Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving

by Bram Stoker

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REMINISCENCES

OF

HENRY IRVING

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1907

THE LAST PICTURE PAINTED OF HENRY IRVING FROM A PASTEL By J.

BERNARD PARTRIDGE (IN THE POSSESSION OF THE AUTHOR)

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF HENRY IRVING

BY

BRAM STOKER

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

MCMVII

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

JOHN LAWRENCE TOOLE

LOVING COMRADE AND TRUE FRIEND

OF

HENRY IRVING

PREFACE

Were my book a “life” of Henry Irving instead of a grouping of such matters as came into my own purview, I should probably feel some embarrassment in the

commencement of a preface. Logically speaking, even the life of an actor has no preface. He begins, and that is all. And such beginning is usually obscure; but faintly remembered at the best. Art is a completion; not merely a history of endeavour. It is only when completeness has been obtained that the beginnings of endeavour gain importance, and that the steps by which it has been won assume any shape of permanent interest. After all, the struggle for supremacy is so universal that the matters of hope and difficulty of one person are hardly of general interest. When the individual has won out from the huddle of strife, the means and steps of his succeeding become of interest, either historically or in the educational aspect—but not before. From every life there may be a lesson to some one; but in the teeming millions of humanity such lessons can but seldom have any general or exhaustive force. The mere din of strife is too incessant for any individual sound to carry far. Fame, who rides in higher atmosphere, can alone make her purpose heard. Well did the framers of picturesque idea understand their work when in her hand they put a symbolic trumpet.

The fame of an actor is won in minutes and seconds, not in years. The latter are only helpful in the recurrence of opportunities; in the possibilities of repetition. It is not feasible, therefore, adequately to record the progress of his work. Indeed that work in its perfection cannot be recorded; words are, and can be, but faint suggestions of awakened emotion. The student of history can, after all, but accept in matters evanescent the judgment of contemporary experience. Of such, the weight of evidence can at best incline in one direction; and that tendency is not susceptible of further proof. So much, then, for the work of art that is not plastic and permanent. There remains therefore but the artist. Of him the other arts can make record in so far as external appearance goes. Nay, more, the genius of sculptor or painter can suggest—with an understanding as subtle as that of the sun-rays which on sensitive media can depict what cannot be seen by the eye—the existence of these inner forces and qualities whence accomplished works of any kind proceed. It is to such

art that we look for the teaching of our eyes. Modern science can record something of the actualities of voice and tone. Writers of force and skill and judgment can convey abstract ideas of controlling forces and purposes; of thwarting passions; of embarrassing weaknesses; of all the bundle of inconsistencies which make up an item of concrete humanity. From all these may be derived some consistent idea of individuality. This individuality is at once the ideal and the objective of portraiture.

For my own part the work which I have undertaken in this book is to show future minds something of Henry Irving as he was to me. I have chosen the form of the book for this purpose. As I cannot give the myriad of details and impressions which went to the making up of my own convictions, I have tried to select such instances as were self-sufficient to the purpose. If here and there I have been able to lift for a single instant the veil which covers the mystery of individual nature, I shall have made something known which must help the lasting memory of my dear dead friend. In the doing of my work, I am painfully conscious that I have obtruded my own personality, but I trust that for this I may be forgiven, since it is only by this means that I can convey at all the ideas which I wish to impress.

As I cannot adequately convey the sense of Irving's worthiness myself, I try to do it by other means. By showing him amongst his friends, and explaining who those friends were; by giving incidents with explanatory matter of intention; by telling of the pressure of circumstance and his bearing under it; by affording such glimpses of his inner life and mind as one man may of another. I have earnestly tried to avoid giving pain to the living, to respect the sanctity of the dead; and finally to keep from any breach of trust—either that specifically confided in me, or implied by the accepted intimacy of our relations. Well I know how easy it is to err in this respect; to overlook the evil force of irresponsible chatter. But I have always tried to bear in mind the grim warning of Tennyson's bitter words:

"Proclaim the faults he would not show;

Break lock and seal; betray the trust;

Keep nothing sacred; ’tis but just

The many-headed beast should know.”

For nearly thirty years I was an intimate friend of Irving; in certain ways the most intimate friend of his life. I knew him as well as it is given to any man to know another. And this knowledge is fully in my mind, when I say that, so far as I know, there is not in this book a word of his inner life or his outer circumstances that he would wish unsaid; no omission that he would have liked filled.

Let any one who will read the book through say whether I have tried to do him honour—and to do it by worthy means: the honour and respect which I feel; which in days gone I held for him; which now I hold for his memory.

BRAM STOKER.

4 Durham Place,

Chelsea, London.

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I EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS OF HENRY IRVING

I

The first time I ever saw Henry Irving was at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, on the evening of Wednesday, August 28, 1867. Miss Herbert had brought the St. James’s company on tour, playing some of the old comedies and Miss Braddon’s new drama founded on her successful novel, Lady Audley’s Secret. The piece chosen for this

particular night was The Rivals, in which Irving played Captain Absolute.

Forty years ago provincial playgoers did not have much opportunity of seeing great acting, except in the star parts. It was the day of the stock companies, when the chief theatres everywhere had good actors who played for the whole season, each in his or her established class; but notable excellence was not to be expected at the salaries then possible to even the most enterprising management. The “business”—the term still applied to the minor incidents of acting, as well as to the disposition of the various characters and the entrances and exits—was, of necessity, of a formal and traditional kind. There was no time for the exhaustive rehearsal of minor details to which actors are in these days accustomed. When the bill was changed five or six times a week it was only possible, even at the longest rehearsal, to get through the standard outline of action, and secure perfection in the cues—in fact, those conditions of the interdependence of the actors and mechanics on which the structural excellence of the play depends. Moreover, the system by which great actors appeared as “stars,” supported by only one or two players of their own bringing, made it necessary that there should be in the higher order of theatres some kind of standard way of regulating the action of the plays in vogue. It was a matter of considerable interest to me to see, when some fourteen years later Edwin Booth came to play at the Lyceum, that he sent his “dresser” to represent him at the earlier rehearsals, so as to point out to the stage management the disposition of the characters and general arrangement of matured action to which he was accustomed. I only mention this here to illustrate the conditions of stage work at an earlier period.

This adherence to standard “business” was so strict, though unwritten, a rule that no one actor could venture to break it. To do so without preparation would have been to at least endanger the success of the play; and “preparation” was the prerogative of the management, not of the individual player. Even Henry Irving, though he had been, as well as a player, the stage manager of the St. James’s company, and so could carry out his ideas partially, could not have altered the broad lines of the play

established by nearly a century of usage.

As a matter of fact, The Rivals had not been one of Miss Herbert's productions at the St. James's, and so it did not come within the scope of his stage management at all.

Irving had played the part of Captain Absolute in the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, during three years of his engagement there, 1856–59, where he had learned the traditional usage. Thus the only possibility open to him, as to any actor with regard to an established comedy, was to improve on the traditional method of acting it within the established lines of movement; in fact, to impersonate the character to better advantage.

On this particular occasion the play as an entity had an advantage not always enjoyed in provincial theatres. It was performed by a company of comedians, several of whom had acted together for a considerable time. The lines of the play, being absolutely conventional, did not leave any special impress on the mind; one can only recall the actors and the acting.

HENRY IRVING BEFORE BECOMING AN ACTOR 1856

To this day I can remember the playing of Henry Irving as Captain Absolute, which was different from any performance of the same part which I had seen. What I saw, to my amazement and delight, was a patrician figure as real as the persons of one's dreams, and endowed with the same poetic grace. A young soldier, handsome, distinguished, self-dependent, compact of grace and slumbrous energy. A man of quality who stood out from his surroundings on the stage as a being of another social world. A figure full of dash and fine irony, and whose ridicule seemed to bite; buoyant with the joy of life; self-conscious; an inoffensive egoist even in his love-making; of supreme and unsurpassable insolence, veiled and shrouded in his fine quality of manner. Such a figure as could only be possible in an age when the answer to offence was a sword-thrust, when only those dare be insolent who could

depend to the last on the heart and brain and arm behind the blade. The scenes which stand out most vividly are the following: His interview with Mrs. Malaprop, in which she sets him to read his own intercepted letter to Lydia wherein he speaks of the old lady herself as “the old weather-beaten she-dragon.” The manner with which he went back again and again, with excuses exemplified by action rather than speech, to the offensive words—losing his place in the letter and going back to find it—seeming to try to recover the sequence of thought—innocently trying to fit the words to the subject—was simply a triumph, of well-bred, easy insolence. Again, when Captain Absolute makes repentant obedience to his father’s will his negative air of content as to the excellences or otherwise of his suggested wife was inimitable. And the shocked appearance, manner and speech of his hypocritical submission: “Not to please your father, sir?” was as enlightening to the audience as it was convincing to Sir Anthony. Again, the scene in the Fourth Act, when in the presence of his father and Mrs. Malaprop he has to make love to Lydia in his own person, was on the actor’s part a masterpiece of emotion—the sort of thing to make an author grateful. There was no mistaking the emotions which came so fast, treading on each other’s heels: his mental perturbation; his sense of the ludicrous situation in which he found himself; his hurried, feeble, ill-concealed efforts to find a way out of the difficulty. And through them all the sincerity of his real affection for Lydia which actually shone, coming straight and convincingly to the hearts of the audience.

But these scenes were all of acting a part. The reality of his character was in the scene of Sir Lucius O’Trigger’s quarrel with him. Here he was real. Man to man the grace and truth of his character and bearing were based on no purpose or afterthought. Before a man his manhood was sincere; before a gallant gentleman his gallantry was without flaw, and, as the dramatist intended, outshone even the chivalry of that perfect gentleman Sir Lucius O’Trigger.

The acting of Henry Irving is, after nearly forty years, so vivid in my memory that I

can recall his movements, his expressions, the tones of his voice.

And yet the manner in which his acting in the new and perfect method was received in the local press may afford an object-lesson of what the pioneer of high art has, like any other pioneer, to endure.

During the two weeks' visit to Dublin the repertoire comprised, as well as The Rivals, The School for Scandal, The Belle's Stratagem, The Road to Ruin, She Stoops to Conquer, and Lady Audley's Secret.

Of these other plays I can say nothing, for I did not see them. Lately, however, on looking over the newspapers, I found hardly a word of even judicious comment; praise there was not. According to the local journalistic record, his Joseph Surface was "lachrymose, coarse, pointless, and ineffective. Nothing could be more ludicrously deficient of dramatic power than his acting in the passage with Lady Teazle in the screen scene. The want of harmony between the actual words and gesture, emphasis and expression, was painfully palpable."

And yet to those who can read between the lines and gather truth where truth—though not perhaps the same truth—is meant, this very criticism shows how well he played the hypocrite who meant one thing whilst conveying the idea of another. Were Joseph's acts and tones and words all in perfect harmony he would seem to an audience not a hypocrite but a reality.

Another critic considered him "stiff and constrained, and occasionally left the audience under the impression that they were witnessing the playing of an amateur."

The only mention of his Young Marlow was in one paper that it was "carefully represented by Mr. Irving," and in another that it was "insipid and pointless."

Of young Dornton in The Road to Ruin there was one passing word of praise as an "able impersonation." But of The Rivals I could find no criticism whatever in any of the Dublin papers when more than thirty-eight years after seeing the play I searched them, hoping to find some confirmation of my vivid recollection of Henry Irving's

brilliant acting. The following only, in small type, I found in the Irish Times of more than a week after the play had been given:

“Of those who support Miss Herbert, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews are undoubtedly the best. Mr. Stoyle is full of broad comedy, but now and then he is not true to nature. Mr. Irving and Mr. Gaston Murray are painstaking and respectable artists.”

It is good to think that the great player who, as the representative actor of his nation—of the world—for over a quarter of a century, was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey to the grief of at least two Continents, had after eleven years of arduous and self-sacrificing work, during which he had played over five hundred different characters and had even then begun quite a new school of acting, been considered by at least one writer for the press “a painstaking and respectable artist.”

II

I did not see Henry Irving again till May 1871, when with the Vaudeville company he played for a fortnight at the Theatre Royal Albery’s comedy Two Roses. Looking back to that time, the best testimony I can bear to the fact that the performance interested me is that I went to see it three times. The company was certainly an excellent one. In addition to Henry Irving, it contained H. J. Montague, George Honey, Louise Claire, and Amy Fawsitt.

Well do I remember the delight of that performance of Digby Grant, and how well it foiled the other characters of the play.

Amongst them all it stood out star-like—an inimitable character which Irving impersonated in a manner so complete that to this day I have been unable to get it out of my mind as a reality. Indeed, it was a reality, though at that time I did not know it. Years afterwards I met the original at the house of the late Mr. James McHenry—a villa in a little park off Addison Road.

This archetype was the late Chevalier Wikoff, of whom in the course of a friendship

of years I had heard much from McHenry, who well remembered him in his early days in Philadelphia, in which city Wikoff was born. In his youth he had been a very big, handsome man, and in the days when men wore cloaks used to pass down Chestnut Street or Locust Street with a sublime swagger. He was a great friend of Edwin Forrest the actor, and a great "ladies' man." He had been a friend and lover of the celebrated dancer Fanny Elsler, who was so big and yet so agile that, as my father described to me, when she bounded in on the stage, seeming to light from the wings to the footlights in a single leap, the house seemed to shake. Wikoff was a pretty hard man, and as cunning as men are made. When I knew him he was an old man, but he fortified the deficiencies of age with artfulness. He was then a little hard of hearing, but he simulated complete deafness, and there was little said within a reasonable distance that he did not hear. For many years he had lived in Europe, chiefly in London and Paris. There was one trait in his character which even his intimate friends did not suspect. Every year right up to the end of his long life he disappeared from London at a certain date. He was making his pilgrimage to Paris, where on a given day he laid some flowers on a little grave long after the child's mother, the dancer, had died. Wikoff was a trusted agent of the Bonapartes, and he held strange secrets of that adventurous family. He it was, so McHenry told me, who had brought in secret from France to England the last treasures of the Imperial house after the débâcle following Sedan.

This was the person whom Irving had reproduced in Digby Grant. Long before, he had met him at McHenry's. With that "seeing eye" of his he had marked his personality down for use, and with that marvellous memory, which in my long experience of him never failed him, was able to reproduce with the exactness of a "Chinese copy" every jot and tittle appertaining to the man, without and within. His tall, gaunt, slightly stooping figure; his scanty hair artfully arranged to cover the ravages of time; the cunning, inquisitive eyes; the mechanical turning of the head which becomes the habit of the deaf; the veiled voice which can do everything but

express truth—even under stress of sudden emotion. Years after Two Roses had had its run at the Vaudeville and elsewhere I went to see Wikoff when he was ill in a humble lodging. In answer to my knuckle-tap he opened the door himself. For an instant I was startled out of my self-possession, for in front of me stood the veritable Digby Grant. I had met him already a good many times, but always in the recognised costume of morning or evening. Now I saw him as Irving had represented him; but I do not think he had ever seen him as I saw him at that moment. I believe that the costume in which he appeared in that play was the result of the actor's inductive ratiocination. He had studied the individuality so thoroughly, and was so familiar with not only his apparent characteristics but with those secret manifestations which are in their very secrecy subtle indicators of individuality grafted on type, that he had re-created him—just as Cuvier or Owen could from a single bone reconstruct giant reptiles of the Palæozoic age. There was the bizarre dressing-jacket, frayed at the edge and cuff, with ragged frogs and stray buttons. There the three days' beard, white at root and raven black at point. There the flamboyant smoking-cap with yellow tassel, which marks that epoch in the history of ridiculous dress out of which in sheer revulsion of artistic feeling came the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

HENRY IRVING AS DIGBY GRANT IN "TWO ROSES" Drawing made in his dressing-room by Fred Barnard, 1870

Irving had asked me to bring with me to Wikoff some grapes and other creature comforts, for which the poor old man was, I believe, genuinely grateful; but in the course of our chat he told me that Irving had "taken him off" for "that fellow in the Two Roses." Wikoff did not seem displeased at the duplication of his identity, but rather proud of it.

This wonderful creation in the play "took the town," as the phrase is, and for some time the sayings of the characters in it were heard everywhere. It was truly a

"creation"; not merely in the actor's sense, where the first player of a character in London is deemed its "creator," but in the usual meaning of the word. For it is not enough in acting to know what to do; it must be done! All possible knowledge of Wikoff, from his psychical identity to his smoking-cap, could not produce a strong effect unless the actor through the resources of his art could transform reality to the appearance of reality—a very different and much more difficult thing.

When Irving played in Two Roses in Dublin in 1872 there was not a word in any of the papers of the acting of any of the accomplished players who took part in it; not even the mention of their names.

What other cities may have said of him in these earlier days I know not, but I take it that the standard of criticism is generally of the same average of excellence, according to the assay of the time. In the provinces the zone of demarcation between bad and good varies less, in that mediocrity qualifies more easily and superexcellence finds a wider field for work. Of one thing we may be sure: that success has its own dangers. Self-interest and jealousy and a host of the lesser and meaner vices of the intellectual world find their opportunity.

When the floodgates of Comment are opened there comes with the rush of clean water all the scum and rubbish which has accumulated behind them, drawn into position by the trickling stream.

II THE OLD SCHOOL AND THE NEW

I

More than five years elapsed before I saw Henry Irving again. We were both busy men, each in his own way, and the Fates did not allow our orbits to cross. He did not come to Dublin; my work did not allow my going to London except at times when he was not playing there. Those five years were to him a triumphant progress in his

art and fame. He rose, and rose, and rose. The Bells in 1871 was followed in 1872 by Charles I., in 1873 by Eugene Aram, and Richelieu, in 1874 by Philip and Hamlet, in 1875 by Macbeth, and in 1876 by Othello and Queen Mary.

For my own part, being then in the Civil Service, I could only get away in the "prime of summer time" as my seniors preferred to take their holiday in the early summer or the late autumn. I had, when we next met, been for five years a dramatic critic. In 1871 my growing discontent with the attention accorded to the stage in the local newspapers had culminated with the neglect of Two Roses. I asked the proprietor of one of the Dublin newspapers whom I happened to know, Dr. Maunsell, an old contemporary and friend of Charles Lever, to allow me to write on the subject in the Mail. He told me frankly that the paper could not afford to pay for such special work, as it was, in accordance with the local custom of the time, done by the regular staff, who wrote on all subjects as required. I replied that I would gladly do it without fee or reward. This he allowed me to carry out.

From my beginning the work in November 1871 I had an absolutely free hand. I was thus able to direct public attention, so far as my paper could effect it, where in my mind such was required. In those five years I think I learned a good deal. "Writing maketh an exact man"; and as I have always held that in matters critical the critic's personal honour is involved in every word he writes, the duty I had undertaken was to me a grave one. I did not shirk work in any way; indeed, I helped largely to effect a needed reform as to the time when criticism should appear. In those days of single printings from slow presses "copy" had to be handed in very early. The paper went to press not long after midnight, and there were few men who could see a play and write the criticism in time for the morning's issue. It thus happened that the critical article was usually a full day behind its time. Monday night's performance was not generally reviewed till Wednesday at earliest; the instances which I have already given afford the proof. This was very hard upon the actors and companies making short visits. The public en bloc is a slow-moving force, and when possibility of

result is cut short by effluxion of time it is a sad handicap to enterprise and to exceptional work.

I do not wish to be egotistical, and I trust that no reader may take it that I am so, in that I have spoken of my first experiences of Henry Irving and how, mainly because of his influence on me, I undertook critical work with regard to his own art. My purpose in doing so is not selfish. I merely wish that those who honour me by reading what I have written should understand something which went before our personal meeting, and why it was that when we did meet we came together with a loving and understanding friendship which lasted unbroken till my dear friend passed away.

Looking back now after an interval of nearly forty years, during which time I was mainly too busy to look back at all, I can understand something of those root-forces which had so strange an influence on both Irving's life and my own, though at the first I was absolutely unconscious of even their existence. Neither when I first saw Irving in 1867, nor when I met him in 1876, nor for many years after I had been his close friend and fellow worker, did I know that his first experience of Dublin had been painful to the last degree. I thought from the way in which the press had ignored him and his work that they must have been bad enough in 1867 and 1871. But long afterwards he told me the story to this effect:

Quite early in his life as an actor—when he was only twenty-one—in an off season, when the "resting" actor grasps at any chance of work, he received from Mr. Harry Webb, then Manager of the Queen's Theatre, Dublin, and with whom he had played at the Edinburgh Theatre, an offer of an engagement for some weeks. This he joyfully accepted; and turned up in due course. He did not know then, though he learned it with startling rapidity, that he was wanted to fill the place of a local favourite who had been, for some cause, summarily dismissed. The public visited their displeasure on the new-comer, and in no uncertain way. From the moment of

his coming on the stage on the first night of his engagement until almost its end he was not allowed to say one word without interruption. Hisses and stamping, cat-calls and the thumping of sticks were the universal accompaniments of his speech.

Now to an actor nothing is so deadly as to be hissed. Not only does it bar his artistic effort, but it hurts his self-esteem. Its manifestation is a negation of himself, his power, his art. It is present death to him quâ artist, with the added sting of shame. Well did the actors know it who crowded the court at Bow Street when the vanity-mad fool who murdered poor William Terriss was arraigned. The murderer was an alleged actor, and they wanted to punish him. When he was placed in the dock, with one impulse they hissed him!

In Irving's case at the Queen's the audience, with some shameful remnant of fair play, treated him well the last two nights of his performance, and cheered him. It was manifestly intended as a proof that it was not against this particular man that their protest was aimed—though he was the sufferer by it—but against any one who might have taken the place of their favourite, whom they considered had been injured.

Of this engagement Irving spoke to an interviewer in 1891 apropos of an outrage, unique to him, inflicted on Toole shortly before at Coatbridge—a place of which the saying is, "There is only a sheet of paper between Hell and Coatbridge."

"Did you ever have any similar experience in your own career, Mr. Irving?"

"... I did have rather a nasty time once, and suffered much as Mr. Toole has done from the misplaced emotions of the house. It was in this way. When I was a young man—away back about 1859" (should be 1860) "I should say it was—I was once sent for to fulfil an engagement of six weeks at the Queen's Theatre, a minor theatre in the Irish capital. It was soon after I had left here, Edinburgh. I got over all right, and was ready with my part, but to my amazement, the moment I appeared on the stage I was greeted with a howl of execration from the pit and gallery. There was I

standing aghast, ignorant of having given any cause of offence, and in front of me a raging Irish audience, shouting, gesticulating, swearing probably, and in various forms indicating their disapproval of my appearance. I was simply thunderstruck at the warmth of my reception.... I simply went through my part amid a continual uproar—groans, hoots, hisses, cat-calls, and all the appliances of concerted opposition. It was a roughish experience that!"

"But surely it did not last long?"

"That depends," replied the player grimly, "on what you call long. It lasted six weeks.... I was as innocent as yourself of all offence, and could not for the life of me make out what was wrong. I had hurt nobody; had said nothing insulting; I had played my parts not badly for me. Yet for the whole of that time I had every night to fight through my piece in the teeth of a house whose entire energies seemed to be concentrated in a personal antipathy to myself."

It was little wonder that the actor who had thus suffered undeservedly remembered the details, though the time had so long gone by that he made error as to the year. No wonder that the time of the purgatorial suffering seemed fifty per cent. longer than its actual duration. Other things of more moment had long ago passed out of his mind—he had supped full of success and praise; but the bitter flavour of that month of pain hung all the same in his cup of memory.

How it hung can hardly be expressed in words. For years he did not speak of it even to me when telling me of how on March 12, 1860, he played Laertes to the Hamlet of T. C. King. It was not till after more than a quarter of a century of unbroken success that he could bear even to speak of it. Not even the consciousness of his own innocence in the whole affair could quell the mental disturbance which it caused him whenever it came back to his thoughts.

II

When, then, Henry Irving came to Dublin in 1876, though it was after a series of triumphs in London running into a term of years, he must have had some strong misgivings as to what his reception might be. It is true that the early obloquy had lessened into neglect; but no artist whose stock-in-trade is mainly his own personality could be expected to reason with the same calmness as that Parliamentary candidate who thus expressed the grounds of his own belief in his growing popularity:

"I am growing popular!"

"Popular!" said his friend. "Why, last night I saw them pelt you with rotten eggs!"

"Yes!" he replied with gratification, "that is right! But they used to throw bricks!"

In London the bricks had been thrown, and in plenty. There are some persons of such a temperament that they are jealous of any new idea—of any thing or idea which is outside their own experience or beyond their own reasoning. The new ideas of thoughtful acting which Irving introduced won their way, in the main, splendidly. But it was a hard fight, for there were some violent and malignant writers of the time who did not hesitate to stoop to any meanness of attack. It is extraordinary how the sibilation of a single hiss will win through a tempest of cheers! The battle, however, was being won; when Irving came to Dublin he brought with him a reputation consolidated by the victorious conclusions of five years of strife. The new method was already winning its way.

It so happens that I was myself able through a "fortuitous concourse" of facts to have some means of comparison between the new and the old.

My father, who was born in 1798 and had been a theatre-goer all his life, had seen Edmund Kean in all his Dublin performances. He had an immense admiration for that actor, with whom none of the men within thirty years of his death were, he said, to be compared. When the late Barry Sullivan came on tour and played a range of the great plays he had enormous success. My father, then well over seventy, did not

go to the play as often as he had been used to in earlier days; but I was so much struck with the force of Barry Sullivan's acting that I persuaded him to come with me to see him play Sir Giles Overreach in A New Way to Pay Old Debts—one of his greatest successes, as it had been one of Kean's. At first he refused to come, saying that it was no use his going, as he had seen the greatest of all actors in the part, and did not care to see a lesser one. However, he let me have my way, and went; and we sat together in the third row of the pit, which had been his chosen locality in his youth. He had been all his life in the Civil Service, serving under four monarchs—George III., George IV., William IV., and Victoria—and retiring after fifty years of service. In those days, as now, the home Civil Service was not a very money-making business, and it was just as well that he preferred the pit. I believed then that I preferred it also, for I too was then in the Civil Service!

