—Because it is not worth a dam.

Why should a fat lady avoid falling in love as she would the devil?—Because, should she get inflamed, she may go to blazes.

Why is the individual who gets the cup like the future Mrs. Gaisford?—Because he will be presented with your ugly mug.

What Tory is there would be acceptable to either of the political parties in the coming election of Montreal?—A victory.

Why is the last conundrum like Heuben's sack?—Because, when they opened it, they found it had'nt got the cup.

Why is Europe like a farm-yard?—Because it has a Turkey in it.

Why is the goddess of the morning like a lion?—Because she is Aurora.

APOLOGY.

In Addition to the foregoing, I received several other Conundrums, some of which, being decidedly immoral, were immediately destroyed; but to the friends who favoured me with several of a party political, temporary local, and decidedly personal nature, I must apologize for not printing them as it is not convenient for me to walk the streets in armour, beneath my clothing, and I have a great antipathy to legal proceedings.

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