He sat the play out with intense eagerness, and as the curtain fell on the frenzied usurer driven mad by thwarted ambition and the loss of his treasure, feebly spitting at the foes he could not master as he sank feebly into supporting arms, he turned to me and said:

"He is as good as the best of them!"

Barry Sullivan was a purely traditional actor of the old school. All his movements and gestures, readings, phrasings, and times were in exact accordance with the accepted style. It was possible, therefore, for my father to judge fairly. I saw Barry Sullivan in many plays: Hamlet, Richelieu, Macbeth, King Lear, The Gamester, The Wife's Secret, The Stranger, Richard III., The Wonder, Othello, The School for Scandal, as well as playing Sir Giles Overreach, and some more than once; I had a fair opportunity of comparing his acting over a wide range with the particular play by which my father judged. Ab uno disce omnes is hardly a working rule in general, but one example is a world better than none. I can fairly say that the actor's general excellence was fairly represented by his characterisation and acting of Sir Giles. I

had also seen Charles Kean, G. V. Brook, T. C. King, Charles Dillon, and Vandenhoff. I had therefore in my own mind some kind of a standard by which to judge of the worth of the old school, tracing it back to its last great exemplar. When, therefore, I came to contrast it with the new school of Irving, I was building my opinion not on sand but upon solid ground. Let me say how the change from the old to the new affected me; it is allowable, I suppose, in matters of reminiscence to take personal example. Hitherto I had only seen Irving in two characters, Captain Absolute and Digby Grant. The former of these was a part in which for at least ten years—for I was a playgoer very early in life—I had seen other actors all playing the part in a conventional manner. As I have explained, I had only in Irving's case been struck by his rendering of his own part within the conventional lines. The latter part was of quite a new style—new to the world in its essence as its method, and we of that time and place had no standard with regard to it, no means or opportunity of comparison. It was therefore with very great interest that we regarded in 1876 the playing of this actor who was accepted in the main as a new giant. To me as a critic, with the experience of five years of the work, the occasion was of great moment; and I am free to confess that I was a little jealous lest the new-comer—even though I admired so much of his work as I had seen—should overthrow my friend and countryman. For at this time Barry Sullivan was more than an acquaintance; we had spent a good many hours together talking over acting and stage history generally. Indeed, I said in my critical article thus:

"Mr. Irving holds in the minds of all who have seen him a high place as an artist, and by some he is regarded as the Garrick of his age; and so we shall judge him by the highest standard which we know."

At the first glance, after the lapse of time, this seems if not unfair at least hard upon the actor; but the second thought shows a subtle though unintentional compliment: Henry Irving had already raised in his critic, partly by the dignity of his own fame and partly through the favourable experience of the critic, the standard of criticism.

He was to be himself the standard of excellence! His present boon to us was that he had taught us to think. Let me give an illustration.

Barry Sullivan was according to accepted ideas a great Macbeth. I for one thought so. He had great strength, great voice, great physique of all sorts; a well-knit figure with fine limbs, broad shoulders, and the perfect back of a prize-fighter. He was master of himself, and absolutely well versed in the parts which he played. His fighting power was immense, and in the last act of the play good to see. The last scene of all, when the "flats" of the penultimate scene were drawn away in response to the usual carpenter's whistle of the time, was disclosed as a bare stage with "wings" of wild rock and heather. At the back was Macbeth's Castle of Dunsinane seen in perspective. It was supposed to be vast, and occupied the whole back of the scene. In the centre was the gate, double doors in a Gothic archway of massive proportions. In reality it was quite eight feet high, though of course looking bigger in the perspective. The stage was empty, but from all round it rose the blare of trumpets and the roll of drums. Suddenly the Castle gates were dashed back, and through the archway came Macbeth, sword in hand and buckler on arm. Dashing with really superb vigour down to the footlights, he thundered out his speech:

"They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly."

Now this was to us all very fine, and was vastly exciting. None of us ever questioned its accuracy to nature. That Castle with the massive gates thrown back on their hinges by the rush of a single man came back to me vividly when I saw the play as Irving did it in 1888, though at the time we had never given it a thought. Indeed, we gave thought to few such things; we took them with simplicity and as they were, just as we accepted the conventional scenes of the then theatre, the Palace Arches, the Oak Chamber, the Forest Glade with its added wood wings, and all the machinery of tradition. With Irving all was different. That "easy" progress of Macbeth's soldiers returning tired after victorious battle, seen against the low dropping sun across the

vast heather studded with patches of light glinting on water; the endless procession of soldiers straggling, singly, and by twos and threes, filling the stage to the conclusion of an endless array, conveyed an idea of force and power which impressed the spectator with an invaluable sincerity. In fact, Irving always helped his audience to think.

III FRIENDSHIP

I

That Irving was, in my estimation, worthy of the test I had laid down is shown by my article on the opening performance of Hamlet, and in the second article written after I had seen him play the part for the third time running. That he was pleased with the review of his work was proved by the fact that he asked on reading my criticism on Tuesday morning that we should be introduced. This was effected by my friend Mr. John Harris, Manager of the Theatre Royal.

Irving and I met as friends, and it was a great gratification to me when he praised my work. He asked me to come round to his room again when the play was over. I went back with him to his hotel, and with three of his friends supped with him.

We met again on the following Sunday, when he had a few friends to dinner. It was a pleasant evening and a memorable one for me, for then began the close friendship between us which only terminated with his life—if indeed friendship, like any other form of love, can ever terminate. In the meantime I had written the second notice of his Hamlet. This had appeared on Saturday, and when we met he was full of it. Praise was no new thing to him in those days. Two years before, though I knew nothing of them at that time, two criticisms of his Hamlet had been published in Liverpool. One admirable pamphlet was by Sir (then Mr.) Edward Russell, then, as now, the finest critic in England; the other by Hall Caine—a remarkable review to

have been written by a young man under twenty. Some of the finest and most lofty minds had been brought to bear on his work. It is, however, a peculiarity of an actor's work that it never grows stale; no matter how often the same thing be repeated, it requires a fresh effort each time. Thus it is that criticism can never be stale either; it has always power either to soothe or to hurt. To a great actor the growth of character never stops, and any new point is a new interest, a new lease of intellectual life.

II

Before dinner Irving chatted with me about this second article. In it I had said:

"There is another view of Hamlet, too, which Mr. Irving seems to realise by a kind of instinct, but which requires to be more fully and intentionally worked out.... The great, deep, underlying idea of Hamlet is that of a mystic.... In the high-strung nerves of the man; in the natural impulse of spiritual susceptibility; in his concentrated action, spasmodic though it sometimes be, and in the divine delirium of his perfected passion there is the instinct of the mystic, which he has but to render a little plainer in order that the less susceptible senses of his audience may see and understand."

He was also pleased with another comment of mine. Speaking of the love shown in his parting with Ophelia I had said:

"To give strong grounds for belief, where the instinct can judge more truly than the intellect, is the perfection of suggestive acting; and certainly with regard to this view of Hamlet Mr. Irving deserves not only the highest praise that can be accorded, but the loving gratitude of all to whom his art is dear."

There were plenty of things in my two criticisms which could hardly have been pleasurable to the actor, so that my review of his work could not be considered mere adulation. But I never knew in all the years of our friendship and business relations

Irving to take offence or be hurt by true criticism—that criticism which is philosophical and gives a reason for every opinion adverse to that on which judgment is held. When any one could let Irving believe that he had either studied the subject or felt the result of his own showing, he was prepared to argue to the last any point suggested on equal terms. I remember at this time Edward Dowden, the great Shakespearean critic, then, as now, Professor of English Literature in Dublin University, saying to me in discussing Irving's acting:

"After all, an actor's commentary is his acting!"—a remark of embodied wisdom. Irving had so thoroughly studied every phase and application and the relative importance of every word of his part that he was well able to defend his accepted position. Seldom indeed was any one able to refute him; but when such occurred no one was more ready to accept the true view—and to act upon it.

Thus it was that on this particular night my host's heart was from the beginning something toward me, as mine had been toward him. He had learned that I could appreciate high effort; and with the instinct of his craft liked, I suppose, to prove himself again to his new, sympathetic and understanding friend. And so after dinner he said he would like to recite for me Thomas Hood's poem The Dream of Eugene Aram.

That experience I shall never—can never—forget. The recitation was different, both in kind and degree, from anything I had ever heard; and in those days there were some noble experiences of moving speech. It had been my good fortune to be in Court when Whiteside made his noble appeal to the jury in the Yelverton Case; a speech which won for him the unique honour, when next he walked into his place in the House of Commons, of the whole House standing up and cheering him.

I had heard Lord Brougham speak amid a tempest of cheers in the great Round Room of the Dublin Mansion House.

I had heard John Bright make his great oration on Ireland in the Dublin Mechanics'

Institute, and had thrilled to the roar within, and the echoing roar from the crowded street without, which followed his splendid utterance. Like all the others I was touched with deep emotion. To this day I can remember the tones of his organ voice as he swept us all—heart and brain and memory and hope—with his mighty periods; moving all who remembered how in the Famine time America took the guns from her battleships to load them fuller with grain for the starving Irish peasants.

These experiences and many others had shown me something of the power of words. In all these and in most of the others there were natural aids to the words spoken. The occasion had always been great, the theme far above one's daily life. The place had always been one of dignity; and above all, had been the greatest of all aids to effective speech, that which I heard Dean (then Canon) Farrar call in his great sermon on Garibaldi "the mysterious sympathy of numbers." But here in a dining-room, amid a dozen friends, a man in evening dress stood up to recite a poem with which we had all been familiar from our schooldays, which most if not all of us had ourselves recited at some time.

But such was Irving's commanding force, so great was the magnetism of his genius, so profound was the sense of his dominance that I sat spell-bound. Outwardly I was as of stone; nought quick in me but receptivity and imagination. That I knew the story and was even familiar with its unalterable words was nothing. The whole thing was new, re-created by a force of passion which was like a new power. Across the footlights amid picturesque scenery and suitable dress, with one's fellows beside and all around one, though the effect of passion can convince and sway it cannot move one personally beyond a certain point. But here was incarnate power, incarnate passion, so close that one could meet it eye to eye, within touch of the outstretched hand. The surroundings became non-existent; the dress ceased to be noticeable; recurring thoughts of self-existence were not at all. Here was indeed Eugene Aram as he was face to face with his Lord; his very soul aflame in the light of his abiding horror. Looking back now, I can realise the perfection of art with which the mind

was led and swept and swayed hither and thither as the actor wished. How a change of tone or time denoted the personality of the “Blood-avenging Sprite”—and how the nervous, eloquent hands slowly moving, outspread fanlike, round the fixed face—set as doom, with eyes as inflexible as Fate—emphasised it till one instinctively quivered with pity! Then came the awful horror on the murderer’s face as the ghost in his brain seemed to take external shape before his eyes, and enforced on him that from his sin there was no refuge. After this climax of horror the Actor was able by art and habit to control himself to the narrative mood whilst he spoke the few concluding lines of the poem.

Then he collapsed half fainting.

III

There are great moments even to the great. That night Irving was inspired. Many times since then I saw and heard him—for such an effort eyes as well as ears are required—recite that poem and hold audiences, big or little, spell-bound till the moment came for the thunderous outlet of their pent-up feelings; but that particular vein I never met again. Art can do much; but in all things even in art there is a summit somewhere. That night for a brief time, in which the rest of the world seemed to sit still, Irving’s genius floated in blazing triumph above the summit of art. There is something in the soul which lifts it above all that has its base in material things. If once only in a lifetime the soul of a man can take wings and sweep for an instant into mortal gaze, then that “once” for Irving was on that, to me, ever memorable night.

As to its effect I had no adequate words. I can only say that after a few seconds of stony silence following his collapse I burst out into something like a violent fit of hysterics.

Let me say, not in my own vindication, but to bring new tribute to Irving’s splendid power, that I was no hysterical subject. I was no green youth; no weak individual,

yielding to a superior emotional force. I was as men go a strong man—strong in many ways. If autobiography is allowable in a work of reminiscence, let me say here what has to be said of myself.

In my earlier years I had known much illness. Certainly till I was about seven years old I never knew what it was to stand upright. This early weakness, however, passed away in time and I grew into a strong boy. When I was in my twentieth year I was Athletic Champion of Dublin University. When I met Irving first I was in my thirtieth year. I had been for ten years in the Civil Service, and was then engaged on a dry-as-dust book on The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions. I had edited a newspaper, and had exercised my spare time in many ways—as a journalist; as a writer; as a teacher. In my College days I had been Auditor of the Historical Society—a post which corresponds to the Presidency of the Union in Oxford or Cambridge—and had got medals, or certificates, for History, Composition, and Oratory. I had been President of the Philosophical Society; I had got University Honours in pure Mathematics. I had won numerous silver cups for races of various kinds—for rowing, weight-throwing, and gymnastics. I had played for years in the University football team, where I had received the honour of a "cap!" When, therefore, after his recitation I became hysterical, it was distinctly a surprise to my friends; for myself surprise had no part in my then state of mind. Irving seemed much moved by the occurrence.

On piecing together the causes of his pleasure at finding an understanding friend, and his further pleasure in realising that that friend's capacity for receptive emotion was something akin in forcefulness to his power of creating it, I can now have some glimpse of his compelling motive when he went into his bedroom and after a couple of minutes brought me out his photograph with an inscription on it, the ink still wet:

"My dear friend Stoker. God bless you! God bless you!! Henry Irving. Dublin, December 3, 1876."

In those moments of our mutual emotion he too had found a friend and knew it. Soul had looked into soul! From that hour began a friendship as profound, as close, as lasting as can be between two men.

He has gone his road. Now he lies amongst the great dead; his battle won; the desire of his heart for the advancement of his chosen and beloved art accomplished: his ambition satisfied; his fame part of the history and the glory of the nation.

The sight of his picture before me, with those loving words—the record of a time of deep emotion and full understanding of us both, each for the other—unmans me once again as I write.

I have ventured to write fully, if not diffusely, about not only my first meeting with Irving but about matters which preceded it and in some measure lead to an understanding of its results.

When a man with his full share of ambition is willing to yield it up to work with a friend whom he loves and honours, it is perhaps as well that in due season he may set out his reasons for so doing. Such is but just; and I now place it on record for the sake of Irving as well as of myself, and for the friends of us both.

For twenty-seven years I worked with Henry Irving, helping him in all honest ways in which one may aid another—and there were no ways with Irving other than honourable.

Looking back I cannot honestly find any moment in my life when I failed him, or when I put myself forward in any way when the most scrupulous good taste could have enjoined or even suggested a larger measure of reticence.

By my dealing with him I am quite content to be judged, now and hereafter. In my own speaking to the dead man I can find an analogue in the words of heartbreaking sincerity:

“Stand up on the jasper sea,

And be witness I have given

All the gifts required of me!”

IV HONOURS FROM DUBLIN UNIVERSITY

During that visit to Dublin, 1876, Irving received at the hands of the University two honours, one of them unique. Both were accorded by all grades of the College—for Dublin University is the University of the College.

Both honours were unofficial and yet both entirely representative. Both were originated by a few of us the morning after his first performance of Hamlet—before I had the honour of knowing him personally. The first was an Address to be presented in the Dining Hall by the Graduates and Undergraduates of the University. The movement came from a few enthusiasts, of whom the late G. F. Shaw and Professor R. Y. Tyrrell, both Fellows of the University, were included. As I had originated the idea I was asked by the Committee to write the draft address.

One of the paragraphs, when completed, ran as follows:

“For the delight and instruction that we (in common with our fellow citizens) have derived from all your impersonations, we tender you our sincere thanks. But it is something more than gratitude for personal pleasure or personal improvement that moves us to offer this public homage to your genius. Acting such as yours ennobles and elevates the stage, and serves to restore it to its true function as a potent instrument for intellectual and moral culture.

“Throughout your too brief engagement our stage has been a school of true art, a purifier of the passions, and a nurse of heroic sentiments; you have even succeeded in commending it to the favour of a portion of society, large and justly influential, who usually hold aloof from the theatre.”

The Address was signed with the names necessary to show its scope and wide

significance.

To this Irving replied suitably. I give some passages of his speech; for the occasion was a memorable one, with far-reaching consequences to himself and his art and calling:

“I believe that this is one of the very rare occasions on which public acknowledgment has been given by an Academic body to the efforts of a player, and this belief impresses me with the magnitude of the honour which you have conferred.... I feel not merely the personal pride of individual success which you thus avow, but that the far nobler work which I aim at is in truth begun. When I think that you, the upholders of the classic in every age, have just flung aside the traditions of three centuries, and have acknowledged the true union of poet and actor, my heart swells with a great pride that I should be the recipient of such acknowledgment. I trust with all my soul that the reform which you suggest may ere long be carried out, and that that body to whom is justly entrusted our higher moral education may recognise in the Stage a medium for the accomplishment of such ends. What you have done to-day is a mighty stride in this direction. In my profession it will be hailed with joy and gladness—it must elevate, not only the aims of individual actors, but our calling in the eyes of the world. Such honour as you have now bestowed enters not into the actor’s dreams of success. Our hopes, it is true, are dazzling. We seek our reward in the approval of audiences, and in the tribute of their tears and smiles; but the calm honour of academic distinction is and must be to us, as actors, the Unattainable, and therefore the more dear when given unsought....

“It is only natural in the presence of gentlemen whose Alma Mater holds such state among institutes of learning that I should feel embarrassed in the choice of words with which to thank you; but I beg you to believe this. For my Profession, I tender you gratitude; for my Art, I honour you; for myself, I would that I could speak all

that is in my soul. But I cannot; and so falteringly tender you my most grateful thanks."

The second honour given on the same day—December 11, 1876—was a "University Night." Trinity had taken all the seats in the theatre, and these had been allotted in a sort of rough precedence, University dignitaries coming first, and public men of light and leading—alumni of the University—next, and so on to the undergraduates who occupied pit and gallery. An announcement had been made by the Management of the theatre that only those seats not required by the University would be available on the evening for the public. What follows is from the account of the affair written by myself for the Dublin Mail:

"The grand reception given to Mr. Irving in Trinity College during the day had increased the interest of the public, and vast crowds had assembled to await the opening of the doors. A little before seven the sound of horns was heard in the College, and from the gate in Brunswick Street swept a body of five hundred students, who took the seats reserved for them in the pit of the theatre. Then gradually the boxes began to fill, and as each Fellow and Professor and well-known University character made his appearance, he was cheered according to the measure of his popularity.... All University men, past and present, wore rosettes. Long before the time appointed for beginning the play the whole house was crammed from floor to ceiling; the pit and galleries were seas of heads, and the box lobbies were filled with those who were content to get an occasional glimpse of the stage through the door. When Mr. Irving made his appearance the pit rose at him, and he was received with a cheer which somewhat resembled a May shower, for it was sudden, fierce, and short, as the burst of welcome was not allowed to interrupt the play. Mr. Irving's performance was magnificent. It seemed as though he were put on his mettle by the University distinction of the day to do justice to the stateliness of his mighty theme, and, at the same time, was fired to the utmost enthusiasm—as it was, indeed, no wonder—at the warmth of his reception. In the philosophic passage 'To be or not to

be,' and the advice to the players, there was a quiet, self-possessed dignity of thought which no man could maintain if he did not know that he had an appreciative audience, and that he was not talking over their heads. In the scene with Ophelia he acted as though inspired, for there was a depth of passionate emotion which even a great actor can but seldom feel; and in the play scene he stirred the house to such a state of feeling that there was a roar of applause. During the performance he was called before the drop-scene several times; but it was not till the green curtain fell that the pent-up enthusiasm burst forth. There was a tremendous applause, and when the actor came forward the whole house rose simultaneously to their feet, and there was a shout that made the walls ring again. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved, and cheer upon cheer swelled louder and louder as the player stood proudly before his audience, with a light upon his face such as never shone from the floats. It was a pleasant sight to behold—the sea of upturned faces in the pit, clear, strong young faces, with broad foreheads and bright eyes—the glimpse of colour as the crimson rosettes which the student's wore flashed with their every movement—the gleaming jewels of the ladies in the boxes—the moving mass of hats and handkerchiefs, and above all the unanimity with which everything was done. It was evident that in the theatre this night was a body moved by a strong esprit de corps, for without any fugleman every movement was simultaneous. They took their cue from the situation, moved by one impulse to do the same thing. It was, indeed, a tribute of which any human being might be proud. For many minutes the tempest continued, and then, as one man, the house sat down, as Mr. Henry Irving stepped forward to make his speech, which was as follows:

"'Ladies and Gentlemen,—Honest steadfast work in any path of life is almost sure to bring rewards and honours; but they are rewards and honours so unexpected and so unprecedented that they may well give the happy recipient a new zest for existence. Such honours you have heaped upon me. For the welcome you have given me upon these classic boards—for the proud distinction your grand University has

bestowed upon me—for these honours accept the truest, warmest, and most earnest thanks that an overflowing heart tries to utter, and you cannot think it strange that every fibre of my soul throbs and my eyes are dim with emotion as I look upon your faces and know that I must say "Good-bye." Your brilliant attendance on this, my parting performance, sheds a lustre upon my life.'

"At the close of his speech Mr. Irving seemed much affected, as, indeed, it was no wonder, for the memory of Saturday night is one which he will carry to his grave. Not Mr. Irving alone, but the whole of the profession should be proud of such a tribute to histrionic genius, for the address in the University and the assemblage at the theatre not only adds another sprig to the actor's well-won crown of laurel, but it marks an era in the history of the stage."

When the performance was over a vast crowd of young men, nearly all students, waited outside the stage door to escort the actor to his hotel, the Shelbourne, in St. Stephen's Green. This they did in noble style. They had come prepared with a long, strong rope, and taking the horses from the carriage harnessed themselves to it. There were over a thousand of them, and as no more than a couple of hundred of them could get a hand on the rope the rest surrounded us—for I accompanied my friend on that exciting progress—on either side a shouting body. The street was a solid moving mass and the wild uproar was incessant. To us the street was a sea of faces, for more than half the body were turning perpetually to have another look at the hero of the hour. Up Grafton Street we swept, the ordinary passengers in the street falling of necessity back into doorways and side streets; round into St. Stephen's Green, where the shouting crowd stopped before the hotel. Then the cheering became more organised. The desultory sounds grew into more exact and recurring volume till the cheers rang out across the great square and seemed to roll away towards the mountains in the far distance. Irving was greatly moved, almost overcome; and in the exuberance of his heart asked me seriously if it would not be possible to ask all his friends into the hotel to join him at supper. This being

manifestly impossible, as he saw when he turned to lift his hat and say good-night and his eyes ranged over that seething roaring crowd, he asked could he not ask them all to drink a health with him. To this the hotel manager and the array of giant constables—then a feature of the Dublin administration of law and order, who had by this time arrived, fearing a possibility of disorder from so large a concourse of students—answered with smiling headshake a non possumus. And so amid endless cheering and relentless hand-shaking we forced a way into the hotel.

That the occasion was marked by rare orderliness—for in those days town and gown fights were pretty common—was shown by the official Notice fixed on the College gate on Monday morning:

"At Roll-call to-night the Junior Dean will express his grateful sense of the admirable conduct of the Students on Saturday last, at Mr. Irving's Reception in Trinity College and subsequently at the performance in the Theatre Royal."

After that glorious night Henry Irving, with brave heart and high hopes, now justified by a new form of success, left Ireland for his own country, where fresh triumphs awaited him.

V CONVERGING STREAMS

I

In June 1877 Henry Irving paid a flying visit to Dublin in order to redeem his promise of giving a Reading in Trinity College. It must have been for him an arduous spell of work. Leaving London by the night mail on Sunday, he arrived at half-past six in the morning of Monday, June 18, at Kingstown, where I met him. He had with him a couple of friends: Frank A. Marshall, who afterwards edited Shakespeare with him, and Harry J. Loveday, then and afterwards his stage manager. The Reading was in the Examination Hall, which was crowded in every

corner. It consisted of part of Richard III., part of Othello, Calverley's Gemini et Virgo, Dickens' Copperfield and the Waiter, and The Dream of Eugene Aram.

He was wildly cheered in the Hall; and in the Quadrangle, when he came out, he was "chaired" on men's shoulders all round the place. Knowing how that particular game is best played by the recipient of the honour, and surmising what the action of the crowd would be, I was able to help him. I had already coached him when we had breakfasted together at the hotel as to how to protect himself; and in the rush I managed to keep close to him to see that the wisdom of my experience was put in force. Years afterwards, in 1894, I saw Irving saved by this experience from possibly a very nasty accident when, at his being chaired in the Quadrangle of the Victoria University of Manchester, the bearers got pulled in different ways and he would otherwise have fallen head down, his legs being safe held tight in the clutches of two strong young men.

That night he dined in Hall with the Fellows at the High Table and was afterwards in the Commination Room where I too was a guest, and where we remained till it was time for him to leave for London by the night mail. I saw him off from Kingstown.

His reading that day of Richard III. gave me a wonderful glimpse of his dealing with that great character. There was something about it so fine—at once so subtle and so masterly—that it made me long to see the complete work.

II

Thirteen days afterwards I was in London and saw him at the Lyceum in The Lyons Mail; I sat in his dressing-room between the acts. My visit to London was to attend the Handel Festival. I saw a good deal of Irving, meeting him on most days.

I may here give an instance of his thoughtful kindness. Since our first meeting the year before, he had known of my wish to get to London, where as a writer I should have a larger scope and better chance of success than at home. One morning, July

12, I got a letter from him asking me to call at 17 Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, at half-past one and see Mr. Knowles. I did so, and on arriving found it was the office of the Nineteenth Century. There I saw the editor and owner, Sir (then Mr.) James Knowles, who received me most kindly and asked me all sorts of questions as to work and prospects. Presently while he was speaking he interrupted himself to say:

"What are you smiling at?" I answered:

"Are you not dissuading me from venturing to come to London as a writer?"

After a moment's hesitation he said with a smile:

"Yes! I believe I am."

"I was smiling to think," I said, "that if I had not known the accuracy and wisdom of all you have said I should have been here long ago!"

That seemed to interest him; he was far too clever a man to waste time on a fool. Presently he said:

"Now, why do you think it better to be in London? Could you not write to me, for instance, from Dublin?"

"Oh! yes, I could write well enough, but I have known that game for some time. I know the joy of the waste-paper basket and the manuscript returned—unread. Now Mr. Knowles," I went on, "may I ask you something?"

"Certainly!"

"You are, if I mistake not, a Scotchman?" He nodded acquiescence, keeping his eye on me and smiling as I went on:

"And yet you came to London. You have not done badly either, I understand? Why did you come?"

"Oh!" he answered quickly, "far be it from me to make little of life in London or the advantages of it. Now look here, I know exactly what you feel. Will you send me

anything which you may have written, or which you may write for the purpose, which you think suitable for the Nineteenth Century? I promise you that I shall read it myself; and if I can I will find a place for it in the magazine!"

I thanked him warmly for his quick understanding and sympathy, and for his kindly promise. I said at the conclusion:

"And I give you my word that I shall never send you anything which I do not think worthy of the Nineteenth Century!"

From that hour Sir James and I became close friends. I and mine have received from him and his innumerable kindnesses; and there is for him a very warm corner in my heart.

Strange to say, the next time we spoke of my writing in the Nineteenth Century was when in 1881 he asked me to write an article for him on a matter then of much importance in the world of the theatre. I asked him if it was to be over my signature. When he said that was the intention, I said:

"I am sorry I cannot do it. Irving and I have been for now some years so closely associated that anything I should write on a theatrical subject might be taken for a reflex of his opinion or desire. Since we have been associated in business I have never signed any article regarding the stage unless we shared the same view. And whilst we are so associated I want to keep to that rule. Otherwise it would not be fair to him, for he might get odium in some form for an opinion which he did not hold! As a matter of fact we join issue on this particular subject!"

The first time I had the pleasure of writing for him was when in 1890 I wrote an article on "Actor-Managers" which appeared in the June number. Regarding this, Irving's opinion and my own were at one, and I could attack the matter with a good heart. I certainly took pains enough, for I spent many, many hours in the Library of my Inn, the Inner Temple, reading all the "Sumptuary" laws in the entire collection of British Statutes. Irving himself followed my own article with a short one on the

subject of the controversy on which we were then engaged.

III

In the autumn of that year, 1877, Irving again visited Dublin, opening in Hamlet on Monday, November 19. The year's work had smoothed and rounded his impersonation, and to my mind, improved even upon its excellence. I venture to quote again some sentences from my own criticism upon it as the evidence of an independent and sincere contemporary opinion. In the year that had passed not the public only had learned something—much; he too had learned also, even of his own instinctive ideas—up to then not wholly conscious. We all had learned, acting and reacting on each other. We had followed him. He, in turn, encouraged and aided by the thought as well as the sympathy of others and feeling justified in further advance, had let his own ideas grow, widening to all the points of the intellectual compass and growing higher and deeper than had been possible to his unaided efforts. For original thought must, after all, be in part experimental and tentative. It is in the consensus of many varying ideas, guesses and experiences—reachings out of groping intelligences into the presently dark unknown—that the throbbing heart of true wisdom is to be found. In my criticism I said:

"Mr. Irving has not slackened in his study of Hamlet, and the consequence is an advance. All the little fleeting subtleties of thought and expression which arise from time to time under slightly different circumstances have been fixed and repeated till they have formed an additional net of completeness round the whole character. To the actor, art is as necessary as genius, for it is only when the flashes of genius evoked by occasion have been studied as facts to be repeated, that a worthy reproduction of effect is possible.... Hamlet, as Mr. Irving now acts it, is the wild, fitful, irresolute, mystic, melancholy prince that we know in the play; but given with a sad, picturesque gracefulness which is the actor's special gift.... In his most passionate moments with Ophelia, even in the violence of his rage, he never loses

that sense of distance—of a gulf fixed—of that acknowledgment of the unseen which is his unconscious testimony to her unspotted purity....”

The lesson conveyed to me by his acting of which the above is the expression was put by him into words in his Preface to the edition of Diderot’s Paradox of Acting, translated by Walter Pollock and published in 1883, six years after he had been practising the art by which he taught and illuminated the minds of others.

During this engagement Irving played Richard III., and his wonderful acting satisfied all the hopes aroused by sample given in his Reading at the University. For myself I can say truly that I sat all the evening in a positive quiver of intellectual delight. His conception and impersonation of the part were so “subtle, complete, and masterly”—these were the terms I used in my criticism written that night—that it seemed to me the power of acting could go no further; that it had reached the limit of human power. Most certainly it raised him still higher in public esteem. Its memory being still with me, I could fully appreciate the power and fineness of Tennyson’s criticism which I heard long afterwards. When the poet had seen the piece he said to Irving:

“Where did you get that Plantagenet look?”

IV

In those days a small party of us, of whom Irving and I were always two, very often had supper in those restaurants which were a famous feature of men’s social life in Dublin. There were not so many clubs as there are now, and certain houses made a speciality of suppers—Jude’s, Burton Bindon’s, Corless’s. The last was famous for “hot lobster” and certain other toothsome delicacies and had an excellent grill; and so we often went there. By that time Irving had a great vogue in Dublin, and since the Address in College and the University night in 1876 his name was in the public mind associated with the University. All College men were naturally privileged persons with him, so that any one who chose to pass himself off as a student could

easily make his acquaintance. The waiters in the restaurant, who held him in great respect, were inclined to resent this, and one night at Corless's when a common fellow came up and introduced himself as a Scholar of Trinity College—he called it "Thrinity"—Irving, not suspecting, was friendly to him. I looked on quietly and enjoyed the situation, hoping that it might end in some fun. The outsider having made good his purpose, wished to show off before his friends, men of his own style, who were grinning at another table. When he went over towards them, our waiter, who had been hovering around us waiting for his chance—his napkin taking as many expressive flickers as the tail of Whistler's butterfly in The Gentle Art of Making Enemies—stooped over to Irving and said in a hurried whisper:

"He said he was a College man, sur! He's a liar! He's only a Commercial!"

V

During his fortnight in Dublin I drove one Sunday with Irving in the Phœnix Park, the great park near Dublin which measures some seven miles in circumference. Whilst driving through that section known as the "Nine Acres" we happened on a scene which took his fancy hugely. In those days wrestling was an amusement much in vogue in Ireland, chiefly if not wholly among the labouring class. Bouts used to be held on each Sunday afternoon in various places, and naturally the best of the wrestlers wished to prove themselves in the Capital. Each Sunday some young man who had won victory in Navan, or Cork, or Galway, or wherever exceptional excellence had been manifested, would come up to town to try conclusions in the "Phaynix," generally by aid of a subscription from his fellows or his club, for they were all poor men to whom a long railway journey was a grave expense. There was no prize, no betting; it was Sport, pure and simple; and sport conducted under fairer lines I have never seen or thought of. We saw the gathering crowd and joined them. They did not know either of us, but they saw we were gentlemen, strangers to themselves, and with the universal courtesy of their race put us in the front when the

ring had been formed. This forming of the ring was a unique experience. There were no police present, there were no stakes or ropes; not even a whitened mark on the grass. Two or three men of authority amongst the sportsmen made the ring. It was done after this fashion: One man, a fine, big, powerful fellow, was given a drayman's heavy whip. Then one of those with him took off his cap and put it before the face of the armed man. Another guided him from behind in the required direction. Warning was called out lustily, and any one not getting at once out of the way had to take the consequence of that fiercely falling whip. It was wonderful how soon and how excellently that ring was formed. The manner of its doing, though violent exceedingly, was so conspicuously and unquestionably fair that not even the most captious or quarrelsome could object.

Then the contestants stepped into the ring and made their little preparations for strife. Two splendid young men they were—Rafferty of Dublin and Finlay of Drogheda—as hard as nails and full of pluck. The style of wrestling was the old-fashioned "collar and elbow" with the usual test of defeat: both shoulders on the ground at once. It was certainly a noble game. A single bout sometimes lasted for over a quarter of an hour; and any one who knows what the fierce and unrelenting and pauseless struggle can be, and must be in any kind of equality, can understand the strain. What was most noticeable by us however was the extraordinary fairness of the crowd. Not a word was allowed; not a hint of method of defence or attack; not an encouraging word or sign. The local men could have cheered their own man to the echo; but the stranger must of necessity be alone or with only a small backing at best. And so, as encouragement could not be equal for the combatants, there should be none at all!

It was a lesson in fair play which might have shone out conspicuously in any part of the civilised world. Irving was immensely delighted with it and asked to be allowed to give a prize to be divided equally between the combatants; a division which showed the influence on his mind of the extraordinary fairness of the conditions of

the competition. In this spirit was the gift received. Several of the men came round me whom they had by this time recognised as an old athlete of “the College”—now a “back number” of some ten years’ standing. When I told them who was the donor they raised a mighty cheer.

The only difficulty we left behind us was that of “breaking” the bank-note which had been given. We saw them as we moved off producing what money they had so as to make up his half for the stranger to take with him to Drogheda.

VI

One evening in that week Irving came up to supper with me in my rooms after The Bells. We were quite alone and talked with the freedom of understanding friends. He spoke of the future and of what he would try to do when he should have a theatre all to himself where he would be sole master. He was then in a sort of informal partnership with Mrs. Bateman, and had of course the feeling of limitation of expansive ideas which must ever be when there is a sharing of interests and responsibilities. He was quite frank as to the present difficulties, although he put them in the most kindly way possible. I had a sort of dim idea that events were moving in a direction which within a year became declared. He had spoken of a matter at which he had hinted shortly after our first meeting: the possibility of my giving up the post I then occupied in the Public Service and sharing his fortunes in case he should have a theatre quite his own. The hope grew in me that a time might yet come when he and I might work together to one end that we both believed in and held precious in the secret chamber of our hearts. In my diary that night, November 22, 1877, I wrote:

“London in view.”

VI JOINING FORCES

I

Henry Irving produced Wills's play Vanderdecken at the Lyceum on June 8, 1878. I had arrived in London the day before and was able to be present on the occasion. The play was a new version of the legend of the "Flying Dutchman" and was treated in a very poetical way. Irving was fine in it, and gave one a wonderful impression of a dead man fictitiously alive. I think his first appearance was the most striking and startling thing I ever saw on the stage. The scene was of the landing-place on the edge of the fiord. Sea and sky were blue with the cold steely blue of the North. The sun was bright, and across the water the rugged mountain-line stood out boldly. Deep under the shelving beach, which led down to the water, was a Norwegian fishing-boat whose small brown foresail swung in the wind. There was no appearance anywhere of a man or anything else alive. But suddenly there stood a mariner in old-time dress of picturesque cut and faded colour of brown and peacock blue with a touch of red. On his head was a sable cap. He stood there, silent, still and fixed, more like a vision made solid than a living man, realising well the description of the phantom sailor of whom Thekla had told him in the ballad spoken in the first act:

"And the Captain there

In the dismal glare

Stands paler than tongue can tell

With clenchéd hand

As in mute command,

And eyes like a soul's in Hell!"

It was marvellous that any living man should show such eyes. They really seemed to shine like cinders of glowing red from out the marble face. The effect was instantaneous, and boded well for the success of the play.

But the play itself wanted something. The last act, in which Thekla sails away with the phantom lover whose soul had been released by her unselfish love, was impossible of realisation by the resources of stage art of the time. Nowadays, with calcium lights and coloured “mediums” and electricity, and all the aids to illusion which Irving had himself created or brought into use, much could be done. For such acting the play ought to have been a great one; but it fell short of excellence. It was a great pity; for Irving’s appearance and acting in it were of memorable perfection.

On the next day, Sunday, I spent hours with Irving in his rooms in Grafton Street helping him to cut and alter the play. We did a good deal of work on it and altered it considerably for the better I thought.

The next morning I breakfasted with him in his rooms; and, after another long spell of work on the play, I went with him to the Lyceum to attend rehearsal of the altered business.

That even I attended the Lyceum again and thought the play had been improved. So had Irving too, so far as was possible to a performance already so complete. I supped with him at the Devonshire Club, where we talked over the play and continued the conversation at his own rooms till after five o’clock in the morning.

The next day I went to Paris, but on my return saw Vanderdecken again and thought that by practice it had improved. It played “closer,” and the actors were more at ease—a most important thing in an eerie play!

II

In August of the same year, 1878, Henry Irving paid another visit to Ireland. He had promised to give a Reading in the Ulster Hall for the benefit of the Belfast Samaritan Hospital, and this was in the fulfilment of it. By previous arrangement the expedition was enlarged into a holiday. As the Reading was to be on the 16th he travelled from London on the night mail of the 12th. I met him on his arrival at

Kingstown in the early morning, as he was to stay with my eldest brother, Sir Thornley Stoker. He was in great spirits; something like a schoolboy off on a long-expected holiday. Here he spent three very enjoyable days, a large part of which were occupied in driving-excursions to Lough Bray and Leixlip. On the 15th Irving and Loveday and I went to Belfast. After having a look at the Ulster Hall, a huge hall about as big as the Manchester Free Trade Hall, we supped with a somewhat eccentric local philanthropist, Mr. David Cunningham. Mr. Cunningham was a large man, tall and broad and heavy, and with a great bald head which rose dome-shaped above a massive frontal sinus. He was the best of good fellows, the mainstay of the Samaritan Hospital and a generous helper of all local charities.

The Reading was an immense success. Over three thousand persons were present, and at the close was a scene of wild enthusiasm. We supped again with David Cunningham—he was one of the "Christian name" men whose surname is seldom heard, and never alone. A good many of his friends were present, and we had an informal and joyous time. There were of course lots of speeches. Belfast is the very home of fiery and flamboyant oratory, and all our local friends were red-hot Orangemen.

On this occasion, however, we were spared any contentious matter, though the harmless periods of the oratory of the "Northern Acropolis," as some of them called their native city, were pressed into service. One speaker made as pretty an "Irish bull" as could be found—though the "bull" is generally supposed to belong to other provinces than the hard-headed Ulster. In descanting on the many virtues of the guest of the evening he mentioned the excellence of his moral nature and rectitude of his private life in these terms:

"Mr. Irving, sir, is a gentleman what leads a life of unbroken blemish!"

We sometimes kept late hours in the seventies. That night we left our host's house at three o'clock A.M. On our return to the hotel Irving and I sat up talking over the

events of the day. The sun was beginning to herald his arrival when we began, but in spite of that we sat talking till the clock struck seven.

I well understood even then, though I understand it better now, that after a hard and exciting day or night—or both—the person most concerned does not want to go to bed. He feels that sleep is at arm's-length till it is summoned. Irving knew that the next day he would have to start at three o'clock on a continuous journey to London, which would occupy some fifteen hours; but I did not like to thwart him when he felt that a friendly chat of no matter how exaggerated dimensions would rest him better than some sleepless hours in bed.

III

Irving's visit to Dublin as an actor began in that year, 1878, on September 23, and lasted a fortnight. During this time I was a great deal with him, not only in the theatre during rehearsals as well as at the performances, but we drove almost every day and dined and supped at the house of my brother and sister-in-law, with whom he was great friends; at my own lodgings or his hotel; at restaurants or in the houses of other friends. It was a sort of gala time to us all, and through every phase of it—and through the working time as well—our friendship grew and grew.

We had now been close friends for over two years. We understood each other's nature, needs and ambitions, and had a mutual confidence, each towards the other in his own way, rare amongst men. It did not, I think, surprise any of us when six weeks after his departure I received a telegram from him from Glasgow, where he was then playing, asking me if I could go to see him at once on important business.

I was with him the next evening. He told me that he had arranged to take the management of the Lyceum into his own hands. He asked me if I would give up the Civil Service and join him; I to take charge of his business as Acting Manager.

I accepted at once. I had then had some thirteen years in the public service, a term

entitling me to pension in case of retirement from ill-health (as distinguished from "gratuity" which is the rule for shorter period of service); but I was content to throw in my lot with his. In the morning I sent in my resignation and made by telegram certain domestic and other arrangements of supreme importance to me at that time—and ever since. We had decided that I was to join him on December 14 as I should require a few weeks to arrange matters at home. I knew that as he was to open the Lyceum on December 30 time was precious, and accordingly did all required with what expedition I could.

I left Glasgow on November 25, and took up my work with Irving at Birmingham on December 9, having in the meantime altered my whole business life, arranged for the completion of my book on The Duties of Petty Sessions Clerks, and last, not least, having got married—an event which had already been arranged for a year later.

Irving was staying at the Plough and Harrow, that delightful little hotel at Edgbaston, and he was mightily surprised when he found that I had a wife—the wife—with me.

IV

We finished at Birmingham on Saturday, December 14, and on Sunday he went on with the company to Bristol whilst we came on to London. The week at Birmingham had been a heavy time. I had taken over all the correspondence and the letters were endless. It was the beginning of a vast experience of correspondence, for from that on till the day of his death I seldom wrote, in working times, less than fifty letters a day. Fortunately—for both myself and the readers, for I write an extremely bad hand—the bulk of them were short. Anyhow I think I shall be very well within the mark when I say that during my time of working with Henry Irving I have written in his name nearly half a million letters!

But the week in Birmingham was child's play compared with the next two weeks in

London. The correspondence alone was greater; but in addition the theatre which was to be opened was in a state of chaos. The builders who were making certain structural alterations had not got through their work; plasterers, paper-hangers, painters, upholsterers were tumbling over each other. The outside of the building was covered with scaffolding. The whole of the auditorium was a mass of poles and platforms. On the stage and in the paint-room and the property-rooms, the gas-rooms and carpenter's shop and wardrobe-room, the new production of Hamlet was being hurried on under high pressure.

On the financial side of things too, there were matters of gravity. Irving had to begin his management without capital—at least without more than that produced by his tour and by such accommodation as he could get from his bankers on the security of his property.

These were matters of much work and anxiety, for before the curtain went up on the first night of his management he had already paid away nearly ten thousand pounds, and had incurred liability for at least half as much more by outlay on the structure and what the lawyers call "beautifyings" of the Lyceum.

He had taken over the theatre as from the end of August 1878, so that there was a good deal of extra expense even whilst the theatre was lying idle; though such is usual in some form in the "running" of a theatre.

In another place I shall deal with Finance. I only mention it here because at the very start of his personal enterprise he had to encounter a very great difficulty.

Nearly all the work was new to me, and I was not sorry when on the 19th my colleague, the stage manager, arrived and took in hand the whole of the stage matters. When Irving and the company arrived, four days after, things both on the stage and throughout the house were beginning to look more presentable. When the heads of departments came back to work, preparations began to hum.

V

One of these men, Arnott, the property master and a fine workman, had had an odd experience during the Bristol week. Something had gone wrong with the travelling "property" horse used in the vision scene of The Bells, and he had come up to town to bring the real one from the storage. In touring it was usual to bring a "profile" representation of the gallant steed. "Profile" has in theatrical parlance a special meaning other than its dictionary meaning of an "outline." It is thin wood covered on both sides with rough canvas carefully glued down. It is very strong and can be cut in safety to any shape. The profile horse was of course an outline, but the art of the scene-painter had rounded it out to seemingly natural dimensions. Now the "real" horse, though a lifeless "property," had in fact been originally alive. It was formed of the skin of a moderately sized pony; and being embellished with picturesque attachments in the shape of mane and tail was a really creditable object. But it was expensive to carry as it took up much space. Arnott and two of his men ran up to fetch this down as there was not time to make a new profile horse. When they got to Paddington he found that the authorities refused to carry the article by weight on account of its bulk, and asked him something like £4 for the journey. He expressed his feelings freely, as men occasionally do under irritating circumstances, and said he would go somewhere else. The clerk in the office smiled and Arnott went away; he was a clever man who did not like to be beaten, and railways were his natural enemies. He thought the matter over. Having looked over the time-table and found that the cost of a horse-box to Bristol was only £1 13s., he went to the department in charge of such matters and ordered one, paying for it at once and arranging that it should go on the next fast train. By some manœuvring he so managed that he and his men took Koveski's horse into the box and closed the doors.

When the train arrived at Bristol there had to be some shunting to and fro so as to place the horse-box in the siding arranged for such matters. The officials in charge

threw open the door for the horse to walk out. But he would yield to no blandishment, nor even to the violence of chastisement usual at such times. A little time passed and the officials got anxious, for the siding was required for other purposes. The station at Bristol is not roomy and more than one line has to use it. The official in charge told him to take out his damned horse!

"Not me!" said he, for he was now seeing his way to "get back" at the railway company; "I've paid for the carriage of the horse and I want him delivered out of your premises. The rate I paid includes the services of the necessary officials."

The porters tried again, but the horse would not stir. Now it is a dangerous matter to go into a horse-box in case the horse should prove restive. One after another the porters declined, till at last one plucky lad volunteered to go in by the little window close to the horse's head. Those on the platform waited in apprehension, till he suddenly ran out from the box laughing and crying out:

"Why you blamed fools. He ain't a 'orse at all. He's a stuffed 'un!"

VI

As I have said, Arnott always got even in some way with those who tried to best him. I remember once when a group of short lines, now amalgamated into the Irish Great Northern Railway and worked in quite a different way, did what we all considered rather too sharp a thing. We had to have a special train to go from Dublin to Belfast on Sunday. For this they charged us full fare for every person and a rate for the train as well. Then when we were starting they took, at the ordinary rate, other passengers in our train for which we had paid extra. This, however, was not that which awoke Arnott's ire. The causa teterrima belli was that whilst they gave us only open trucks for goods they charged us extra for the use of tarpaulins, which are necessary in railway travelling where goods are inflammable and sparks many. Having made the arrangement I had gone back to London on other business, and did not go to Belfast, so I did not know, till after the tour had closed, what had happened

later. When I was checking the accounts in my office at the Lyceum, I found that though the railway company had charged us what we thought was an exorbitant price, still the cost of the total journey compared favourably with that of other journeys of equal length. I could not understand it until I went over the accounts, comparing item by item with the other journeys. Thus I "focussed" the difference in the matter of "goods." Then I found that whereas the other railways had charged us on somewhere about nineteen tons weight this particular line had only assessed us at seven. I sent for Arnott and asked him how could the difference be, as on the first journey I had verified the weight as I usually did, such saving much trouble throughout a tour as it made the check easier. He shook his head and said that he did not know. I pressed him, pointing out that either this railway had underweighed us or that others had overweighed.

"Oh, the others were all right, sir," he said. "I saw them weighed at Euston myself!"

"Then how on earth can there be such a difference?" I asked. "Can't you throw any light on it?" He shook his head slowly as though pondering deeply and then said with a puzzled look on his face:

"I haven't an idea. It must have been all right, for the lot of them was there, and the lot of us, too. There couldn't have been any mistake with them all looking on. No, sir, I can't account for it; not for the life of me!" Then seeing that I turned to my work again he moved away. When he was half way to the door he turned round, his face brightening as though a new light had suddenly dawned upon him. He spoke out quite genially as though proud of his intellectual effort:

"Unless it was, sir, that there was some mistake about the weighin'. You see, while the weighin' was goin' on we was all pretty angry about things. We because they was bestin' us, and they because we was tellin' em so, and rubbin' in what we thought of 'em in a general way. Most of us thought that there might have been a fight and we was all ready—the lot of us—on both sides. We was standin' close

together, for we wouldn't stir and they had to come to us.... An'—it might have been that me and the boys was standin' before they came to join us on the platform with the weights! I daresay we wasn't so quarrelsome when we moved a bit away, for there was more of them than of us; an' they stood where we had been. They didn't want to follow us. An'—an'—the weighin' was done by them!"

VII

One more anecdote of the Property Master.

We were playing in Glasgow at the Theatre Royal, which had just been bought by Howard and Wyndham. J. B. Howard was a man of stern countenance and masterful manner. He was a kindly man, but Nature had framed him in a somewhat fierce mould. His new theatre was a sacred thing, and he liked to be master in his own house. We were playing an engagement of two weeks; and on the first Saturday night it was found that a certain property—a tree trunk required for use in Hamlet, which was to be played on Tuesday night—was not forthcoming. So Arnott was told to make another at once and have it ready, for it required time to dry. Accordingly he went down to the theatre on Sunday morning with a couple of his men. There was no one in the theatre; in accordance with the strict Sabbath-keeping then in vogue at Glasgow, local people were all away—even the hall-keeper. Such a small matter as that would never deter Arnott. He had his work to do, and get in he must. So he took out a pane of glass, opened a window, and went in. In the property shop he found all he required; wood, glue, canvas, nails, paint; so the little band of expert workmen set to work, and having finished their task, came away. They had restored the window-pane, and came out by the door. On Monday morning there was a hubbub. Some one had broken into the theatre and taken store of wood and canvas, glue, nails and paint, and there in the shop lay a fine property log already "set" and drying fast. Inquiry showed that none of the local people were to blame. So suspicion naturally fell on our men, who did not deny the soft impeachment. Howard was

fuming; he sent for the man to have it out with him. Arnott was a fine, big, well-featured north-countryman, with large limbs and massive shoulders—such a man as commanded some measure of respect even from an angry manager.

“I hear that you broke into my theatre yesterday and used up a lot of my stores?”

“Yes sir! The theatre was shut up and there was no time.”

“Time has nothing to do with it, sir. Why did you do it?”

“Well, Mr. Howard, the governor ordered it, and Mr. Loveday told me not to lose any time in getting it ready as we had to rehearse to-day.” This accounted to Mr. Howard, the man, for the breach of decorum; but as the manager he was not satisfied. He was not willing to relinquish his grievance all at once; so he said, and he said it in the emphatic manner customary to him:

“But, sir, if Mr. Loveday was to tell you to take down the flys of my theatre would you do that, too?”

The answer came in a quiet, grave voice:

“Certainly, sir!”

Howard looked at him fixedly for a moment, and then raising both hands in front of him said, as he shrugged his shoulders:

“In that case I have nothing more to say! I only wish to God that my men would work like that!” and so the quasi-burglar went unreproved.

VII LYCEUM PRODUCTIONS

During Henry Irving’s personal management of the Lyceum he produced over forty plays, of which eleven were Shakespeare’s: Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, Henry VIII., King Lear, Cymbeline, and Richard III. Coriolanus was produced during his agreement with the Lyceum Company. He also reproduced six plays

which he had before presented during his engagement by and partnership with the Batemans: Eugene Aram, Richelieu, Louis XI., The Lyons Mail, Charles I., The Bells. He also produced the following old plays, in most of which he had already appeared at some time: The Lady of Lyons, The Iron Chest, The Corsican Brothers, The Belle's Stratagem, Two Roses, Olivia, The Dead Heart, Robert Macaire, and a good many "curtain-raisers" whose excellences were old and tried.

The new plays were in some instances old stories told afresh, and in the remainder historic subjects treated in a new way or else quite new themes or translations. In the first category were Faust, Werner, Ravenswood, Iolanthe (one act). In the second were: The Cup, The Amber Heart, Becket, King Arthur, Madame Sans-Gêne, Peter the Great, The Medicine Man, Robespierre and the following one-act plays: Waterloo, Nance Oldfield, and Don Quixote. Dante was produced after the Lyceum Company had been unable to carry out their contract with him.

This gives an average of two plays, "by and large" as the sailors say, for each year from 1878 to 1898, after which time he sold his rights to the Lyceum Theatre Company, Limited. Regarding some of these plays are certain matters of interest either in the preparation or the working. I shall simply try, now and again, to raise a little the veil which hangs between the great actor and the generations who may be interested in him and his work.

VIII IRVING BEGINS MANAGEMENT

I

The first half-year of Irving's management was, in accordance with old usage, broken into two seasons; the first ending on May 31 and the second beginning on June 1. This was the last time, except in the spring of 1881, that such an unnatural division of natural periods took place. After that, during the entire of his

management the “season” lasted until the theatre closed. And as the coming of the hot weather was the time when, for the reason the theatre-going public left London, the theatre had to be closed, about the end of July became practically the time for recess. It had become an unwritten law that Goodwood closed the London theatre season, just as in Society circles the banquet of the Royal Academy, on the first Saturday in May, marked the formal opening of the London “season.” This made things very comfortable for the actors, who by experience came to count on from forty-six to forty-eight weeks’ salary in a year. This was certainly so in the Lyceum, and in some other theatres of recognised position.

II

The first season made great interest for the public. It was all fairly new to me, for except when I had been present at the first night of Wills’s Medea played by Mrs. Crowe (Miss Kate Bateman) in July 1872 and had seen Irving in The Lyons Mail in 1877 and had been at the performance and rehearsal of Vanderdecken in 1878, I had not been into the theatre till I came officially. As yet I knew nothing at all of the audiences, from the management point of view. I soon found an element which had only anything like a parallel in the enthusiasm of the University in Dublin. Here was an audience that believed in the actor whom they had come to see; who took his success as much to heart as though it had been their own; whose cheers and applause—whose very presence—was a stimulant and a help to artistic effort.

This was the audience that he had won—had made; and I myself, as a neophite, was in full sympathy with them. With such an audience an artist can go far; and in such circumstances there seems nothing that is not possible on the hither side of life and health. The physicists tell us that it is a law of nature that there must be two forces to make impact; that the anvil has to do its work as well as the hammer. And it is a distinguishing difference between scientific and other laws that the former has no exceptions. So it is in the world of the theatre. Without an audience in sympathy no

actor can do his best. Nay more, he should have the assurance of approval, or else sustained effort at high pitch becomes impossible. Some people often think, and sometimes say, that an actor's love of applause is due to a craving vanity. This may be in part true, and may even be wholly true in many cases; but those who know the stage and its needs and difficulties, its helps and thwarting checks, learn to dread a too prolonged stillness. The want of echoing sympathy embarrasses the player. For my own part, having learned to understand their motives, to sympathise with their aims, and to recognise their difficulties, I can understand the basic wisdom of George Frederick Cook when on the Liverpool stage he stopped in the middle of a tragic part and coming down to the footlights said to the audience:

"Ladies and gentlemen, if you don't applaud I can't act!"

It was from Irving I heard the story; and he certainly understood and felt with that actor of the old days. If the members of any audience understood how much better value they would get for their money—to put the matter on its lowest basis—when they show appreciation of the actor's efforts, they would certainly now and again signify the fullest recognition of his endeavour.

This "Lyceum audience," whose qualities endeared them to me from that first night, December 30, 1878, became for twenty-four years of my own experience a quantity to be counted on. Nay more, for when the Lyceum came as a theatre to an end, the audience followed Irving to Drury Lane. They or their successors in title were present on that last night of his season, June 10, 1905, that memorable night when he said farewell, not knowing that it would be the last time, except one benefit performance, he should ever appear in London as a player.

III

The production with which the season of 1878–9 opened was almost entirely new. When Irving took over the Lyceum the agreement between him and Mrs. Bateman entitled him to the use of certain plays and matériel necessary for their

representation. But he never contented himself with the scenery, properties or dresses originally used. The taste of the public had so improved and their education so progressed, chiefly under his own influence, that the perfection of the seventies would not do for later days. For Hamlet new scenery had been painted by Hawes Craven, and of all the dresses and properties used few if any had been seen before. What we had seen in the provinces was the old production. I remember being much struck by the care in doing things, especially with reference to the action. It was the first time that I had had the privilege of seeing a play "produced." I had already seen rehearsals, but these except of pantomime had generally been to keep the actors, supers and working staff up to the mark of excellence already arrived at. But now I began to understand why everything was as it was. With regard to stagecraft it was a liberal education. Often and often in the years since then, when I have noticed the thoughtless or careless way in which things were often done on other stages, I have wondered how it was that the younger generation of men had not taken example and reasoned out at least the requirements of those matters incidental to their own playing. Let me give an example:

"In the last act, the cup from which Gertrude drinks the poison is an important item inasmuch as it might have a disturbing influence. In one of the final rehearsals, when grasped by Hamlet in a phrenzy of anxiety lest Horatio should drink: 'Give me the cup; let go; by heaven, I'll have it!' the cup, flung down desperately rolled away for some distance, and then following the shape of the stage rolled down to the footlights. There is a sort of fascination in the uncertain movement of an inanimate object, and such an occurrence during the play would infallibly distract the attention of the audience. Irving at once ordered that the massive metal goblet used should have some bosses fixed below the rim, so that it could not roll. At a previous rehearsal he had ordered that as the wine from the cup splashed the stage, coloured sawdust should be used—which it did to exactly the same artistic effect.

In another matter of this scene his natural kindness made a sweet little episode

which he never afterwards omitted. When he said to the pretty little cup-bearer who offered him the poisoned goblet: “Set it by awhile!” he smiled at the child and passed his hand caressingly over the golden hair.

Certain other parts of his Hamlet were unforgettable; his whirlwind of passion at the close of the play scene which, night after night, stirred the whole audience to frenzied cheers; the extraordinary way in which by speech and tone, action and time, he conveyed to his auditory the sense of complex and entangled thought and motive in his wild scene with Ophelia; his wonderment at the announcement of Horatio:

“I think I saw him yester-night.”

Hamlet. “Saw who?”

Horatio. “My Lord, the King your Father.”

Hamlet. “The King—my father?”

And the effective way in which he conveyed his sense of difference of the subjective origin of the ghost at its second appearance at which Shakespeare hinted, following out Belleforest’s remark on the novel:

“In those days, the northe parts of the worlde, living as then under Sathans lawes, were full of inchanters, so that there was not any young gentleman whatsoever that knew not something therein sufficient to serve his turne, if need required.... Hamlet, while his father lived, had been instructed in that devilish art, whereby the wicked spirite abuseth mankind, and advertiseth him (as he can) of things past.”

Of things past! Hamlet could know of things that had been though he could not read the future. This it was which was the essence of his patient acquiescence in the ways of time—half pagan fatalism, half Christian belief—as shown in that pearl amongst philosophical phrases:

“If it be now, ’tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all.”

IV

Hamlet was played ninety-eight nights on that first season. Four of them hang in my mind for very different reasons. The first was that wonderful opening night when the great audience all aflame with generous welcome and exalted by ready sympathy lifted us to unwonted heights.

The second was on January 18, the eighteenth night of Hamlet. The Chinese Ambassador, the Marquis Tsêng, came to see the play and with him came Sir Halliday Macartney.

After the third act the Ambassador and Sir Halliday Macartney came to see Irving in his dressing-room, where they stayed some time talking. It was interesting to note—Sir Halliday translated his remarks verbally—how accurately the Ambassador followed the play, which he had not read nor heard of. Where he failed was only on some small points of racial or theological difference. He seemed to be absolutely correct on the human side.

Presently we all went down on the stage whilst Ellen Terry as Ophelia was in the midst of her mad scene. Irving and Sir Halliday and I were talking and, in the interest of the conversation, we all temporarily overlooked the Ambassador. Presently I looked round instinctively and was horrified to see that he had moved in on the stage and was then close to the edge of the arch at the back of the scene where Ophelia had made her entrance and would make her exit. He was in magnificent robes of Mandarin yellow, and wore such adornments as are possible to a great official who holds the high grade and honour of the Peacock’s Feather. I jumped for him and just succeeded in catching him before he had passed into the blaze of the limelight. I could fancy the sudden amazement of the audience and the wild roar of laughter that would follow when in the midst of this most sad and pathetic of scenes would enter unheralded this gorgeous anachronism. Under ordinary circumstances I think I should have allowed the contretemps to occur. Its

unique grotesqueness would have ensured a widespread publicity not to be acquired by ordinary forms of advertisement. But there was greater force to the contrary. The play was not yet three weeks old in its run; it was a tragedy, and the holy of holies to my actor chief to whom full measure of loyalty was due; and beyond all it was Ellen Terry who would suffer.

V

The third was a very sad occasion, but one which showed that the manager of a theatre must have "nerve" to do the work entailed by his high responsibility. He remained in the wings O.P. ("Opposite Prompt" in stage parlance) after scene ii of Act I of Hamlet. The following scene (iii) is a front scene ready for the change to the scene where Polonius gives good advice to his children Laertes and Ophelia. After the few words between the brother and sister on the cue of Laertes: "here my father comes," Polonius enters speaking quickly as one in surprise: "Yet here Laertes! Aboard, aboard, for shame!"

Irving instinctively turned on hearing the intonation of the voice, and after one lightning glance signed to the prompter to let down the act drop, which was done instantly. I was standing beside him at the time talking to him and was struck by the marvellous rapidity of thought and action; of the decision which seemed almost automatic. Then, the curtain having been drawn back sufficiently to let him pass, he stepped to the footlights and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I regret to have to tell you that something has happened which I should not like to tell you; and will ask you to bear in patience a minute. We shall, with your permission, go on from the beginning of the third scene of Act I." He stepped back amid instantaneous and sympathetic applause. Perhaps they knew; some few must have seen for themselves what had occurred, and many undoubtedly guessed. But all recognised the mastery and decision which had saved a very painful and difficult situation. The curtain straightened behind him as he passed in on the

stage.

In an incredibly short time all was ready, for stage workmen as well as actors are adepts at their trade. Within seven or eight minutes the curtain went up afresh and the play began anew—with a different Polonius.

That night a call went up for the whole company and employees—"Everybody concerned on the stage" at noon next day.

It was a grave and solemn gathering; and all were there except one who had received a kindly intimation that he need not attend. Irving came on the stage at the stroke of the hour. Loveday and I were with him. He stood in front of the footlights with his back to the auditorium. He spoke for a few minutes only; but that speech must have sunk deeply into the hearts of every listener. He reminded them of the loyalty which is due from craftsmen to one another; of the loyalty which is due to a manager who has to think for all; and finally of the loyalty which is due—and was on the unhappy occasion to which he referred—due to their own comrade. "By that want of loyalty," he said, "in any of the forms, you have helped to ruin your comrade. Some of you must have noticed; at least those who dressed in the room with him or saw him in the Green Room. Had I been told—had the stage manager had a single hint from any one, we could, and would have saved him. The lesson would perhaps have been a bitter one, but it would have saved him from worse disaster. As it is, no other course was open to me to save him from public shame. As it is, the disaster of last night may injure him for life. And it is you who have done this. Now, my dear friends and comrades, let this be a lesson to us all. We must be loyal to each other. That is to be helpful, and it is to the honour of our art and our calling!"

There he stopped and turned away. No one said a word. For a short space they stood still and then melted slowly away in silence, like the multitude of a dream.

VI

The fourth occasion was on the night of March 27 when Irving, having been taken with a serious cold, was unable to play—the first time he had been out of the bill for seven years! The note in my diary runs:

“Stage very dismal. Ellen Terry met me in the passage and began to cry! I felt very like joining her!”

I instance this as a fair illustration of how Irving was loved by all with whom he came in personal contact.

IX SHAKESPEARE PLAYS—I

I

Irving did not think of playing The Merchant of Venice until he had been to the Levant. The season of 1879–80 had been arranged before the end of the previous season. We were to commence with The Iron Chest; Irving had considerable faith in Coleman’s play and intended to give it a run. It was to be followed in due course, as announced in his farewell speech at the end of the second season, by The Gamester, The Stranger, Coriolanus, and Robert Emmett—a new play by Frank Marshall. It was rather a surprise, therefore, when on October 8, before the piece had run two weeks, he broached the subject of a new production. It had been apparent to us since his return from a yachting trip in the Mediterranean that he was not so much in love with the play as he usually was with anything which he had immediately in hand. Even if a play did not seem to possess him, I never saw him show the slightest sign of indifference to it in any other case.

On that particular evening he asked Loveday and me if we could stay and have a chop in the Beefsteak Room. He was evidently full of something of importance; it seemed a relief to him when supper was finished and the servant who waited had gone. When we had lit our cigars he said quietly:

"I am going to do The Merchant of Venice." We both waited, for there was nothing to say until we should know a little more. He went on:

"I never contemplated doing the piece, which did not even appeal very much to me, until when we were down in Morocco and the Levant. You know the Walrus" (that was the fine steamer which the Baroness Burdett Coutts had chartered for her yachting party) "put into all sorts of places. When I saw the Jew in what seemed his own land and in his own dress, Shylock became a different creature. I began to understand him; and now I want to play the part—as soon as I can. I think I shall do it on the first of November! Can it be done?"

Loveday answered it would depend on what had to be done.

"That is all right," said Irving. "I have it in my mind. I have been thinking it over and I see my way to it. Here is what I shall have in the 'Casket' scene." He took a sheet of notepaper and made a rough drawing of the scene, tearing out an arch in the back and propping another piece of paper in it with a rough suggestion of a Venetian scene. "I will have an Eastern lamp with red glass—I know where is the exact thing. It is, or used to be two or three years ago, in that furniture shop in Oxford Street, near Tottenham Court Road."

Then he went on to expound his idea of the whole play; and did it in such a way that he set both Loveday and myself afire with the idea. We talked it out till early morning. Indeed the Eastern sun was outlining the beauty of St. Mary's-le-Strand as the time-roughened stone stood out like delicate tracery against the blush of the sunrise. Then and often since have I thought that Sir Christopher Wren must have got his inspiration regarding St. Mary's on returning late—or early in the morning—from a supper in Westminster. The church is ugly enough at other times, but against sunrise it is a picturesque delight.

As we parted Irving smiled as he said:

"Craven had better get out that red handkerchief, I think."

Therein lay a little joke amongst us. Hawes Craven who was—as happily he still is—a great scene painter, could work like a demon when time pressed. Ordinarily he wore when at work in those days a long coat once of a dark colour, and an old brown bowler hat, both splashed out of all recognition with paint. Scene-painting is essentially a splashy business, the drops of paint from the great brushes, of necessity vigorously used to cover the acres of canvas, “come not in single spies but in battalions.” But when matters got desperate, when the pressure of the time-gauge registered not in hours but in minutes, the head-gear was changed for a red handkerchief which twisted round the head made a sort of turban. This became in time a sort of oriflamme. We knew that there was to be no sleep, and precious little pause even for food, till the work was all done.

Of course no mortal man could do the whole of the scenery in the three weeks available. Scenes had to be talked over, entrances and exits fixed and models made. Four scene-painters bent their shoulders to the task. Craven did three scenes, Telbin three, Hann three, and Cuthbert one. The whole theatre became alive with labour. Each night had its own tally of work with the running play; but from the time the curtain went down at night till when the doors were opened the following night full pressure never ceased. Properties, dresses, and “appointments” came in completed perpetually. Rehearsals went on all day. On Saturday night, November 1—just over three weeks after he had broached the idea, and less than three from the time the work was actually begun—the curtain went up on The Merchant of Venice.

It had an unbroken run of two hundred and fifty nights, the longest run of the play ever known.

It is a noteworthy fact that one of the actors, Mr. Frank Tyars, who played the Prince of Morocco, after being perfect for two hundred and forty-nine nights, forgot some of his words on the two hundred and fiftieth.

For twenty-six years that play remained in the working répertoire of Henry Irving.

He played Shylock over a thousand times.

II

The occasion of Irving's producing Othello during his own management was due to his love and remembrance of Edwin Booth. In 1860, at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, Irving began a long engagement. In the bill his name is announced: "His first appearance." In November of the following year Booth appeared as a star, playing Othello, Irving being the Cassio; Hamlet, Irving being the Laertes; A New Way to Pay Old Debts, he of course taking Sir Giles Overreach, and Irving Wellborn. For his benefit he gave on Friday night Romeo and Juliet, in which Irving played Benvolio to his Romeo. Often, when we talked of Booth some twenty years afterwards, he told me of the extraordinary alertness of the American actor; of his fierce concentration and tempestuous passion; of the blazing of his remarkable eyes. It will be seen from the comparison of their respective parts in the plays set out that the difference between them in the way of status as players was marked. The theatre had its own etiquette, and stars were supposed to have a stand-off manner of their own. These things have changed a good deal in the interval, but in the early sixties it was a real though an impalpable barrier, as hard to break through as though it were compact of hardier material than shadowy self-belief. Naturally the men did not have much opportunity for intimacy, but Irving never forgot the bright young actor who had won his heart as well as his esteem. Twenty years afterwards, when the younger man had won his place in the world and when his theatre was becoming celebrated as a national asset, Booth again visited England. Whoever had arranged his business did not choose the best theatre for him. For in those days the Princess's in Oxford Street did not have a high dramatic cachet. He got a good reception of course; but the engagement was not a satisfactory one, and Booth was much chagrined. I was there myself on the night of his opening, November 6, 1880, on which he played Hamlet. I was much disappointed in the ensemble; for though

Booth was fine, neither the production nor the support was worthy of his genius and powers. The management was a new one, and the manager a man who had been used to a different class of theatre. Also there were certain things which jarred on the senses of any one accustomed to a finer order. This was none of Booth's doings; but he was the sufferer by it. Booth and Irving had met at once after the former had come to London, and had renewed their old acquaintance—on a more intimate basis. In those days there was a certain class of busybodies who tried always to make mischief between Americans and English; twenty-five years ago the entente cordiale was not so marked as became noticeable after the breaking out of the war between America and Spain. There were even some who did not hesitate to say that Booth had not been fairly received in London. Irving jumped to the difficulty, went at once to Booth and said to him:

"Why don't you come and play with me at the Lyceum? I'll put on anything you wish; or if there is any piece in which we can play together, let us do that."

Booth was greatly delighted, and took the overture in the same good spirit in which it was meant. He at once told Irving that he would like to appear in Othello. Irving said:

"All right! You decide on the time; and I'll get the play ready, if you will tell me how you would like it arranged."

Booth said he would like to leave all that to his host, as he had not himself taken a part in the production of plays for years and did not even attend rehearsals. So Irving took all the task on himself. When he asked Booth whether he would like to play Othello or Iago—for he played both—he said he would like to begin with Othello and that it would, he thought, be well if they changed week about; and so it was arranged. The performance began on May 2, 1881.

By Booth's wish Othello was only to be played three times a week, as he was averse from the strain of such a heavy part every night. The running bill—The Cup and The

Belle's Stratagem—kept its place on the other three. For the special performances some of the prices were altered, stalls nominally ten shillings becoming a guinea, the dress-circle seats being ten shillings instead of six. The prices for the off nights remained as usual.

The success of Othello was instantaneous and immense. During the seven weeks the arrangement lasted the houses were packed. And strange to say the takings of the off nights were not affected in any way.

III

The two months thus occupied made a happy time for Booth. He came down to rehearsal early in the week before the production, and was so pleased that he never missed a rehearsal during the remainder of the time. He said more than once that it had given him a new interest in his work. In social ways too the time went pleasantly. Several of his distinguished countrymen were then staying in London, and no matter how strenuous work might be, time was found for enjoyment though the days had to be stretched out in the manner suggested in Tommy Moore's ballad:

"For the best of all ways to lengthen our days

Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear!"

On Sunday, June 12, John McCullough gave a party at Hampton Court, where we dined at the Greyhound. We drove down in four-in-hand drags and spent the late afternoon walking through the beautiful gardens of Hampton Court. June in that favoured spot is always delightful.

There was an amusing episode on our dilatory journeying among the flowers. One of the gardeners, a bright-faced old fellow for whom Nature had been unkind enough to use the mould wrought for the shaping of Richard III., on being asked some trivial question gave so smart an answer that we all laughed. Then began a hail of questions; the old man, smiling gleefully, answered them as quick as lightning. One

by one nearly all the party joined in; but to one and all a cunning answer was given without slack of speed, till the whole crowd was worsted. One of the party asked the gardener if he would lend him his hat for a minute. The old man handed it, remarking in a manifestly intended stage aside:

“It’ll be no use to him. The brains don’t go with it!” The man who borrowed it, “Billy” Florence, put it on the grass, open side up, and said:

“Now boys!”

Instantly a rain of money—more of it gold than silver, and some folded notes—fell into the hat. Then with a handshake all round the clever old fellow toddled off. The names of that party will show most people of the great world, even twenty years afterwards, that there was no lack of “brains” in that crowd, even enough possibly to answer effectually to the sallies of one old man. Most of them may be seen on the dinner menu which they signed.

One night at supper in the Beefsteak Room, Irving told me an amusing occurrence which took place at Manchester when Booth played there. He said it was “about” 1863, so it may have been that time of which I have written—1861. Richard III. was put up, Charles Calvert, the manager, playing Richmond, and Booth Gloster. Calvert determined to make a brave show of his array against the usurper, and being manager was able to dress his own following to some measure of his wishes. Accordingly he drained the armoury of the theatre and had the armour furbished up to look smart. Richard’s army came on in the usual style. They were not much to look at though they were fairly comfortable for their work of fighting. But Richmond’s army enthralled the senses of the spectators, till those who knew the play began to wonder how such an army could be beaten by the starvelings opposed to them. They were not used to fight, or even to move in armour, however; and the moment they began to make an effort they one and all fell down and wriggled all over the stage in every phase of humiliating but unsuccessful effort to get up; and

the curtain had to be lowered amidst the wild laughter of the audience.

SUGGESTION FOR IAGO'S DRESS Drawn by Henry Irving, 1881

X SHAKESPEARE PLAYS—II

I

Romeo and Juliet was the first great Shakespearean production which Irving made under his own management. Hamlet had been done on very simple lines, the age in which it is set not allowing of splendour. The Merchant of Venice had been entirely produced and rehearsed within three weeks. But the story of "Juliet and her Romeo," perhaps the greatest and most romantic love-story that ever was written, is one which not only lends itself to, but demands, picturesque setting. For its tragic basis the audience must understand the power and antiquity of the surroundings of each of those unhappy lovers. Under conditions of humbler life the tragedy would not have been possible; in still loftier station, though there might have been tragedy, it would have been wrought by armed force on one of the rival Houses or the other. It is necessary to give something of the luxury, the hereditary feud of two dominant factions represented by their chiefs, of the ingrained bloodthirstiness of the age of the Italian petty States. Irving knew this well, and with his superlative stage instinct grasped the picturesque possibilities. The Capulets and the Montagues must be made not only forces, but typal.

What Irving's intention was may be seen in the opening words which he wrote himself in the short preface to the published Acting Version of the play:

"In producing this tragedy, I have availed myself of every resource at my command to illustrate without intrusion the Italian warmth, life, and romance of this enthralling love-story."

It was produced on May 8, 1882, and ran for one hundred and sixty-one nights, the

summer vacation intervening.

Extraordinary care was taken in the preparation of the play. In the beginning Irving had asked Mr. Alfred Thompson, known as a popular designer of dresses for many plays, to design the costumes. This he did; but as they were not exactly what was wanted, not a single one of them was used in the piece. Irving himself selected the costumes from old pictures and prints, and costume books. He chose and arranged the colours and stuff to be used. Nevertheless, with his characteristic generosity, he put in the playbill and advertisements Mr. Thompson's name as designer. For the scenery also he made initial suggestions, all in reference to exactness of detail and the needs of the play in the way of sentiment as well as of action. The scenery was really most beautiful and poetic and won much κυδος for the painters, Hawes Craven, William Telbin and Walter Hann.

In another way too a new departure was made. Hitherto it had been a custom in theatres that the musical director should compose or select whatever incidental music was necessary. In every great theatre might be found a really good musician in charge of the orchestra; and on him the management wholly relied for musical help and setting. But with regard to Romeo and Juliet Irving thought that the theme was a tempting one for a composer of note to take in hand. If this could be arranged not only would the play as a whole benefit enormously, but even its business aspect be greatly enhanced by the addition of the new strength. He wished that Sir Julius Benedict should compose special music for the new production. We were then on a provincial tour; but I ran up to London and saw Sir Julius, who was delighted to undertake the task. In due time charming music was completed.

So long before as June 1880, on two different nights, 14th and 16th, Irving and I supped alone in the Beefsteak Room, and on each occasion talked of Romeo and Juliet. For a long time the play had been in Irving's mind as one to be produced when the proper opportunity should come. In his early days in the "fifties" he had

played both Paris and Tybalt; and we may be sure that in his ambitious soul and restless eager brain the tragic part of Romeo was shaping itself for future use. More than twenty years afterwards when the dreams of power to do as he wished on the stage had grown first to possibilities and then to realities, he certainly convinced me that his convictions of the phases of character were quite mature. He had followed Romeo through all his phases, both of character and emotion. He seemed to have not only the theory of action and pose and inflection of voice proper for every moment of his appearance, but the habit of doing it, which is the very stronghold of an actor's art. To me his conception was enlightening with a new light.

The words: "Thou canst not teach me to forget" he took to strike a key-note of the play. He rehearsed them over and over again, not only on the stage, but on several occasions when we were alone, or when Loveday was also with us. I well remember one night when we three were alone and had supped after the running play, Two Roses, when he was simply bubbling over with the new play. Over and over again he practised the action of leaning on Benvolio, and the tone and manner of the speech. In it there was a distinct duality of thought—of existence. He managed to convey that though his mind was to a measure set on love with a definite object, there was still a sterner possibility of a deeper passion. It seemed to show the heart of a young man yearning for all-compelling love, even at the time when the pale phantom of such a love claimed his errant fancy.

Once he was started on this theme he went on with fiery zeal to other passages in the play, till at last the pathos of the end touched him to his heart's core. I find an entry in my diary:

"H. much touched at tragedy of last act, and in speaking the words wept."

That night too we practised carrying the body of Paris into the tomb. In the first instance he asked me, as one who had been an athlete, to show him how I would do it. Accordingly Loveday lay on the floor on his back whilst I lifted him, Irving

keenly watching all the time. Standing astride over the body I took it by the hinches—as the wrestlers call the upper part of the hips—and bending my legs whilst at the same moment raising with my hands, keeping my elbows down, and swaying backwards I easily flung it over my shoulder. Irving thought it was capital, and asked me to lift him so that he could understand the motion. I did so several times. Then I lay down and he lifted me, easily enough, in the same way. It must have required a fair effort of strength on his part; for he was a thin, spare man whilst I was over twelve stone. He said that that method would do very well and looked all right, but that it might prove too much of a strain in the stress of acting. So we put off other experiments till another evening.

Some ten days after, my brother George, who had been all through the Russo-Turkish war as a surgeon in the Turkish service, was in the theatre. He had been Chief of Ambulance of the Red Crescent and had been in the last convoy into Plevna and had brought to Philippopolis all the Turkish wounded from the battle at the Schipka Pass, and so had had about as much experience of dead bodies as any man wants. Irving thought it might be well to draw on his expert knowledge, and after supper asked him what was the easiest way of carrying a dead body, emphasising the “easiest”; accordingly I, who was to enact the part of “body,” lay down again. George drew my legs apart, and stooping very low with his back to me, lifted the legs in turn so that the inside of my knees rested on his shoulders. Then, catching one of my ankles in each hand, he drew my body up till the portion of my anatomy where the back and legs unite was pressed against the back of his neck. He then straightened his arms and rose up, my body, face outward, trailing down his back and my arms hanging limp. It was just after the manner of a butcher carrying the carcase of a sheep. It was most certainly the “easiest” way to carry a body—there was no possible doubt about that; but its picturesque suitability for stage purpose was another matter. Irving laughed consumedly, and when next we discussed the matter he had come to the conclusion that the best way was to drag the

body into the entrance of the monument. He would then appear in the next scene dragging the body down the stone stair to the crypt. To this end a body was prepared, adjusted to the weight and size of Paris so that in every way vraisemblance was secured.

That production was certainly wonderfully perfect. Some of the scenes were of really entrancing beauty, breathing the Italian atmosphere. Even the supers took fire with the reality of all around them. No matter how carefully rehearsed, they would persist in throwing into their work a martial vigour of their own. The rubric of the scene, as printed from the original, does not give the slightest indication of the wonderful stress of the first scene:

"Enter Several Persons of both Houses, who join in the Fray: then enter Citizens and Peace Officers, with their Clubs and Partisans."

The scene was of the market-place of Verona with side streets and at back a narrow stone bridge over a walled-in stream. The "Several Persons," mostly apprentices of the Capulet faction, entered, at first slowly, but coming quicker and quicker till quite a mass had gathered on the hither side of the bridge. The strangers were being easily worsted. Then over the bridge came a rush of the Montagues armed like their foes with sticks or swords according to their degree. They used to pour in on the scene down the slope of the bridge like a released torrent, and for a few minutes such a scene of fighting was enacted as I have never elsewhere seen on the stage. The result of the mighty fight was that during the whole time of the run of the play there was never a day when there was not at least one of the young men in hospital. We tried to make them keep to the business set down for them, for on the stage even a fight between supers is so carefully arranged that no harm can come if they keep to their instructions. But one side or the other would grow so ardent that a mighty trouble of some kind had to be counted upon.

When I look back upon other presentations of Romeo and Juliet I can see the

exceeding value of all the picturesque realism of Irving's production. I have in my mind's eye two others in London, one of which I saw and the other of which I heard, for we were then in America, where tragedy was lost in the mirth of the audience.

The former was held in the old Gaiety Theatre, then under the management of the late John Hollingshead. It was at a matinée given by a lady who was ambitious of beginning her theatrical career as Juliet. Of course on such an occasion one has to be contented with the local scenery; either such as is used in the running play or can be easily taken from and to the storage. The play went fairly well until the third act; William Terriss was the Romeo, and his performance, if not subtle, was full of life and go. But when the scene went up on Juliet's chamber there was a sudden and wild burst of laughter from every part of the house. The stage management had used a picturesque scene without any idea of suitability. Juliet's bed was set right in the open, on a wide marble terrace with steps leading to the garden!

The other occasion was when the property master, with a better idea of customary utility than of picturesque accuracy, had set out for Juliet's bed one of double width—a matrimonial couch with two pillows!

II

Much Ado About Nothing followed close after Romeo and Juliet, the theatre being closed for three nights to allow of full-dress rehearsals. It began on October 11, 1882, and had an unbroken run of two hundred and twelve nights, being only taken off because the other plays of the répertoire for the coming American tour had to be made ready and rehearsed by playing them. This was not only the longest run the play had ever had, but probably the only real run it had ever had at all. It was always one of those plays known as "ventilators" which are put up occasionally with hope on the part of the management that they may do something this time, and a moral conviction that they can't in any case do worse than the plays that have already been tried. But Irving had faith in it, and in his own mind saw a way of doing it which

would help it immensely. It was beautifully produced and carefully rehearsed. The first act was all brightness and beauty. The cathedral was such as was never before seen on the stage. Even the cathedral servants were new, their brown dresses giving picturesque sombre richness to the scene. Irving had seen such dresses in the cathedral of Seville or Burgos—I forget which—and had noted and remembered. Ellen Terry was born for the part of Beatrice. It was almost as though Shakespeare had a premonition of her coming.

Don Pedro. "Out of question, you were born in a merry hour."

Beatrice. "No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born."

Surely such a buoyant, winsome, merry, enchanting personality was never seen on the stage—or off it. She was literally compact of merriment, until when her anger with Claudio blazed forth in a brief tragic moment, half passion and whole pathos, that carried everything before it. And as for tragic strength, none who have ever seen or may ever see it can forget her futile helpless anger—the surging, choking passion in her voice, as striding to and fro with long paces, her whirling words won Benedick to her as in answer to his query "Is Claudio thine enemy," she broke out:

"Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman?—O, that I were a man!—what? bear her in hand until they come to take hands; and then with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour—O God, that I were a man! I'd—I'd—I'd eat his heart in the market-place!"

And then after some combative words with her lover?

"I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving."

It was that last feminine touch that won Benedick to her purpose of revenge. All the audience felt that he could do no less.

III

By the way, a curious evidence of the truth of its emotional effect came one night, not very long after the play began its long career. I was in my office just after the curtain had gone up on the fourth act when I was sent for to the front of the house to see some one. In the vestibule I found a tall, powerful, handsome man. He had masterful eyes, a resonant voice and a mouth that shut like steel. A most interesting personality I thought. I introduced myself, and as I had been told he had expressed a wish to see Irving I asked him if he could wait a little as the curtain had gone up. He was very cheery and friendly, and he said at once:

"Of course I'll wait. I've just come to London and I came at once to see my cousin Johnny. I haven't seen him since we were boys." I had been trying to place him. This gave me the clue I wanted.

"Are you John Penberthy?" I asked. This delighted him, and he shook my hand again. I said that I had often heard of him. From the moment of our meeting we became friends.

John Penberthy was one of the sons of Sarah Behenna, sister of Irving's mother, who had married Captain Isaac Penberthy, a famous mining captain of his time in Cornwall. Whilst a very young man John had gone to South America and had soon become, by his courage and forceful character as well as by his gifts and skill as a miner himself, a great mining captain. He was mostly in the silver mines; he it was who had developed and worked the great Huanchaca mine in Bolivia. For some twenty or more years he had lived in a place and under conditions where a quick eye and a ready hand were the surest guarantees of long life—especially to a man who had to control the fierce spirits of a Spanish mine.

I took him round on the stage, thinking what a surprise as well as a pleasure it would be to Irving to find him there when he came off after the scene. He at once got deeply interested in the scene going on, and now and again as I stood beside him I

could see his strong hands closed and hear him grind his teeth. When the scene was over and Irving and Ellen Terry were bowing in the glare of the footlights amid a storm of applause, Captain Penberthy turned to me, his face blazing with generous anger, and said in his native Cornwall accent which he had never lost:

"It was a damned good job for that cur Claudio that I hadn't my shootin' irons on me. If I had I'd soon have blasted hell out of him!"

IV

An instance of the interest of the public in a Lyceum production was shown by a letter received by Irving a few nights after the play had been produced. For one of the front scenes the scene-painter, Hawes Craven, had been given a free hand. He chose for the subject a walk curving away through giant cedars, brown trunks and twisted branches—a noble spot in which to muse. Irving's correspondent pointed out, as well as I remember, that whereas the period is set in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, the cedar was not introduced into Messina until the middle of that century and could not possibly have attained the stature shown in the scene.

Perhaps I may here mention that Irving had some other experiences of the same kind:

When he reproduced Charles I. in June 1879, some critical observer called attention to the fact that the trees in the Hampton Court scene, having been planted in the time of Charles, could not possibly have grown within his reign to the size represented.

Again, whilst in Philadelphia in 1894, where we had played Becket, the secretary of a Natural History Society wrote a letter—a really charming letter it was too—pointing out that Tennyson had made a mistake in that passage of the last act of the play where Becket speaks of finding a duck frozen on her nest of eggs. Such might certainly occur in the case of certain other wild birds; but not in the case of a duck whose habits made such a tragedy impossible. Irving replied in an equally

courteous letter, saying, after thanking him for the interest displayed in the play and for his kindness in calling attention to the alleged error, that there must have been some misreading of the poet's words as he did not mention a duck at all!

"... we came upon

A wild-fowl sitting on her nest...."

V

It may be well to mention here the way in which Irving cared always and in every way for the feelings of the public. In religious matters he was scrupulous against offence. When the church scene of Much Ado About Nothing was set for the marriage of Claudio and Hero, he got a Catholic priest to supervise it. He listened carefully whilst the other explained the emblematic value of the points of ritual. The then Property Master was a Catholic and had taken some pains to be correct as to details. When the reverend critic pointed out that the white cloth spread in front of the Tabernacle on the High Altar meant that the Host was within Irving at once ordered that a piece of cloth of gold should be spread in its place. Again, when he was told that the cross on the ends of the stole of the marrying priest was emblematical of the Sacrament he ordered a fleur-de-lis to be embroidered instead. In the same way, on knowing that the red lamp, hung over the altar-rail by his direction for purely scenic effect, was a sacramental sign he had it altered and others placed to destroy the significance. But not so when as Becket he put on the pall to go into the cathedral where the murderous huddle of knights awaited him. There he wore the real pall. There were no feelings to be offended then, though the occasion was in itself a sacrament—the greatest of all sacraments—martyrdom. All sensitiveness regarding ritual was merged in pity and the grandeur of the noble readiness:

"I go to meet my King."

XI SHAKESPEARE PLAYS—III

I

Of all the plays of which Irving talked to me in the days of our friendship when there was an eager wish for freedom of effort, or in later times when a new production was a possibility rather than an intention, I think Macbeth interested me most. When I met him in 1876 he had already played it at the Lyceum; but somehow it was borne in on me that what had been done was not up to his fullest sense of truth. His instinctive idea of treatment—that which is the actor's sixth sense regarding character—was correct. So much I could tell, for the conviction which was in him came out from him to others. But I do not think that at that time his knowledge of the part was complete. In the consideration of such a play it has to be considered what was Shakespeare's knowledge of its origin; for it is by this means that we can get a guiding light on his intention. That he had studied Wintown and Holinshed is manifest to any one who has read the "Cronykil" of the former or the Chronicle of the latter. Now Irving had got hold of the correct idea of Macbeth's character, and from his own inner consciousness of its working out, combined with the enlightenment of the text, knew that Macbeth had thought of and intended the murder of Duncan long before the opening of the play, and that he and his wife had talked it over. But I think that not at first, nor till after he had re-studied the play, was he aware of the personal relationship between Macbeth and Duncan: that after the King and his sons Macbeth was the next successor to the crown of Scotland. This is according to history, and Shakespeare knew it from Holinshed. But even Shakespeare is somewhat wanting in his way of setting it forth in the play. I know that I myself had from my earliest recollection been always puzzled by the passage in Act I, scene iv, where Macbeth in an aside says:

"The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step

On which I must fall down, or else o’erleap,

For in my way it lies.”

Nothing that has gone before in the play can afford to any unlearned member of an audience any possible clue as to how Macbeth could have been injured or thwarted by an honour shown to his own son by the King who had already showered honours and thanks upon his victorious general. In his Address at Owens College, Manchester, six years after his second production of the play, Henry Irving set forth this and many other critical points with admirable lucidity.

To me Irving’s intellectual position with regard to the character was from the first irrefragable. He added scholarship as the time went on; but every addition was a help to understanding. Between the time when I had first heard him talk over the play and the character in 1876 and when I saw him play it, twelve years elapsed. In all that time it was a favourite subject to talk between us, and I think it was one evening in February 1887 on which after he and I, having supped alone in the Beefsteak Room, talked over the play till the windows began to show their edges brightening in the coming day, that he made up his mind to the reproduction.

We were then deep in the run of Faust, which had passed its three hundredth representation at the Lyceum; but in the running of a London theatre it is necessary to look a long way ahead; a year at least. In this case there was need of a longer preview, for our plans had already been made for a considerable time. We were to run Faust through the season except some weeks at the end to prepare other plays which together with Faust we were to take to America in the tour already arranged for 1887–8. As we should not be back till the spring of the later year the production of a new play, together with the music and selection of the company, had all to be thought of in time. Irving had—and justifiably—great hopes of the play, and spared on it neither pains nor expense. With regard to the scenery he thought that he would get Keeley Halswelle, A.R S.A., to make the designs. He was very fond of his work

and considered that it would be exactly suitable for his purpose. The painter consented and made some lovely sketches.

He expressed a wish to paint the scenes himself, and when the sketches and then the models in turn had to be approved of, we engaged the great paint-rooms of the Covent Garden Opera House then available, for his use. The canvas-cloths, framed pieces, borders and wings were got ready by our own carpenters and “primed” for the painting.

After a while we began to get anxious about the scenery. We kept asking and asking and asking as to time of completion; but without result. Finally I paid a visit of inspection to Covent Garden and to my surprise and horror found the acres of white untouched even to the extent of a charcoal outline.

The superb painter of pictures, untutored in stage art and perspective, had found himself powerless before those vast solitudes. He had been unable even to begin his task!

The work was then undertaken by Hawes Craven, J. Harker, T. W. Hall, W. Hann, and Perkins and Caney, with magnificent result.

Macbeth is a play that really requires the aid of artistic completeness. Its diction is so lordly, so poetical, so searching in its introspective power that it lifts the mind to an altitude which requires and expects some corresponding elevation of the senses.

Here, by the way, a certain incident comes back to my memory. In the Queen’s Theatre, Dublin, some forty years ago the tragedy was being given, and when the actor who played Lennox came to the lines

“The night has been unruly: where we lay,

Our chimneys were blown down....”

he spoke them, in the very worst of Dublin accents, as follows:

“The night hath been rumbunctious where we slep,

Our chimbleys was blew down."

For the music incidental to the play Sir Arthur Sullivan undertook the composition. He wrote overtures, preludes, incidental music and choruses, one and all suitable as well as fine. Throughout there is a barbaric ring which seems to take us back and place us amongst a warlike and undeveloped age. Wherever required he altered it during the progress of rehearsal.

It was a lesson in collaboration to see the way in which these two men, each great in his own craft, worked together. Arthur Sullivan knew that with Irving lay the responsibility of the ensemble, and was quite willing to subordinate himself to the end which the other had in view. Small-minded men are unwilling, or perhaps unable, to accept this position. If their susceptibilities are in any way wounded by even a non-recognition of the superiority of their work they are apt to sulk; and when an artist sulks those who have to work with him are apt to encounter a paralysing dead-weight. In any form vis inertia is cramping to artistic effort. But both these men were too big for chagrin or jealousy. As example of the harmony of their working and of the absolute necessity in such matters for absolute candour let me instance one scene. Here the music had all been written and rehearsed, and Sir Arthur sat in the conductor's chair. In a pause of the rehearsal of action on the stage he said:

"We are ready now, Irving, if you can listen."

"All right, old man; go ahead!" When the numbers of that particular piece of incidental music had been gone through the composer asked:

"Do you like that? Will it do?" Irving replied at once with kindly seriousness:

"Oh, as music it's very fine; but for our purpose it is no good at all. Not in the least like it!"

Sullivan was not offended by the frankness. He was only anxious to get some idea of what the other wanted. He asked him if he could give any hint or clue as to what

idea he had. Irving, even whilst saying in words that he did not know himself exactly what he wanted, managed, by sway of body and movement of arms and hands, by changing times and undulating tones, and by vowel sounds without words, to convey his inchoate thought, instinctive rather than of reason. Sullivan grasped the idea and the anxious puzzlement of his face changed to gladness.

"All right!" he said heartily, "I think I understand. If you will go on with the rehearsal I shall have something ready by-and-by." Sitting where he was, he began scoring, the band waiting. When some of the scenes had been rehearsed there was some movement in the orchestra—the crowding of heads together, little chirpy sounds from some of the instruments and then in a pause of the rehearsal:

"Now, Mr. Ball!"—John Meredith Ball was the Musical Director of the Lyceum. "If you are ready now, Irving, we can give you an idea. It is only the theme. If you think it will do I will work it out to-night."

The band struck up the music and Irving's face kindled as he heard.

"Splendid!" he said. "Splendid! That is all I could wish for. It is fine!"

I could not help feeling that such recognition and praise from a fellow artist was one of the rewards which has real value to the creator of good work.

II

It was necessary that Henry VIII. should be very carefully done; for its period is well recorded in architecture, stone-carving, goldsmith work, tapestry, stuffs, embroideries, costumes and paintings. Indeed many historical lessons may be taken from this play. Shakespeare, if he did not actually know or intend this, had an intuition of it. Henry VIII. marks one of the most important epochs in history, and as it was by the very luxury and extravagance of the nobles of the time that the power of the old feudalism was lowered, such naturally becomes a pivotal point of the play. It was a part of the subtle policy of Cardinal Wolsey to bring the great nobles to

London, instead of holding local courts of their own and surrounding themselves with vast retinues of armed retainers. Combination amongst a few such might shake even the throne. When once at the Court of the King they were encouraged and incited to vie with each other in the splendour of their dress and equipment; and soon their capacity for revolt was curbed by the quick wasting of their estates. The wonderful pageant of the Field of the Cloth of Gold had its political use and bearing which the student of the future will do well to investigate. In his play Shakespeare bore all this in mind, and took care to lay down in exact detail the order of his processions and rituals. It can be, therefore, seen that in this renaissance of art with a political meaning—and, therefore, a structural part of a historical play—it was advisable, if not necessary, to be exact in the décor of the play. To this end the greatest care was taken, with of course the added managerial intention of making the piece as attractive as possible. Seymour Lucas (then A.R.A. now R.A.), who undertook to superintend the production, went to and fro examining the buildings and picture and art work of the period wherever to be found. For months he had assistants working in the South Kensington Museum making coloured drawings of the many stuffs used at that time; reproducing for the guidance of the weavers, who were to take up their part of the work in turn, both texture and pattern and colour. Further months were occupied with the looms before the antique stuffs thus reproduced were ready for the costumier.

Irving's own dress—his robe as Cardinal—was, after months of experiment, exactly reproduced from a genuine robe of the period, kindly lent to him by Rudolph Lehmann, the painter.

Many lessons in stage values and effects were to be learned from this magnificent production. Let me give a couple of instances. As the period was that of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, there was naturally a good deal of cloth of gold used in the English Court; and such, or the effect of it, had to be set forth in the play. A day was fixed when Seymour Lucas was to choose the texture, make and colour of the

various patterns of gold cloth submitted. For this purpose the curtain was taken up and the footlights were turned on. A row of chairs, back out, were placed along the front of the stage, and on each was hung a sample of cloth of gold. Lucas and Irving, with Loveday and myself, sat in the stalls; and with us the various artists and workpeople employed in the production of the play—property master, wardrobe mistress, costumiers, &c. Something like the following took place as the painter's eye ranged along the glittering line of fabrics:

"That first one—well, fair. Let it remain! The next, take it away. No use at all! Third and fourth—put them on one side—We may want them for variety. Fifth—Oh! that is perfect! Just what we want!"

When the examination was finished we all went on the stage to look at the specimens accepted and discarded. There we found the second so peremptorily rejected was real cloth of gold at ten guineas a foot; whilst the fifth whose excellence for the purpose we had so enthusiastically accepted was Bolton sheeting stencilled in our own property-room, and costing as it stood about eighteen pence a yard.

Again, very fine jewellery—stage jewellery—had been prepared to go with the various dresses. In especial in the procession at the beginning of the fourth act the collars of the Knights of the Garter were of great magnificence. One of the actors, however, was anxious to have everything as real as possible, and not being content with the splendour of the diamond collars provided, borrowed a real one from one of the Dukes, whose Collar of the Garter was of a magnificence rare even amongst such jewels. He expected it to stand out amongst the other jewelled collars seen in the procession. But strange to say, it was the only one amongst them all that did not look well. It did not even look real. Stage jewels are large, and are backed with foil, which throws back the fierce light of the "floats," and the "standards," and the "ground rows," and all those aids to illusion which have been perfected by workmen

competent to their purpose.

III

The play ends with the christening of the infant Princess Elizabeth, in which of course a dummy baby was used. This gave a chance to the voices clamant for realism on the stage. When the play had run some forty nights Irving got a letter, from which I quote:

“The complete success of Henry VIII. was marred when the King kissed the china doll. The whole house tittered.... Herewith I offer the hire of our real baby for the purpose of personating the offspring....” To this I replied:

“Mr. Irving fears that there might be some difficulty in making the changes which you suggest with regard to the infant Princess Elizabeth in the play. If reality is to be achieved it should of necessity be real reality and not seeming reality; the latter we have already on the stage. A series of difficulties then arises, any of which you and your family might find insuperable: If your real baby were provided it might be difficult, or even impossible, for the actor who impersonates King Henry VIII. to feel the real feelings of a father towards it. This would necessitate your playing the part of the King; and further would require that your wife should play the part of Queen Anne Boleyn. This might not suit either of you—especially as in reality Henry VIII. had afterwards his wife’s head cut off. To this your wife might naturally object; but even if she were willing to accept this form of reality, and you were willing to accept the responsibility on your own part, Mr. Irving would, for his own sake, have to object. By law, if you had your wife decapitated you would be tried for murder; but as Mr. Irving would also be tried as an accessory before the fact, he too would stand in danger of his life. To this he distinctly objects, as he considers that the end aimed at is not worth the risk involved.

“Again, as the play will probably run for a considerable time, your baby would grow. It might, therefore, be necessary to provide another baby. To this you and

your wife might object—at short notice.

“There are other reasons—many of them—militating against your proposal; but you will probably deem those given as sufficient.”

Henry VIII. was produced on the night of Tuesday, January 5, 1892, and ran at the Lyceum for two hundred and three performances, ending on November 5. Its receipts were over sixty-six thousand pounds.

XII SHAKESPEARE PLAYS—IV

I

In the Edinburgh theatre during his three years’ engagement there, 1856–9, Irving had played the part of Curan in King Lear. This was, I think, the only part which he had ever played in the great tragedy; and it is certainly not one commending itself to an ambitious young actor. It is not what actors call a “fat” part; it is only ten lines in all, and none of those of the slightest importance. But the ambitious young actor had his eye on the play very early, and had thought out the doing of it in his own way. The play was not produced till the end of 1892; but nearly ten years before he had talked it over with me. I find this note rough in my diary for January 5, 1883:

“Theatre 7 till 2. H. and I supper alone. He told me of intention to play Lear on return from America. Gave rough idea of play—domestic—gives away kingdom round a wood fire, &c.”

On the night of the 9th he spoke again of it under similar circumstances. And on April 10 he returned to the subject.

King Lear, in the production of which Ford Madox Brown advised, was produced on November 10, 1892, and ran in all seventy-six nights. My diary of November 10 says:

“First night; King Lear. Great enthusiasm between acts. Whilst scenes on, stillness

like the grave. An ideal audience. Thunders of applause and cheers at end."

II

On the morning of January 19, after King Lear had run for sixty nights, I received a hurried note, written with pencil, from Irving, asking me to call and see him as soon as possible. I hurried to his rooms and found him ill and speechless with "grippe." This was one of the early epidemics of influenza and its manifestations were very sudden. He could not raise his head from his pillow. He wrote on a slip of paper:

"Can't play to-night. Better close the theatre."

"No!" I said, "I'll not close unless you order me to. I'll never close!" He smiled feebly and then wrote:

"What will you do?"

"I don't know," I said; "I'll go down to the theatre at once. Fortunately this is a rehearsal day and everybody will be there." He wrote again:

"Try Vezin."

"All right," I said. Just then Ellen Terry, to whom he had sent word, came in. When she knew how bad he was she said to me:

"Of course you'll close, Bram" (we use Christian names a good deal on the stage).

"No!" I said again.

"Then what will you do?"

"I don't know. But we'll play—unless you won't consent to!"

"Don't you know that I'll do anything!"

"Of course I do! It will be all right." This was a wild presumption, for at the time the Stage Manager was away ill.

All the time Irving was hearing every word, and smiled a little through his pain and illness. He never liked to hear of any one giving up; and I think it cheered him a

little to know that things were going on. I went to Mr. Vezin's rooms at once but he was out of town. When I got to the theatre all the company were there, I asked Terriss if he could play Lear. He said no, that he had not studied the part at all—adding in regret: "I only wish to goodness that I had. It will be a lesson to me in the future." I then asked the company in general if any of them had ever played Lear—or could play it; but there was no affirmative reply.

In the company was Mr. W. J. Holloway, who played the part of Kent. He was an old actor—that is, the actor was old though the man was in active middle age. He had, I knew, played in what is called "leading business" with his own company in Australia, where he had made much success. I asked him if he could read the part that night. If so, I should before the play ask the favour of the audience in the emergency; and that he would then play it "without the book" on the next night. He answered that he would rather wait till the next night, by which time he would be ready to play. To this I replied that if we closed for the night we should not re-open until Mr. Irving was able to resume work. After thinking a moment he said:

"Of course any one can read a part."

"Then," said I, "will you read it to-night and play to-morrow?"

He answered that he would. So I said to him:

"Now, Mr. Holloway, consider that from this moment till the curtain goes up you own the theatre. If there is anything you want for help or convenience, order it; you have carte blanche. Mr. Irving's dresser will make you up, and the Wardrobe Mistress will alter any dress to suit you. We will have a rehearsal if you wish it, now or in the evening before the play; or all day, if you like."

"I think," he said after a pause, "I had better get home and try to get hold of the words. I know the business pretty well as I have been at all the rehearsals. I am usually a quick study, and it will be so much better if I can do without the book—for part of the time at any rate."

In this he was quite wise; his experience as an old actor stood to him here. Kent is all through the play close to Lear, either in his own person or in disguise. The actor, therefore, who played the part, which in stage parlance is a “feeder,” had been at all the rehearsals of Lear’s scenes when the “business” of the play is being fixed and when endless repetitions of speech and movement make all familiar with both text and action. Also for sixty nights he had gone through the play till every part of it was burned into his brain. Still, knowledge of a thing is not doing it; and it was a very considerable responsibility to undertake to play such a tremendous part as Lear at short notice.

When he came down at night he seemed easier in his mind than I expected; his wife, who was present—though without his knowing it lest it might upset him—told me privately that he was “letter perfect” in at least the two first acts. “I have been going over it with him all day,” she said, “so I am confident he will be all right.”

And he was all right. From first to last he never needed a word of prompting. Of course we had prepared for all emergencies. Not only had the prompter and the call-boy each a prompt-book ready at every wing, but all his fellow actors were primed and ready to help.

I shall never forget that performance; it really stirred me to look at it as I did all through from the wings in something of the same state of mind as a hen who sees her foster ducklings toddling into the ditch. I had known that good actors were fine workmen of their craft, but I think I never saw it realised as then. It was like looking at a game of Rugby football when one is running with the ball for a touch-down behind goal with all the on-side men of his team close behind him. He could not fail if he wanted to. They backed him up in every possible way. The cues came quick and sharp and there was not time to falter or forget. If any of the younger folk, upset by the gravity of the occasion, forgot or delayed in their speeches, some one else spoke them for them. The play went with a rush right through; the only difference

from the sixty previous performances being that though the entr'actes were of the usual length the play was shorter by some twenty minutes. When the call came at the end the audience showed their approval of Mr. Holloway's plucky effort by hearty applause. When the curtain had finally fallen the actor received that most dear reward of all. His comrades of all ranks closed round him and gave him a hearty cheer. Then the audience beyond the curtain, recognising the rare honour, joined in the cheer till from wall to wall the whole theatre rang.

It was a moving occasion to us all, and I am right sure that it bore two lessons to all the actors present, young and old alike: to be ready for chances that may come; and to accept the responsibility of greatness in their work when such may present itself.

Of acting in especial, of all crafts the motto might be:

"The readiness is all!"

III

One other incident of the run of King Lear is, I think, worthy of record, inasmuch as it bears on the character and feeling of that great Englishman, Mr. Gladstone. In the second week of the run he came to see the play, occupying his usual seat on the stage on the O.P. corner. He seemed most interested in all that went on, but not entirely happy. At the end, after many compliments to Mr. Irving and Miss Terry, he commented on the unpatriotic conduct of taking aid from the French—from any foreigner—under any circumstances whatever of domestic stress.

IV

Saturday, December 19, 1896, was an eventful day in Irving's life. That evening, in the full tide of his artistic success and with a personal position such as no actor had ever won, he placed on the stage Richard III., his acting in which just twenty years before had added so much and so justly to the great reputation which he had even then achieved.

His early fight had long been won. The public, and in especial the growing generation whose minds were free from the prejudice of ancient custom, had received his philosophic acting without cavil; the “Irving school” of acting had become a part of the nation’s glory.

From the early morning of that day crowds were waiting to gain admission. Many of those in the passage to the pit door, leading in from the Strand, had camp-stools. One man had brought a regular chair so that he might sit all day with as little discomfort as possible. At four o’clock, when a great crowd had assembled, Irving had them all supplied with tea and bread-and-butter at his own expense. This was a custom which had grown up under his care and which made for a feeling of great personal kindness between the actor and his unknown friends. Most of those who waited at the pit door on first nights were young ladies and gentlemen, and of course quite able to provide for themselves. But nothing would induce them to have a cup of tea till it was sent out to them by the management. That came to be a part of their cherished remembrance of such occasions, and was not to be foregone.

Many and many a time since then have I met in society persons, both ladies and gentlemen, who introduced themselves as old friends since the days when I had spoken to them, whilst waiting, through the iron rail which kept them from lateral pressure by newcomers and preserved the queue.

That day they were in great force, and even then, long before the house was, or could be, opened, there was no denying the hope-laden thrill of expectation with which they regarded the coming of the night’s endeavour.

They were well justified, for nothing, so far as the Richard was concerned, could have gone with more marked success. The audience was simply wild with enthusiasm. That alone helps to make success in a theatre; the whole place seems charged with some kind of electric force and every one is lifted or even exalted beyond the common—the actors to do, the others to be receptive. At the close of the

performance there were endless calls and cheering which made the walls ring.

In his very early youth Irving had found a certain attractiveness in Richard III., though doubtless he did not then know or realise what a play was. His cousin, John Penberthy, told me in 1890 how when they were both boys “Johnny” had a book opening out into long series of scenes of plays and that he used to be fond of saying dramatically? “My horse! my horse! A kingdom for my horse!” Whether the error lay with the child’s knowledge or the man’s memory I know not.

Some of the scenes—not merely the painted or built pictures, but that which took in the persons as well as the setting of the stage—were of great beauty. In especial was the first scene when the funeral procession of King Henry VI. came on. Irving had tried to realise some of the effect of the great picture by Edwin A. Abbey, R.A. Here the tide of mourners seems to sweep along in resistless mass, with an extraordinary effect of the spear-poles of royal scarlet amidst the black draperies.

Whilst the bulk of the audience were taking their reluctant way home certain invited guests from their body were beginning to fill up again the great stage which had by now been transposed into a room surrounded by supper-tables. Irving was receiving his friends after what had by then grown to be an established custom of first and last nights. From the buoyancy and joy of the guests it was easy to see how the play had gone. All were rejoicing as if each one had achieved a personal success.

V

In his own rooms that night he met with an accident which prevented his working for ten weeks. And so the run of Richard III. at that time was limited to one triumphant night.

On February 27 it was resumed till the coming of the time, which had long before been fixed, for the production of Madame Sans-Gêne.

XIII IRVING'S METHOD

I

The first time I saw Eugene Aram, June 6, 1879, I was much struck with one fact—amongst many—which afforded a real lesson in the art of acting in all its phases—philosophy, effect, value and method. It is that of the effect, intellectual as well as emotional, of a lightning-like change in the actor's manner. In this play, the Yorkshire schoolmaster, who under the stress of violent emotion wrought by wrong to the woman he loved, has avoided the danger of discovery and has for a long time remained in outward peace in the house of Parson Meadows, the Vicar of Knaresborough. The evil genius of his early day, Richard Houseman, who alone knew of his crime, had succeeded in "tracking" him down; and now, being in desperate straits, tried to blackmail him. Knowing his man, however, he will not meet him. Such a one as Houseman is a veritable "daughter of the horseleech"; the giving is each time a firmer ground for further chantage. Houseman, grown desperate, threatens him that he will expose him to Meadows; and Eugene Aram, who has loved in secret the Vicar's daughter Ruth, seeing all his cherished hopes of happiness shattered, grows more desperate still. All the murderous potentialities which have already manifested themselves wake to new life in the "climbing" passion of the moment—the hysterica passio of King Lear. As Irving played it, the hunted man at bay was transformed from his gentleness to a ravening tiger; he looked the spirit of murder incarnate as he answered threat by threat. Just at that moment the door opened and in walked Ruth Meadows, bright and cheery as a ray of spring sunshine. In a second—less than a second, for the change was like lightning—the sentence begun in one way went on in another without a quaver or pause. The mind and powers of the remorse-haunted man who had for weary years trained himself for just such an emergency worked true. Unfailingly a sudden and marked burst of applause rewarded on each occasion this remarkable artistic tour de

force.

II

The play of Richelieu had always a particular interest for those who knew that in it he made his first appearance on the stage in the small part of Gaston, Duke of Orleans.

Regarding this first appearance three names should be borne in memory as those who helped the ambitious young clerk to an opening in the art he had chosen. The names of two of these are already known. One was William Hoskins, who at considerable self-sacrifice had helped to teach him his craft, and who had predicted good things for him. The other was E. D. Davis, an old actor, who was just entering upon the management of the Lyceum Theatre, Sunderland; and who at Mr. Hoskins' request gave him an engagement.

The third friend made his way possible, and gave him opportunity of appearing to advantage in his parts by supplying him with the sinews of war. This friend was none other than his uncle, Thomas Brodribb, the second of the four brothers of whom Irving's father, Samuel, was fourth. He was—perhaps fortunately for his nephew—a bachelor. He had but small means; but also, happily, small wants. Amongst his assets he had a policy of insurance on which many premiums had been paid; and wishing to do something for his nephew on his starting on a new life, he made over to him this policy so that he might realise on it. This his nephew did to the result of nearly one hundred pounds sterling, all of which was by degrees laid out carefully with most anxious thought on such wardrobe and personal properties as are not usually "found" by provincial managements. This kindly and timely assistance enabled the young actor to appear during his first years on the stage in many parts with something of that suitability of presence which his characters demanded. In those early days the wardrobe of country theatres was limited and the actors often chose their dresses in the sequence of importance; so that it was much to

a young man to be able to supplement such costume as came to him. Could the generous, kindly-hearted Uncle Thomas have lived to see the grand consequences eventually resulting in part from his thoughtful kindness he might have indeed been proud.

There was this difference in Irving's Richelieu and the same part as played by any other actor I have seen. In the great scene of the quarrel between Baradas and the Cardinal, when the former wants, for his own purposes, to take, by the King's authority, Julie from his custody, the latter hurls at him the magnificently effective speech beginning: "Then wakes the power which in the Age of Iron...."

This by the players of the old school was thundered out with the same vigour with which they fought in their sword combats; and certainly the effect was very telling. It was the act as well as the word of personal mastery.

Irving kept the full effect; but did it in such a way that he superadded to the Cardinal's character the flickering spasmodic power of an infirm old man. He too began in tones of thunder. To his full height he drew the tall form that seemed massive in the sacerdotal robes. He was manifestly inspired and borne up by the divine force of his sacred office. But at the end he collapsed, almost sinking into a swoon. Thus the effect was magnified and the sense of both reality and characterisation enhanced.

III

With Louis XI., a part which in France is called le grand rôle, Henry Irving was fairly familiar in his early years on the stage. He had played the part of both Coitier and Tristan, and as one or other of these in most of the scenes he had full experience of the acting value of the title rôle. It would be very unlike the method of study habitual to him even before he went on to the stage if he had not all the time, both at rehearsal and performance, grasped the acting possibilities of both character and situations, and devised new and subtle means for characterisation. When in 1878 he

had run the piece for some three months he had learned much, both by practice and from the opinions of his friends. In those days he did not often read criticisms of an ordinary kind. He found that some of them, written by irresponsible writers imperfectly equipped for their task, only disturbed and irritated him. And so he only read such as had filtered through the judgment of his friends; a habit which George Eliot had adopted about the same time.

Though I had not seen his performance that year I could tell, in 1879, from his anxiety about the rehearsal of certain scenes and the care bestowed on the new or altered scenery and appointments, that his new work was to be on a slightly different plane from the old.

After a few performances Louis XI. became a sort of holiday part to him. There is in it but one change of dress: that between the fourth and fifth acts. This change, though exceptionally heavy, is as nothing to the exhaustion consequent on the many changes of costume necessary in most heavy plays. These ordinarily absorb in swift and laborious work the only breathing times between the periods of action. A series of small labours may in the long run amount to more than one large one.

The limitation of violent effort in this play made him very “easy” in it. In one scene only does such occur; that at the end of the fourth act as originally played. Of late years he played it in four acts altogether, amalgamating the first and second acts with much benefit to the play.

Only once have I seen him put out at anything during the playing of Louis XI. It was in Chicago on the night of Saturday, February 13, 1904. For five weeks following the burning of the Iroquois Theatre in that city no theatre had been allowed to open. The official world, which had itself been gravely in fault in allowing the theatre to be opened before it had been tested, tried to show their integrity by imposing rigid perfection—after the event—on other people. The Illinois Theatre, where we were to play, was the first theatre opened, and naturally we had to stand the brunt of

official over-zeal. We had been harassed beyond belief from the moment we entered the theatre.

On the night of Louis XI. all went well till the end of the bedroom scene between the King and Nemours. Here, when the Duke had escaped, the King calls for aid and his guards rush in with torches, and by their master's direction search the room for his enemy. The effectiveness of the scene depends on the light thus introduced, for the scene is a dark one, lit only by the King's chamber-lamp. To Irving's dismay the cue for the lights was not answered. True, the guards came on, but in darkness. The firemen in the wings had seized from the guards the spirit torches—implements carefully made to obviate any possible danger from fire and each carried by one of our men practised in the handling of them.

After a night or two matters got a little easier. The fire regulations, which directed that the men of that department on the stage should make requisition to the responsible manager who would see them carried out, began to be more decorously observed.

IV

The Lyons Mail is the especial title of Charles Reade's version of Le Courier de Lyons. The play has often been done in its older form but in the newer only by Charles Kean and Henry Irving. Indeed when Irving took it in hand he got Reade to make some changes, especially in the second act, where Joseph Lesurques has the interview with his father, who believes that he is guilty and that he saw him fire the shot by which he himself was wounded.

Irving has often told me that in playing the double part the real difficulty was not to make the two men unlike and guilt look like guilt, but the opposite. He used to adduce instances told him by experienced judges and counsel of where they had been themselves deceived by demeanour. It is indeed difficult for any one to discriminate between the shame, together with the submission to the Divine Law to

which he has been bred, of the innocent, and the fear, whose expression is modified by hardihood, of the guilty. In Irving's case the points of difference were not merely overt; there were subtle differences of tone and look and bearing—loftiness, for instance, as against supreme and fearless indifference and brutality.

The Lyons Mail was always one of the most anxious and exhausting of his plays. In the first place he was always on the stage, either in the one character of Lesurques or the other of Dubose—except at the end of the play, where he appeared to be both. All the intervals were taken up with necessary changes of dress. In the next place the time is all-important. In any melodrama accuracy as to time is important to success; but in this one of confused identity it is all-important. There are occasions when the delay of a single second will mar the best studied effect, and when to be a second too soon is to spoil the plot. In certain plays the actors must "overlap" in their speeches; the effect of their work must be to carry the thought of the audience from point to point without wavering. Thus they receive the necessary information without the opportunity of examining it too closely. This is a part of the high art of the stage. There can be illusions by other means than light.

Once there was a peculiar contretemps in the acting. Tom Mead was a fine old actor with a tall thin form and a deep voice that sounded like an organ. His part was that of Jerome Lesurques, the father of the unhappy man whose double was the villain Dubose. He had played it for many years and very effectively. The end of the first act comes when Dubose, the robber and murderer, is confronted by Jerome Lesurques. The old man thinks it is his son whom he sees rifling the body of the mail guard. As he speaks the words: "Good God! my son, my son," Dubose fires at him, wounding him on the arm, and escapes as the curtain comes down.

On this particular night—it was one of the last nights in New York, closing the tour of 1893–4—Mead forgot his words. Dubose stood ready with his pistol to fire; but no words came. Now, if the audience do not know that Jerome Lesurques thinks that

his son is guilty the heart is taken out of the play, for it is his unconscious evidence that proves his son's guilt. The words had to be spoken at any cost by some one. Irving waited, but the old man's memory was gone. So he himself called out in a loud voice: "I'm not your son!" and shot him. And, strange to say, none of the audience seemed to notice the omission.

Tom Mead was famous in his later years amongst his comrades for making strange errors, and when he had any new part they always waited to see what new story he would beget. Once on a voyage to America when we were arranging the concert for the Seamen's Orphans, he said he would do a scene from Macbeth if Mrs. Pauncefort would do it with him. She, a fine old actress, at once consented and from thence on the members of the company were waiting to see what the slip would be. They were certain there would be one; to them there was no "might" or "if" in the matter. The scene chosen was that of the murder of Duncan, and all went well till the passage was reached:

"And Pity, like a naked new-born babe

Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed

Upon the sightless carriers of the air."

This noble passage he repeated as follows:

"And Pity, like a naked new-born babe

Seated on the horse. No! Horsed on the seat!

No! What is the word?"

Once before, during the first run of Macbeth, he played one of the witches; when circling round the cauldron he had to say: "Cool it with a baboon's blood." This he changed to:

"Cool it with a dragoon's blood!"

As the words are spoken before Macbeth enters, Irving, standing ready in the wings,

of course heard the error. Later in the evening he sent for Mead and called his attention to the error, pointing out that as the audience knew so well the words of the swinging lines they might notice an error, and that it would be well to read over the part afresh. This he promised to do. Next night he got very anxious as the time drew near. He moved about restlessly behind the scenes saying over and over again to himself, "dragoon, no baboon—baboon!—dragoon!—dragoon!—baboon!" till he got himself hopelessly mixed. His comrades were in ecstasy. When at last he came to say the word he said it wrong; and as he had a voice whose tones he could not modify this is what the audience heard:

"Cool it with dragoon's blood—No, no, baboon's. My God! I've said it again! baboon's blood."

When we did Iolanthe, a version by W. G. Wills of King René's Daughter, Mead took the part of Ebn Jaira, an Eastern Wizard. At one part of the piece, where things look very black indeed for the happiness of the blind girl, he has to say: "All shall be well in that immortal land where God hath His dwelling." One night he got shaky in his words and surprised the audience with:

"In that immortal land where God hath His—Ah—um—His apartments!"

Such mental aberrations used to be fairly common in the old days when new parts had to be learned every night, and when the prompter, in so far as the "book" was concerned, was a hard-worked official and not an anachronism, as now. Macready had an experience of it once when playing Hamlet. The actor who took the part of the Priest in the graveyard scene was inadequately prepared and in the passage;

"for charitable prayers,

Shards, flints, and pebbles shall be thrown on her."

he said, "shards, flints and beadles." This almost overcame the star, who was heard to murmur to himself before he went on: "Beadles! Beadles!" and at the end of the play one behind him heard him say as he walked to his dressing-room:

“He said ‘beadles’!”

V

Charles I. is rather too slight and delicate a play for great popularity; and in addition its politics are too aggressive. Whenever I think of it in its political aspect I am always reminded of a pregnant saying of Dion Boucicault—I mean Dion Boucicault the Elder, for the years have run fast—spoken in the beautiful Irish brogue which was partly natural and partly cultivated:

“The rayson why historical plays so seldom succeed is because a normal audience doesn’t go into the thayatre with its politics in its breeches pockets!”

This is really a philosophical truth, and the man who had then written or adapted over four hundred plays knew it. A great political situation may, like any other great existing force, form a milieu for dramatic action; making or increasing difficulties or abrogating or lessening them; or bringing unexpected danger or aid to the persons of the drama. But where the political situation is supposed to be lasting or eternally analogous, it is apt to create in the minds of an audience varying conditions of thought and sympathy. And where these all-powerful forces of an audience are opposed they become mutually destructive, being only united into that one form which makes for the destruction of the play.

One of the most notable things of Irving’s Charles I. was his extraordinary reproduction of Van Dyck’s pictures. The part in its scenic aspect might have been called “Van Dyck in action.” Each costume was an exact reproduction from one of the well-known paintings; and the reproduction of Charles’s face was a marvel. In this particular case he had a fine model, for Van Dyck painted the King in almost every possible way of dignity. To aid him in his work Edwin Long made for him a triptych of Van Dyck heads, and this used to rest before him on his dressing-table on those nights when he played Charles.

Irving was a painter of no mean degree with regard to his “make-up” of parts. He spared no pains on the work, and on nights when he played parts requiring careful preparations, such as Charles I., Shylock, Louis XI., Gregory Brewster (in Waterloo), King Lear, Richelieu and some few others he always came to his dressing-room nearly an hour earlier than at other times. It has often amazed me to see the physiognomy of Shylock gradually emerge from the actor’s own generous countenance. Though I have seen it done a hundred times I could never really understand how the lips thickened, with the red of the lower lip curling out and over after the manner of the typical Hebraic countenance; how the bridge of the nose under his painting—for he used no physical building up—rose into the Jewish aquiline; and, most wonderful of all, how the eyes became veiled and glassy with introspection—eyes which at times could and did flash lurid fire.

But there is for an outsider no understanding what strange effects stage make-up can produce. When my son, who is Irving’s godson, then about seven years old, came to see Faust I brought him round between the acts to see Mephistopheles in his dressing-room. The little chap was exceedingly pretty—like a cupid, and a quaint fancy struck the actor. Telling the boy to stand still for a moment he took his dark pencil and with a few rapid touches made him up after the manner of Mephistopheles; the same high-arched eyebrows; the same sneer at the corners of the mouth; the same pointed moustache. I think it was the strangest and prettiest transformation I ever saw. And I think the child thought so too, for he was simply entranced with delight.

Irving loved children, and I think he was as enchanted over the incident as was the child himself.

XIV ART-SENSE

I

No successful play, perhaps, had ever so little done for it as The Bells on its production. Colonel Bateman did not believe in it, and it was only the concatenation of circumstances of his own desperate financial condition and Irving's profound belief in the piece that induced him to try it at all. The occasion was in its effect somewhat analogous to Edmund Kean's first appearance at Drury Lane; the actor came to the front and top of his profession per saltum. The production was meagre; of this I can bear a certain witness myself. When Irving took over the management of the Lyceum into his own hands the equipment of The Bells was one of the assets coming to him. When he did play it he used the old dresses, scenery and properties, and their use was continued as long as possible. Previous to the American tour of 1883–4, fifty-five performances in all constituted the entire wear and tear.

On our first expedition to America everything was packed in a very cumbrous manner, the amount of timber, nails and screws used was extraordinary. There were hundredweights of extracted screws on the stage of the Star Theatre of New York whilst the unpacking was in progress. When I came down to the theatre on the first morning after the unloading of the stuff, Arnott, who was in charge of the mechanics of the stage, came to me and said:

"Would you mind coming here a moment, sir, I would like you to see something!" He brought me to the back of the stage and pointed out a long heap of rubbish some four feet high. It was just such as you would see in the waste-heap of a house-wrecker's yard.

"What on earth is that?" I asked.

"That is the sink-and-rise of the vision in The Bells. In effecting a vision on the stage the old method used to be to draw the back scenes or "flats" apart, or else to raise the whole scene from above or take it down through a long trap on the stage. The latter was the method adopted by the scene-painter of The Bells."

“Did it meet with an accident?” I asked.

“No, sir. It simply shook to bits just as you see it. It was packed up secure and screwed tight like the rest!”

I examined it carefully. The whole stuff was simply rotten with age and wear; as thoroughly worn out as the deacon’s wonderful one-horse shay in Oliver Wendell Holmes’ poem. The canvas had been almost held together by the overlay of paint, and as for the wood it was cut and hacked and pieced to death; full of old screw-holes and nail-holes. No part of it had been of new timber or canvas when The Bells was produced eleven years before. With this experience I examined the whole scenery and found that almost every piece of it was in a similar condition. It had been manufactured out of all the odds and ends of old scenery in the theatre.

Under the modern conditions of Metropolitan theatres it is hard to imagine what satisfied up to the “seventies.” Nowadays the scenery of good theatres is made for travel. The flats are framed in light wood, securely clamped and fortified at the joints; and in folding sections like screens, each section being not more than six feet wide, so as to be easily handled and placed in baggage-waggons. The scenes are often fixed on huge castors with rubber bosses so as to move easily and silently. But formerly they were made in single panels and of heavy timber and took a lot of strength to move.

II

From the time of my joining him in 1878 till his death Irving played The Bells in all six hundred and twenty-seven times, being one hundred and sixty-eight in London; two hundred and seventy-three in the British provinces, and one hundred and eighty-six in America. During its first run at the Lyceum in 1872–3 it ran one hundred and fifty-one nights, so that in all he played The Bells seven hundred and seventy-eight times, besides certain occasions when he gave it in his provincial tours previous to 1878. Altogether he probably played the piece over eight hundred times.

Colonel Bateman originally leased the rights of the play from the author Leopold Lewis. Finally, at a time of stress—sadly frequent in those days with poor old Lewis—he sold them to Samuel French, from whom Irving finally purchased them. Notwithstanding this double purchase Irving used, after the death of Lewis, to allow his widow a weekly sum whenever he was playing—playing not merely The Bells but anything else—up to the time of his death.

Mathias was an exceedingly hard and exhausting part on the actor, but as years rolled on it became in ever greater demand.

III

The original choice of the play by Irving is an object-lesson of the special art-sense of an actor regarding his own work. Irving knew that the play would succeed. It was not guessing nor hoping nor any other manifestation of an optimistic nature. Had Bateman, in the business crisis of 1872, not allowed him to put it on, he would infallibly have put it on at some other time.

It would be difficult for an actor to explain in what this art-sense consists or how it brings conviction to those whose gift it is. Certainly any one not an actor could not attempt the task at all. In the course of a quarter of a century of intimate experience of this actor, when he has confided to me the very beginnings of his intentions and let me keep in touch with his mind when such intentions became at first fixed and then clamorous of realisation, I have known him see his way to personal success with regard to several characters. For instance:

When in 1885 he had arranged to do Olivia and was making up the cast he put himself down as Dr. Primrose. I had not seen the play in which Ellen Terry had appeared under John Hare’s management—with enormous success for a long run—and I had no guiding light, except the text of the play, as to the excellence of the part as an acting one. But neither had Irving seen it. He too had nothing but the text to go by, but he was quite satisfied with what he could do. He knew of course

from report that Ellen Terry would be fine. For myself I could not see in the Vicar a great part for so great an actor, and tried my best to dissuade him from acting it. “Get the best man in London, or out of it—at any price,” I said; “but don’t risk playing a part like that, already played exhaustively and played well according to accounts!”—Hermann Vezin had played it in the run. Irving answered me with all his considerate sweetness of manner:

“My dear fellow, it is all right! I can see my way to it thoroughly. If I can’t play the Vicar to please I shall think I don’t know my business as an actor; and that I really think I do!” This was said not in any way truculently or self-assertively, but with a businesslike quietude which always convinced. When any man was sincere with Irving, he too was always both sincere and sympathetic, even to an opposing view to his own. When one was fearless as well as sincere he gained an added measure of the actor’s respect.

Again, when in 1885 Faust was being produced I began to have certain grave doubts as to whether we were justified in the extravagant hopes which we had all formed of its success. The piece as produced was a vast and costly undertaking; and as both the décor and the massing and acting grew, there came that time, perhaps inevitable in all such undertakings of indeterminate bounds, as to whether reality would justify imagination. With me that feeling culminated on the night of a partial rehearsal, when the Brocken scene on which we all relied to a large extent was played, all the supers and ballet and most of the characters being in dress. It was then, as ever afterwards, a wonderful scene of imagination, of grouping, of lighting, of action, and all the rush and whirl and triumphant cataclysm of unfettered demoniacal possession. But it all looked cold and unreal—that is, unreal to what it professed. When the scene was over—it was then in the grey of the morning—I talked with Irving in his dressing-room before going home. I expressed my feeling that we ought not to build too much on this one play. After all it might not catch on with the public as firmly as we had all along expected—almost taken for granted. Could we not be

quietly getting something else ready, so that in case it did not turn out all that which our fancy painted we should be able to retrieve ourselves. Other such arguments of judicious theatrical management I used earnestly.

Irving listened, gravely weighing all I said; then he answered me genially:

"That is all true; but in this case I have no doubt. I know the play will do. To-night I think you have not been able to judge accurately. You are forming an opinion largely from the effect of the Brocken. As far as to-night goes you are quite right; but you have not seen my dress. I do not want to wear it till I get all the rest correct. Then you will see. I have studiously kept as yet all the colour scheme to that grey-green. When my dress of flaming scarlet appears amongst it—and remember that the colour will be intensified by that very light—it will bring the whole picture together in a way you cannot dream of. Indeed I can hardly realise it myself yet, though I know it will be right. You shall see too how Ellen Terry's white dress, and even that red scar across her throat, will stand out in the midst of that turmoil of lightning!"

He had seen in his own inner mind and with his vast effective imagination all these pictures and these happenings from the very first; all that had been already done was but leading up to the culmination.

IV

Let me say here that Irving loved sincerity, and most of all in those around him and those who had to aid him in his work—for no man can do all for himself. Alfred Gilbert the sculptor once said to me on seeing from behind the scenes how a great play was pulled through on a first night, when every soul in the place was alive with desire to aid and every nerve was instinct with thought:

"I would give anything that the world holds to be served as Irving is!"

He was quite right. There must be a master mind for great things; and the master of

that mind must learn to trust others when the time of action comes. The time for doubting, for experimenting, for teaching and weighing and testing is in the antecedent time of preparation. But when the hour strikes, every doubt is a fetter to one's own work—a barrier between effort and success.

In artistic work this is especially so. The artist temperament is sensitive—almost super-sensitive; and the requirements of its work necessitate that form of quietude which comes from self-oblivion. It is not possible to do any work based on individual qualities, when from extrinsic cause some unrequired phase of that individuality looms large in the foreground of thought.

This quality is of the essence of every artist, but is emphasised in the actor; for here his individuality is not merely a help to creative power but is a medium by which he expresses himself. Thus it will be found as a working rule of life that the average actor will not, if he can help it, do anything or take any responsibility which will make for the possibility of unpopularity. The reason is not to be found in vanity, or in a merely reckless desire to please; it is that unpopularity is not only harmful to his aim and detrimental to his well-being, but is a disturbing element in his work quâ actor. In another place we shall have to consider the matter of "dual consciousness" which Irving considered to be of the intellectual mechanism of acting. Here we must take it that if to a double consciousness required for a work a third—self-consciousness—is added, they are apt to get mixed; and fine purpose will be thwarted or overborne.

Thus it is that an actor has to keep himself, in certain ways at least, for his work. When in addition he has the cares and worries and responsibilities and labours and distractions of management to encounter daily and hourly, it is vitally necessary that he has trustworthy, and to him, sufficing assistance. It is quite sufficient for one man to originate the scope and ultimate effect of a play; to bring all the workers of different crafts employed in its production; to select the various actors each for

special qualities, to rehearse them and the less skilled labourers employed in effect; in fact to bring the whole play into harmonious completeness. All beyond this is added labour, exhausting to the individual and ineffective with regard to the work in hand. When, therefore, an actor-manager has such trusty and efficient assistance as is here suggested many things become possible to him with regard to the finesse of his art, which he dared not otherwise attempt. Somebody must stand the stress of irritating matters; there must be some barrier to the rush of mordant distractions. Irving could do much and would have in the long run done at least the bulk of what he intended; but he never could have done all he did without the assistance of his friend and trusty stage-lieutenant, who through the whole of his management stood beside him in all his creative work and shaped into permanent form his lofty ideas of stage effect. It is not sufficient in a theatre to see a thing properly done and then leave it to take care of itself for the future. Stage perfection needs constant and never-ending vigilance. No matter how perfectly a piece may be played, from the highest to the least important actor, in a certain time things will begin to get "sloppy" and fresh rehearsals are required to bring all up again to the standard of excellence fixed. To Loveday and the able staff under him, whose devotion and zeal were above all praise, the continued excellence of the Lyceum plays had to be mainly trusted.

Let it be clearly understood here, however, that I say this not to belittle Irving, but to add to his honour. In addition to other grand qualities he had the greatness to trust where trust was due. With him lay all the great conception and imagination and originality of all his accomplishments. He was quite content that others should have their share of honour.

When one considers the amazing labour and expense concerned in the "production" of a play, he is better able to estimate the value of devoted and trusted assistance.

V

Even the thousand and one details of the business of a theatre need endless work and care—work which would in the long run shatter entirely the sensitive nervous system of an artist. In fact it may be taken for granted that no artist can properly attend to his own business. As an instance I may point to Whistler, who, long after he had made money and lost it again and had begun to build up his fortune afresh, came to me for some personal advice before going to America to deliver his “Five o’clock” discourse. In the course of our conversation he said:

“Bram, I wish I could get some one to take me up and attend to my business for me—I can’t do it myself; and I really think it would be worth a good man’s while—some man like yourself,” he courteously added. “I would give half of all I earned to such a man, and would be grateful to him also for a life without care!”

I think myself he was quite right. He was before his time—long before it. He did fine work and created a new public taste ... and he became bankrupt. His house and all he had were sold; and the whole sum he owed would, I think, have been covered by the proper sale of a few of the pictures which were bought almost en bloc by a picture-dealer who sold them for almost any price offered. He had a mass of them in his gallery several feet thick as they were piled against the wall. One of them he sold to Irving for either £20 or £40, I forget which.

This was the great picture of Irving as King Philip in Tennyson’s drama Queen Mary. It was sold at Christie’s amongst Irving’s other effects after his death and fetched over five thousand pounds sterling.

VI

During the run of Cymbeline a pause of one night was made for a special occasion. November 25, 1896, was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first performance of The Bells, and on that memorable birth-night the performance was repeated to an immense house enthusiastic to the last degree.

After the curtain had finally fallen the whole of the company and all the employees of the theatre gathered on the stage for a presentation to Irving to commemorate the remarkable occasion. One and all without exception had contributed in proportion to their means. Most of all, Alfred Gilbert, R.A., who had given his splendid genius and much labour as his contribution. Of course on this occasion it was only the model which was formally conveyed. The form of the trophy was a great silver bell standing some two feet high, exquisite in design and with the grace and beauty of the work of a Cellini; a form to be remembered in after centuries. I had the honour of writing the destined legend to be wrought in a single line in raised letters on a band of crinkly gold on the curve of the bell. Gilbert had made a point of my writing it, and be sure I was proud to do so. It ran:

HONOUR TO IRVING THROUGH THE LOVE OF HIS COMRADES I RING THROUGH THE AGES.

Gilbert was enthusiastic about it, for he said it fulfilled all the conditions of the legend on a bell. In the first place, according to the ancient idea, a bell is a person with a soul and a thought and a voice of its own; it is supposed to speak on its own initiative. In the second place, the particular inscription was short and easily wrought and would just go all round the bell. Moreover from its peculiar form the reading of it could begin anywhere. I felt really proud when he explained all this to me and I realised that I had so well carried out the idea.

VII

It may perhaps be here noted that according to the tradition of the Comédie-Française a play becomes a classic work when it has held the boards for a quarter of a century. The director, M. Jules Claretie, asked Irving if they might play The Bells in the House of Molière. Of course he was pleased and sent to Claretie a copy of the prompt-book and drawings of the scenes and appointments.

Jules Claretie was by now an old friend. In 1879, when the Comédie-Française came

to London and played at the Gaiety Theatre, he came over as one of the men of letters interested in their success. It was not till afterwards that he was selected as Director. I remember well one night when he came to supper with Irving in the Lyceum. This was before the old Beefsteak Room was reappointed to its old use; and we supped in the room next to his own dressing-room, occasionally used in these days for purposes of hospitality. There came also three other Frenchmen of literary note: Jules Clery, Jacques Normand and the great critic Francisque Sarcey. There was a marked scarcity of language between us; none of the Frenchmen spoke in those days a word of English, and neither Irving nor I knew more than a smattering of French. We got on well, however, and managed to exchange ideas in the manner usual to people who want to talk with each other. It was quite late, and we had all begun to forget that we did not know each other's language, when we missed Sarcey. I went out to look for him, fearing lest he might come to grief through some of the steps or awkward places in the almost dark theatre. In those days of gas lighting we always kept alight the "pilot" light in the great chandelier of bronze and glass which hung down into the very centre of the auditorium—just above the sight-line from the gallery. This pilot was a matter of safety, and I rather think that we were compelled, either by the civic authorities or the superior landlord, to see it attended to. The gas remaining in the pipes of the theatre was just sufficient to keep it going for four and twenty hours. If it went out there must be a leak somewhere; and that leak had to be discovered and attended to without delay.

I could not find Sarcey on the dim stage or in the front of the house. In a theatre the rule is to take up the curtain when the audience have passed out so that there may be as much time and opportunity as possible for ventilating the house. I began to get a little uneasy about the missing guest; but when I came near the corner of the stage whence the private staircase led to Irving's rooms I heard a queer kind of thumping sound. I followed it out into the passage leading from the private door in Burleigh Street to the Royal box. This was shut off from the theatre by an iron door—not

locked, but falling gently into the jambs by its own weight. When I pushed open the door I found Sarcey all by himself, dancing an odd sort of dance something after the manner of the "Gillie Callum." It was positively weird. I never afterwards could think of Sarcey without there rising before me the vision of that lively, silent, thick-set, agile figure moving springily in the semi-darkness.

Jules Claretie was many times at the Lyceum after the first visit, and in his régime the Theâtre-Français was the home of courtesy to strangers.

XV STAGE EFFECTS

I

The Lady of Lyons was produced on April 17, 1879. It kept in the bill for a portion of each week for the remainder of the first and the whole of the second season; in all forty-five times—no inconsiderable run of such an old and hackneyed play.

The production was a very beautiful one. There was a specially attractive feature in it: the French army. At the end of the fourth act Claude, all his hopes shattered and he being consumed with remorse, accepts Colonel Damas' offer to go with him to the war in that fine melodramatic outburst:

"Place me wherever a foe is most dreaded—wherever France most needs a life!"

As Irving stage-managed it the army, already on its way, was tramping along the road outside. Through window and open door the endless columns were seen, officers and men in due order and the flags in proper place. It seemed as if the line would stretch out till the crack of doom! A very large number of soldiers had been employed as supers, and were of course especially suitable for the work. In those days the supers of London theatres were largely supplied from the Brigade of Guards. The men liked it, for it provided easy beer-money, and the officers liked them to have the opportunity as it kept them out of mischief. We had always on our

staff as an additional super-master, a Sergeant of Guards who used to provide the men, and was of course in a position to keep them in order.

The men entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing, and it was really wonderful how, availing themselves of their professional training, they were able to seemingly multiply their forces. Often have I admired the dexterity, ease and rapidity with which that moving army was kept going with a hundred and fifty men. Four abreast they marched across the stage at the back. The scene cloth of the landscape outside the cottage was set far up the stage so that there was but a narrow space left between it and the wall, scarcely room for one person to pass; and it was interesting to see the perfection of drill which enabled those soldiers to meet the difficulties of keeping up the constant stream of the troops. They would march into the wings with set pace, but the instant they passed out of sight of the audience they would break into a run; in perfect order they would rush in single file round the back of the scene and arrive at the other side just in time to fall into line and step again. And so the endless stream went on. When Claude ran out with Damas the ranks opened and a cheer rose; he fell into line with the rest and on the army marched.

That marching army never stopped. No matter how often the curtain went up on the scene—and sometimes there were seven or eight calls, for the scene was one specially exciting to the more demonstrative parts of the house—it always rose on that martial array, always moving on with the resistless time and energy of an overwhelming force.

It was only fair that Irving should always get good service from supers, for they never had such a friend. When their standard pay was sixpence per night he gave a shilling. When that sum became standard he gave one and sixpence. And when that was reached he paid two shillings—an increase of 300 per cent. in his own time.

If the smallness of the pay, even now, should strike any reader, let me remind such that supers are not supposed to live on their pay. There are a few special people who

generally dress with them, but such are in reality minor actors and get larger pay. The super proper is engaged during the day as porter, workman, gasman, &c. They simply add to their living wage by work at night. At the Lyceum, if a man only worked as a super, we took it for granted that he was in reality a loafer, and did not keep him.

II

The Corsican Brothers is one of the pieces which requires picturesque setting. The story is so weird that it obtains a new credibility from unfamiliar entourage. Corsica has always been accepted as a land of strange happenings and stormy passions. Things are accepted under such circumstances which would ordinarily be passed by as bizarre. The production was certainly a magnificent one. There are two scenes in it which allow of any amount of artistic effort, although their juxtaposition in the sequence of the play makes an enormous difficulty. The first is the scene of the Masked Ball in the Opera House in Paris; the other the Forest of Fontainebleau, where takes place the duel between Fabian and de Château-Rénaud. Each of these scenes took up the whole stage, right away from the footlights to the back wall; thus the task of changing from one to the other, with only the interval of the supper at Baron de Montgiron's to do it in, was one of extraordinary difficulty. The scene of the Masked Ball represented the interior of the Opera House, the scenic auditorium being furthest from the footlights. In fact it was as though the audience sitting in the Lyceum auditorium saw the scene as though looking in a gigantic mirror placed in the auditorium arch. The scene was in reality a vast one and of great brilliance. The Opera House was draped with crimson silk, the boxes were practical and contained a whole audience, all being in perspective. The men and women in the boxes near to the footlights were real; those far back were children dressed like their elders. Promenading and dancing were hundreds of persons in striking costumes. It must be remembered that in those days there were no electric lights, and as there were

literally thousands of lights in the scene it was a difficult one to fit. Thousands of feet of gas-piping—the joining hose being flexible—were used; and the whole resources of supply were brought into requisition. We had before that brought the use of gas-supply to the greatest perfection attainable. There were two sources of supply, each from a different main, and these were connected with a great "pass" pipe workable with great rapidity, so that if through any external accident one of the mains should be disabled we could turn the supply afforded by the other into all the pipes used throughout the house. This great scene came to an end by lowering the "cut" cloth which formed the background of Montgiron's salon, the door leading into the supper-room being in the centre at back. Whilst the guests were engaged in their more or less rapid banquet, the Opera scene was being obliterated and the Forest of Fontainebleau was coming down from the rigging-loft, ascending from the cellar and being pushed on right and left from the wings. Montgiron's salon was concealed by the descent of great tableau curtains. These remained down from thirty-five to forty seconds and went up again on a forest as real as anything can be on the stage. Trees stood out separately over a large area, so that those entering from side or back could be seen passing behind or amongst them. All over the stage was a deep blanket of snow, white and glistening in the winter sunrise—snow that lay so thick that when the duellists, stripped and armed, stood face to face, they each secured a firmer foothold by kicking it away. Of many wonderful effects this snow was perhaps the strongest and most impressive of reality. The public could never imagine how it was done. It was salt, common coarse salt which was white in the appointed light, and glistened like real snow. There were tons of it. A crowd of men stood ready in the wings with little baggage-trucks such as are now used in the corridors of great hotels; silent with rubber wheels. On them were great wide-mouthed sacks full of salt. When the signal came they rushed in on all sides each to his appointed spot and tumbled out his load, spreading it evenly with great wide-bladed wooden shovels.

III

One night—it was October 18—the Prince of Wales came behind the scenes as he was interested in the working of the play. It was known he was coming, and though the stage hands had been told that they were not supposed to know that he was present they all had their Sunday clothes on. It was the first time his Royal Highness had been "behind" in Irving's management; and he seemed very interested in all he saw. King Edward VII. has and has always had a wonderful memory. That night he told Irving how Charles Kean had set the scenes, the rights and lefts being different from the present setting; how Kean had rested on a log in a particular place; and so forth. Some of our older stage men who had been at the Princess's in Kean's time bore it out afterwards that he was correct in each detail.

That night the men worked as never before; they were determined to let the Prince see what could, under the stimulating influence of his presence, be done at the Lyceum, of which they were all very proud. That night the tableau curtains remained down only thirty seconds—the record time.

The Corsican Brothers was produced on September 18, 1880, and ran for one hundred and ninety performances in that season, The Cup being played along with it ninety-two times. The special reason for The Corsican Brothers being played during that season was that Ellen Terry had long before promised to go on an autumn tour in 1880 with her husband, Charles Kelly. It was, therefore, necessary that a piece should be chosen which did not require her services, and there was no part suitable to her in The Corsican Brothers. This was the only time she had a tour except with Irving, until when during his illness in 1899 she went out by herself to play Madame Sans-Gêne and certain other plays. When she returned to the Lyceum at the close of her tour The Cup was added to the bill.

IV

In the course of the run of The Corsican Brothers there were a good many incidents,

interesting or amusing. Amongst the latter was one repeated nightly during the run of the piece. In the first scene, which is the house of the Dei Franchi in Corsica, opportunity had been taken of the peculiarity of the old Lyceum stage to make the entrance of Fabian dei Franchi—the one of the twins remaining at home—as effective as possible. The old stage of the Lyceum had a "scene-dock" at the back extending for some thirty feet beyond the squaring of the stage. As this opening was at the centre, the perspective could by its means be enlarged considerably. At the back of the Dei Franchi "interior" ran a vine-trellised way to a wicket-gate. As there was no side entrance to the scene-dock it was necessary, in order to reach the back, to go into the cellarage and ascend by a stepladder as generously sloped as the head-room would allow. But when the oncomer did make an appearance he was some seventy feet back from the footlights and in the very back centre of the stage, the most effective spot for making entry as it enabled the entire audience to see him a long way off and to emphasise his coming should they so desire. In that scene Irving wore a Corsican dress of light green velvet and was from the moment of his appearance a conspicuous object. When, therefore, he was seen to ascend the mountain slope and appear at the wicket the audience used to begin to applaud and cheer, so that his entrance was very effective.

But in the arrangement the fact had been lost sight of that another character entered the same way just before the time of his oncoming. This was Alfred Meynard, Louis's friend from Paris, a somewhat insignificant part in the play. Somehow at rehearsal the appearance of the latter did not seem in any way to clash with that of Fabian, and be sure that the astute young actor who played Alfred did not call attention to it by giving himself any undue prominence. The result was that on the first night—and ever afterwards during the run—when Alfred Meynard appeared the audience, who expected Irving, burst into wild applause. The gentleman who played the visitor had not then achieved the distinction which later on became his and so there was no reason, as yet, why he should receive such an ovation. From the great

stage talent and finesse which he afterwards displayed I am right sure that he saw at the time what others had missed—the extraordinary opportunity for a satisfactory entrance so dear to the heart of an actor. It was a very legitimate chance in his favour, and nightly he carried his honours well. That first night a play of his own, his second play, was produced as the lever de rideau. The young actor was A. W. Pinero, and the play was Bygones. Pinero's first play, Daisy's Escape, had been played at the Lyceum in 1879.

V

The Masked Ball was a scene which allowed of any amount of fun, and it was so vast that it was an added gain to have as many persons as possible in it. To this end we kept, during the run, a whole rack in the office full of dominoes, masks and slouched hats, so that any one who had nothing else to do could in an instant make a suitable appearance on the scene without being recognised. As the masculine dress of the time, the forties, was very much the same as now, a simple domino passed muster. I shall never forget my own appearance in the scene a few nights after the opening. We had amongst others engaged a whole group of clowns. There were eight of them, the best in England; the pantomime season being still far off, they could thus employ their enforced leisure—they were of course changed as their services were required elsewhere according to their previously made agreements. These men had a special dance of their own which was always a feature of the scene, and in addition they used to play what pranks they would, rushing about, making fun of others, climbing into boxes and then hauling others in, or dropping them out—such pranks and intrigué funniments as give life to a scene of the kind. When I ventured amongst them they recognised me and made a ring round me, dancing like demons. Then they seized me and spun me round, and literally played ball with me, throwing me from one to the other backwards and forwards. Sometimes they would rush me right down to the footlights and then whirl me back

again breathless. But all the time they never let me fall or gave me away. I could not but admire their physical power as well as their agility and dexterity in their own craft.

The second time I went on I rather avoided them and kept up at the back of the stage. But even here I was, from another cause of mirth, not safe. I was lurking at the back when Irving, his face as set as flint with the passion of the insult and the challenge in the play, came hurriedly up the stage on his way to R.U.E. (right upper entrance). When he saw me the passion and grimness of his face relaxed in an instant and his laughter came explosively, fortunately unnoticed by the audience as his back was towards them. I went after him and asked him what was wrong, for I couldn't myself see anything of a mirthful nature.

"My dear fellow!" he said, "it was you!" Then in answer to my look he explained:

"Don't you remember how we arranged when the scene was being elaborated that in order to increase the effect of size we were to dress the shorter extras and then boys and girls and then little children in similar clothes to the others and to keep in their own section. You were up amongst the small children and with your height"—I am six feet two in my stockings—"with that voluminous domino and that great black feathered hat and in the painted perspective you look fifty feet high!" And he laughed again uproariously.

VI

The Corsican Brothers was, so far as my knowledge goes, the first play—under Irving's management—which Mr. Gladstone came to see. The occasion was January 3, 1881—the first night when The Cup was played. He sat with his family in the box which we called in the familiar slang of the theatre "The Governor's Box"—the manager of a theatre is always the Governor to his colleagues of all kinds and grades. This box was the stage box on the stall level, next to the proscenium. It was shut off by a special door which opened with a pass key and thus, as it was

approachable from the stage through the iron door and from the auditorium by the box door, it was easy of access and quite private. After The Cup Mr. Gladstone wished to come on the stage and tell Irving and Ellen Terry how delighted he was with the performance. Irving fixed as the most convenient time the scene of the masked ball, as during it he had perhaps the only “wait” of the evening—a double part does not leave much margin to an actor. Mr. Gladstone was exceedingly interested in everything and went all round the vast scene. Seeing during the progress of the scene that people in costume were going in and out of queer little alcoves at the back of the scene he asked Irving what these were. He explained that they were the private boxes of the imitation theatre; he added that if the Premier would care to sit in one he could see the movement of the scene at close hand, and if he was careful to keep behind the little silk curtain he could not be seen. The statesman took his seat and seemed for a while to enjoy the life and movement going on in front of him. He could hear now and again the applause of the audience, and by peeping out through the chink behind the curtain, see them. At last in the excitement of the scene he forgot his situation and, hearing a more than usually vigorous burst of applause, leaned out to get a better view of the audience. The instant he did so he was recognised—there was no mistaking that eagle face—and then came a quick and sudden roar that seemed to shake the building. We could hear the “Bravo, Gladstone!” coming through the detonation of hand-claps.

VII

One night, Wednesday, November 17, 1880, the sixty-first performance of the play, Lord Beaconsfield came to a box with some friends. I saw him coming up the stairs to the vestibule of the theatre. This was the only time I ever saw him, except on the floor of the House of Commons. He was then a good deal bent and walked feebly, leaning on the arm of his friend. He stayed to the end of the play and I believe expressed himself very pleased with it. His friend, “Monty” Corry—afterwards Lord

Rowton—who was with him, told Irving that it seemed to revive old memories. As an instance, when he was coming away he asked:

"Do you think we could have supper somewhere, and ask some of the coryphées to join us, as we used to do in Paris in the fifties?"

The poor dear man little imagined how such a suggestion would have fluttered the theatrical dovecote. These coryphées, minor parts of course in the play, were supposed to be very "fast" young persons, and the difficulty of getting them properly played seemed for a long time insurmountable. The young ladies to whom the parts were allotted were all charming-looking young ladies of naturally bright appearance and manner. But they would not act as was required of them. One and all they seemed to set their faces against the histrionic levity demanded of them. It almost seemed that they felt that their personal characters were at stake. Did they act with their usual charm and brightness and nerve somebody might to their detriment mix up the real and the simulated characters. The result was that never in the history of choregraphic art was there so fine an example of the natural demureness of the corps de ballet. They would have set an example to a Confirmation class.

VIII

For the tableau curtain in The Corsican Brothers, Irving had had manufactured perhaps the most magnificent curtains of the kind ever seen. They were of fine crimson silk-velvet and took more than a thousand yards of stuff. The width and height of the Lyceum proscenium were so great that the curtains had to be fastened all over on canvas, fortified with strong webbing where the drag of movement came. Otherwise the velvet would with the vast weight have torn like paper. They were drawn back and up at the same time, so as to leave the full stage visible, whilst picturesquely draping the opening. Material, colour and form of these curtains—which were a full fifty per cent. wider than the opening which they covered—brought both honour and much profit to the manufacturers, who received

many orders for repetitions on a smaller scale. When John Hollingshead burlesqued The Corsican Brothers at the Gaiety Theatre this curtain was made a feature. It was represented by an enormous flimsy patchwork quilt which tumbled down all at once in the form of a tight-drawn curtain covering the whole proscenium arch.

In this burlesque too there was a notable incident when E. W. Royce—an actor with the power and skill of an acrobat—who personated Irving, walked up a staircase in one step.

IX

Another feature was the "double." In a play where one actor plays two parts there is usually at least one time when the two have to be seen together. For this a double has to be provided. In The Corsican Brothers, where one of the two sees the other seeing his brother, more than one double is required. At the Lyceum, Irving's chief double was the late Arthur Matthison, who though a much smaller man than Irving resembled him faintly in his facial aspect. He had a firm belief that he was Irving's double and that no one could tell them apart. This belief was a source of endless jokes. There was hardly a person in the theatre who did not at one time or another take part in one. It was a never-ending amusement to Irving to watch and even to foment such jokes. Even Irving's sons, then little children, having been carefully coached, used to go up to him and take his hand and call him "Papa." On the Gaiety stage they had about twenty doubles of all sizes and conditions—giants, dwarfs, skinny, fat—of all kinds. At the end of the scene they took a call—all together. It was certainly very funny.

One more funny matter there was in the doing of the play. The supper party at Baron Montgiron's house was supposed to be a very "toney" affair, the male guests being the crême de la crême of Parisian society, the ladies being of the demi-monde; all of both classes being persons to whom a "square" meal was no rarity. As, however, the majority of the guests were "extras" or "supers" it was hard to curb their zeal in

matters of alimentation. When the servants used to throw open the doors of the supper-room and announce “Monsieur est servi!” they would make one wild rush and surround the table like hyenas. For their delectation bread and sponge-cake—media which lend themselves to sculptural efforts—and gâteaux of alluring aspect were provided. The champagne flowed in profusion—indeed in such profusion and of so realistic an appearance that all over the house the opera-glasses used to be levelled and speculations as to the brand and cuvée arose, and a rumour went round the press that the nightly wine bill was of colossal dimensions. In reality the champagne provided was lemonade put up specially in champagne bottles and foiled with exactness. It certainly looked like champagne and foamed out as the corks popped. The orgy grew nightly in violence till at the end of a couple of weeks the noblesse of France manifested a hunger and thirst libellous to the Faubourg St. Germain. Irving pondered over the matter, and one day gave orders that special food should be provided, wrought partly of plaster-o’-Paris and partly of papier-mâché. He told the Property Master to keep the matter secret. There was hardly any need for the admonition. In a theatre a joke is a very sacred thing, and there is no one from highest to lowest that will not go out of his way to further it. That night, when the emaciated noblesse of France dashed at their quarry, one and all received a sudden check. There were many unintentional ejaculations of surprise and disappointment from the guests, and much suppressed laughter from the stage hands who were by this time all in the secret and watching from the wings.

After that night there was a notable improvement in the table manners of the guests. One and all they took their food leisurely and examined it critically. And so the succulent sponge-cake in due time reappeared; there was no need for a second lesson against greed.

XVI THE VALUE OF EXPERIMENT

I

In 1883 the Prince of Wales was very much interested in the creation and organisation of the new College of Music, and as funds had to be forthcoming very general efforts were made by the many who loved music and who loved the Prince. On one occasion the Prince hinted to Irving that it would show the interest of another and allied branch of art in the undertaking if the dramatic artists would give a benefit for the new College. He even suggested that Robert Macaire would do excellently for the occasion and could have an "all-star" cast. Irving was delighted and got together a committee of actors to arrange the matter. By a process of natural selection Irving and Toole were appointed to Macaire and Jacques Strop.

The Prince and Princess of Wales attended at the performance. The house was packed from floor to ceiling, and the result to the College of Music was £1002 8s. 6d.—the entire receipts, Irving himself having paid all the expenses.

An odd mistake was made by Irving later on with regard to this affair. In the first year of its working, when the class for dramatic study was organised, he was asked by the directorate to examine. This he was of course very pleased to do. In due season he made his examination and sent in his report. Then in sequence came a letter of thanks for his services. It was, though quite formal, a most genial and friendly letter, and to the signature was appended "Chairman." In acknowledging it to Sir George Grove, the Director of the College, Irving said what a pleasure it had been to him to examine and how pleased he would be at all times to hold his services at the disposal of the College and so forth. He added by way of postscript:

"By the way, who is our genial friend, Mr. Edward? I do not think I have met him!"

He got a horrified letter sent by messenger from Sir George explaining that the signature was that of "Albert Edward"—now His Most Gracious Majesty Edward VII., R. et I. In his modest estimate of his own worth Irving had not even thought that the Prince of Wales would himself write. But the gracious act was like all the

kindness and sweet courtesy which both as Prince and King he always extended to his loyal subject the player—Henry Irving.

II

Faust was produced on December 19, 1885. It ran till the end of that season, the tenth of Irving's management; the whole of the next season, except a few odd nights; again the latter part of the short season of 1888; and for a fourth time in the season of 1894. The production was burned with the other plays in storage in 1898, but the play was reproduced again in 1902.

Altogether it was performed in London five hundred and seventy-seven times: in the provinces one hundred and twenty-eight times; and in America eighty-seven times—in all seven hundred and ninety-two times—to a total amount of receipts of over a quarter of a million pounds sterling.

Irving had a profound belief in Faust as a "drawing" play. He was so sure of it that he would not allow of its being presented until it was in his estimation ready for the public to see. This scrupulosity was a trait in his artistic character, and therefore noticeable in his management. When he had been with Miss Herbert at the St. James's Theatre he was cast for the part of Ferment in The School of Reform at short notice; he insisted on delaying the piece for three days as he would not play without proper rehearsal. This he told me himself one night when we were supping together at the theatre, December 7, 1880. As Faust was an exceedingly heavy production there was much opportunity for delay. It had been Irving's intention to produce the play very early in the season which opened on September 5, but as the new play grew into shape he found need for more and more care. Many of the effects were experimental and had to be tested; and all this caused delay. As an instance of how scientific progress can be marked even on the stage, the use of electricity might be given. The fight between Faust and Valentine—with Mephistopheles in his supposed invisible quality interfering—was the first time

when electric flashes were used in a play. This effect was arranged by Colonel Gouraud, Edison's partner, who kindly interested himself in the matter. Twenty years ago electric energy, in its playful aspect, was in its infancy; and the way in which the electricity was carried so as to produce the full effects without the possibility of danger to the combatants was then considered very ingenious. Two iron plates were screwed upon the stage at a given distance so that at the time of the fighting each of the swordsmen would have his right boot on one of the plates, which represented an end of the interrupted current. A wire was passed up the clothing of each from the shoe to the outside of the indiarubber glove, in the palm of which was a piece of steel. Thus when each held his sword a flash came whenever the swords crossed.

The arrangement of the fire which burst from the table and from the ground at command of Mephistopheles required very careful arrangement so as to ensure accuracy at each repetition and be at the same time free from the possibility of danger. Altogether the effects of light and flame in Faust are of necessity somewhat startling and require the greatest care. The stage and the methods of producing flame of such rapidity of growth and exhaustion as to render it safe to use are well known to property masters. By powdered resin, properly and carefully used, or by lycopodium great effects can be achieved.

There was also another difficulty to be overcome. Steam and mist are elements of the weird and supernatural effects of an eerie play. Steam can be produced in any quantity, given the proper appliances. But these need care and attention, and on a stage, and below and above it, space is so limited that it is necessary to keep the tally of hands as low as possible. In the years that have elapsed, inspecting authorities have become extra careful with regard to such appliances; nowadays they require that even the steam kettle be kept outside the cartilage of the building.

In addition to all these things—perhaps partly on account of them—the stage

manager became ill and Irving had to superintend much of the doing of things himself. The piece we were then running, Olivia, however, was comparatively light work for Irving, and as it was doing really fine business the time could partially be spared. I say "partially," because prolonged rehearsals mean a fearful addition to expense, and when rehearsals come after another play has been given the expense mounts up in arithmetical progression. For instance, the working day of a stage hand is eight working hours. If he be employed for longer, the next four hours is counted as a day, and the two hours beyond that again as a third day. All this time the real work done by the stage hands is very little. Whilst actors or supers or ballet or chorus, or some or all of them, are being rehearsed the men have to stand idle most of the time. Moreover they are now and again idle inter se. Stage work is divided into departments, and for each division are masters, each controlling his own set of men. There is the Master Machinist—commonly called Master Carpenter—the Property Master, the Gas Engineer, the Electric Engineer, the Limelight Master. In certain ways the work of these departments impinge on each other in a way to puzzle an outsider. Thus, when a stage has to be covered it is the work of one set of men or the other, but not of both. Anything in the nature of a painted cloth, such as tessellated flooring, is scenery, and therefore the work of the carpenters; but a carpet is a "property," and as such to be laid down by the property staff. A gas light or an electric light is to be arranged by the engineer of that cult, whilst an oil lamp or a candle belongs to properties. The traditional laws which govern these things are deep seated in trade rights and customs, and are grave matters to interfere with. In the production of Faust much of the scenery was what is called "built out"; that is, there are many individual pieces—each a completed and separate item, such as a wall, a house, steps, &c. So that in this particular play the property department had a great deal to do with the working of what might be broadly considered scenery.

When Irving was about to do the play he made a trip to Nuremberg to see for himself what would be most picturesque as well as suitable. When he had seen

Nuremberg and that wonderful old town near it, Rothenburg, which was even better suited to his purpose, he sent for Hawes Craven. That the latter benefited by his experience was shown in the wonderful scenes which he painted for Faust. He seemed to give the very essence of the place.

III

When the Emperor Frederick—then Crown Prince of Germany—came to the Lyceum to see Faust, I was much struck by the way he spoke of the great city of the Guttenbergs and Hans Sachs. He had come alone, quite informally, from Windsor, where he was staying with Queen Victoria. As he modestly put it in his own way when speaking to me? "The Queen was gracious enough to let me come!" He was delighted and almost fascinated with the play and its production and acting. I had good opportunity of hearing his views. It was of course my duty to wait upon him, as ceremonial custom demanded, between the acts. In each "wait" he went into the Royal room to smoke his cigarette, and on each occasion was gracious enough to ask me to join him. Several times he spoke of Nuremberg with love and delight, and it seemed as if the faithful and picturesque reproduction of it had warmed his heart. Once he said:

"I love Nuremberg. Indeed I always ask the Emperor to let me have the autumn manœuvres in such a place that I can stay there during part of the time they last!"

IV

As a good instance of how on the stage things may change on trial I think we may take the last scene of Faust—that where the scene of Margaret's prison fades away—after the exit of Faust in answer to the imperious summons of Mephistopheles: "Hither to me." Then comes the vision of Margaret's lying dead at the foot of the Cross with a long line of descending angels. For this tableau a magnificent and elaborate scene had been prepared by William Telbin—a rainbow

scene suggestive of Hope and Heavenly beauty. In it had been employed the whole resources of scenic art. Indeed a new idea and mechanism had been used. The edges of the great rainbow which circled the scene were made of a series of stuffs so fine as to be actually almost invisible, beginning with linen, then skrim, and finally ending up with a tissue like gold-beaters' skin; all these substances painted or stained with the colours of the prism in due order. I believe Telbin would have put in the "extra violet ray" if it had been then common property.

When, however, the scene was set, which was on the night before the presentation of the play, Irving seemed to be dissatisfied with it. Not with its beauty or its mechanism; but somehow it seemed to him to lack simplicity. Still he waited till it was lit in all possible ways before giving it over. The lighting of scenes was always Irving's special province; later on I shall have something to say about it. To do it properly and create the best effect he spared neither time nor pains. Many and many and many a night did we sit for four or five hours, when the play of the night had been put aside and the new scene made ready, experimenting.

On this occasion Irving said suddenly:

"Strike the scene altogether, leaving only the wings!"

This was done and the "ladder" of Angels was left stark on the empty stage. For such a vision a capable piece of machinery has to be provided, for it has to bear the full weight of at least a dozen women or girls. The backbone of it is a section of steel rail which is hung from the flies with a steel rope, to this are attached the iron arms made safe and comfortable for the angels to be strapped each in her own "iron." The lower end of the ladder rests on the stage and is fastened there securely with stage screws. The angels are all fixed in their places before the scene begins, and when the lights are turned on they seem to float ethereally. This ladder was of course complete with its living burden when the lighting was essayed, for as in it the centre figures are pure white—the strongest colour known on the stage—it would

not be possible to judge of effect without it. Again Irving spoke:

“Now put down a dark blue sky border as a backing; two if necessary to get height enough.” This was done. He went on:

“Put sapphire mediums on the limelights from both sides so as to make the whole back cloth a dark night blue. Now turn all the white limelights on the angels!”

Then we saw the nobly simple effect which the actor had had in his imagination. Never was seen so complete, so subtle, so divine a vision on the stage. It was simply perfect, and all who saw it at once began to applaud impulsively. After a minute Irving, turning to Telbin, who stood beside him, said:

“I think, Telbin, if you will put in some stars—proper ones you know—in the back cloth when you have primed it—it had better be of cobalt!”—a very expensive paint by the way—“it will be all right. They can get a cloth ready for you by morning.”

The device of the “ladder of angels” was of course an old one; it was its suitable perfection in this instance that made it remarkable. For this ladder it is advisable to get the prettiest and daintiest young women and children possible, the point of honour being the apex. A year before, during the run of Henry VIII., a box was occupied by a friend of Irving’s whose three little girls were so beautiful that between the acts the people on the stage kept peeping out at them. Then the Master Carpenter asked Ellen Terry to look out from the prompt entrance. As she did so he whispered to her:

“Oh, miss! Wouldn’t that middle one make a lovely ‘top angel’!”

Even children as well as grown-ups have their vanities. It became a nightly duty of the Wardrobe Mistress to inspect the “ladder” when arranged. She had to make each of the angels in turn show their hands so that they should not wear the little rings to which they were prone.

V

The educational effect of Faust was very great. Every edition of the play in England was soon sold out. Important heavy volumes, such as Anster's, which had grown dusty on the publisher's shelves were cleared off in no time. New editions were published and could hardly be printed quick enough. We knew of more than a hundred thousand copies of Goethe's dramatic poem being sold in the first season of its run.

One night early in the run of the play there was a mishap which might have been very serious indeed. In the scene where Mephistopheles takes Faust away with him after the latter had signed the contract, the two ascended a rising slope. On this particular occasion the machinery took Irving's clothing and lifted him up a little. He narrowly escaped falling into the cellar through the open trap—a fall of some fifteen feet on to a concrete floor.

VI

When we played Faust in America, it was curious to note the different reception accorded to it undoubtedly arising from traditional belief.

In Boston, where the old puritanical belief of a real devil still holds, we took in one evening four thousand eight hundred and fifty-two dollars—more than a thousand pounds—the largest dramatic house up to then known in America. Strangely the night was that of Irving's fiftieth birthday. For the rest the lowest receipts out of thirteen performances was two thousand and ten dollars. Seven were over three thousand, and three over four thousand.

In Philadelphia, where are the descendants of the pious Quakers who followed Penn into the wilderness, the average receipts were even greater. Indeed at the matinée on Saturday, the crowd was so vast that the doors were carried by storm. All the seats had been sold, but in America it was usual to sell admissions to stand at one dollar each. The crowd of "standees," almost entirely women, began to assemble whilst the treasurer, who in an American theatre sells the tickets, was at his dinner. His

assistant, being without definite instructions, went on selling till the whole seven hundred left with him were exhausted. It was vain to try to stem the rush of these enthusiastic ladies. They carried the outer door and the checktaker with it; and broke down by sheer weight of numbers the great inner doors of heavy mahogany and glass standing some eight feet high. It was impossible for the seat-holders to get in till a whole posse of police appeared on the scene and cleared them all out, only readmitting them when the seats had been filled.

But in Chicago, which as a city neither fears the devil nor troubles its head about him or all his works, the receipts were not much more than half the other places. Not nearly so good as for the other plays of the répertoire presented.

In New York the business with the play was steady and enormous. New York was founded by the Bible-loving righteous-living Dutch.

XVII THE PULSE OF THE PUBLIC

I

In 1882 Irving purchased from Herman Merivale the entire acting rights in his play Edgar and Lucy, founded on Scott's novel The Bride of Lammermoor; but it was not till eight years later that he was able to produce it.

This delay is a fair instance of the difficulties and intricacies of theatrical management. So many things have to be considered in the high policy of the undertaking; so many accidental circumstances or continuations of causes necessitate the deviation of intention; so many new matters come over the horizon that from a long way ahead to undertake to produce a play at a given time is almost always attended with great risk.

Ravenswood is a thoroughly sad, indeed lugubrious play, as any play must be which adheres fairly to the lines of Scott's tragic novel. By the way this novel was written

at Rokeby, the home of the Morritt family, in Yorkshire. The members of that family tell a strange circumstance relating to it. Sir Walter Scott was a close friend of the family and often stayed there; he wrote two of his novels whilst a guest. Whilst at Rokeby on this occasion he was in very bad health; but all the time he worked hard and wrote the novel. When he had finished he was laid up for a while; and when he was well he could not remember any detail at all of his story. He could hardly believe that he had written it.

For seven years after Irving had possession of Merivale's play he had thought it over. He had in his own quiet way made up his mind about it, arranging length and way of doing the play and excogitating his own part till he had possession of it in every way. Then one evening—November 25, 1889—he broached the subject of its definite production. The note which I find in my diary is succinct and explanatory and comprehensive:

"Theatre 7 (P.M.) till 5 (A.M.) H.I. read for Loveday and me Edgar and Lucy, Merivale's dramatisation to his order of The Bride of Lammermoor. It was delightful. Play very fine. Literature noble. H.I. had cut quite one-half out."

I can supplement this brief note from memory. Irving read the play with quite extraordinary effect. He had quite a gift for this sort of work. I heard him read through a good many plays in the course of a quarter of a century of work together and it was always enlightening. He had a way of conveying the cachet of each character by inflection or trick of voice or manner; and his face was always, consciously or unconsciously, expressive. So long before as 1859, when he had read The Lady of Lyons at Crosby Hall, the Daily Telegraph had praised, amongst other matters, his versatility in this respect. I have heard him read in public in a large hall both Hamlet and Macbeth, and his characterisation was so marked that after he had read the entries of the various characters he did not require to refer to them again by name. On this occasion he seemed familiar with every character, and, I doubt not,

could have played any of them, so far as his equipment fitted him for the work, within a short time. Naturally the most effective part was that of Edgar of Ravenswood. Not only is it the most prominent part in the cast, but it was that which he was to play himself, and to which he had given most special attention. In it he brought out all the note of destiny which rules in both novel and play. Manifestly Edgar is a man foredoomed, but not till the note of doom is sounded in the weird and deathly utterances of Ailsie Gourlay could one tell that all must end awfully. Throughout, the tragic note was paramount. Well Edgar knew it; the gloom that wrapped him even in the moment of triumphant love was a birth-gift. As Irving read it that night, and as he acted it afterwards, there was throughout an infinite and touching pathos. But not this character alone, but all the rest were given with great and convincing power. The very excellence of the rendering made each to help the other; variety and juxtaposition brought the full effect. The prophecies, because of their multiplication, became of added import on Edgar's gloom, and toned the high spirit of Hayston of Bucklaw. Lucy's sweetness was intensified by the harsh domination of Lady Ashton. The sufferings of the faithful Caleb under the lash of Ailsie's prophecy only increased its force.

We who listened were delighted. For myself I seemed to see the play a great success and one to be accomplished at little cost. We had now, since 1885, produced in succession three great plays, Faust, Macbeth, and The Dead Heart, and had in contemplation another, Henry VIII., which would exceed them all in possibilities of expense both of production and of working. These great plays were and always must be hugely expensive. As I was chancellor of the exchequer I was greatly delighted to see a chance of great success combined with a reasonable cost and modest accessories. From the quiet effectiveness of Irving's reading I was satisfied that the play would hold good under the less grand conditions. This opinion I still hold. I must not, however, be taken as finding fault with Irving's view, which was quite otherwise. He looked on the play as one needing all the help it could get; and I am

bound to say that his views were justified by success, for the play as he did it was an enormous success. The production account was not large in comparison with that of some other great plays, being a little under five thousand pounds. There were no author's fees, as the play had long ago been bought outright and paid for, so that expense had been incurred and was chargeable against estate whether the play was produced or not. But the running expenses were very heavy, between £180 and £200 a performance. As it was, the play was a heavy one for Ellen Terry; she could only play in it six times a week. To the management there is always an added advantage in a matinée or any extra performance.

Ravenswood was presented on September 20, 1890, and altogether was given during the season one hundred and two times.

II

During its run we had a strange opportunity of experiencing the extraordinary way in which a play fluctuates with the public pulse. From the first night it was a great success, and the booking became so great that we were obliged to enlarge the time for the advance purchase of seats. Our usual time was four weeks, and as a working rule it was found well to keep to this. Where booking is not under great pressure, too long a time means extra particularity in choice of seats, and a de facto curtailment of receipts. For Ravenswood we had to advance, first one week and then a second; so that about the end of the first month we were booking six weeks ahead. I may say that we were booked that long, for as each day's advance sheet was opened it became quickly filled. The agents, too, were hard at work and we were not able to allot to any of them the full number of seats for which they asked. I have a special reason for mentioning this, as will appear. Now at the Lyceum from the time of my taking charge of the business we did not ever "pencil" to agents—that is, we did not let them have seats after the customary fashion "on sale or return." We had, be sure, good reason for this. Whatever seats they had they took at their own risk by week or

month, in a sort of running agreement terminable at fixed notice. When we arrived at the fiftieth performance the play was going as strong as ever, the receipts being on or about two thousand pounds per week. Towards the end of the year, theatre receipts generally began to drop a little; Christmas is coming, and many things occupy family attention; the autumn visitors have all departed; and the fogs of November are bad for business. We did not, therefore, give it a second thought that the door receipts got a little less, for all the bookable seats were already secure. On Thursday, November 20, I had an experience which set me thinking. During that day I had visits from three of the theatre agents having businesses in the West End and the City. They came separately and with an unwonted secrecy. Each wished to see me alone, and being secured from interruption, stated the reason. Each had the same request and spoke in almost identical terms, so that the conversation of one will illustrate all. The first one asked me:

"Will you tell me frankly—if you don't mind—are you really doing good business with Ravenswood?"

"Certainly," I answered. "All we can do. Why you know that we can only let you have for six weeks ahead a part of the seats you have asked for. After some odd nervousness he said again:

"I suppose I may take it that that applies to every one you deal with? I know I can trust you, for you always treat me frankly; and this is a matter I am exceedingly anxious about." For answer I rang the bell for the commissionaire in waiting on the office and sent him round to the box-office to bring me the booking sheets for six weeks ahead. These I duly placed before the agent—Librarian they called them in those days, as they were the survivors of the old lending libraries who used to secure theatre tickets for their customers.

"See for yourself!" I said; and he turned over the sheets, every seat on which was marked as sold.

"It is very extraordinary!" he said after a pause. By this time my own curiosity was piqued and I asked him to tell me what it all meant.

"It means this," he said. "Things can't go on at this rate. We have not sold a single ticket this week for any theatre in London!"

I opened a drawer and took out what we called the "Ushers' Returns" for each night that week. We used to have, as means of checking the receipts of the house in addition to the tickets, a set of returns made by the ushers. Each usher had a sectional chart of the seats under his charge, and he had to show which was occupied during the evening, and which, if any, were unoccupied. I had not gone over these as all the seats having been sold it did not much matter to us whether they were occupied or not. To my surprise I found that on each night, growing as the week went on, were quite a number of seats unoccupied. On reference to the full plan I found that most of these were seats sold to the libraries, but that a good proportion of them had been booked at our own office. Neither of us could account for such a thing in any way. When the next, and then the third agent came there was a strong sense over me that something was happening in the great world. As a rule when there is pressure in a theatre the seats belonging to agents remaining unsold can always be disposed of in the theatre box office.

That night Irving had a little supper party of intimate friends in the Beefsteak Room; amongst them one man, Major Ricarde-Seaver, well skilled in the world of haute finance. In the course of conversation I asked him:

"What is up? There is something going to happen! What is it?" He asked me why I thought so, and I told him.

"That is certainly strange!" was his comment. "Then you don't know?"

"Know what?" I asked. "What is going to happen?" His answer came after a pause.

"You will know soon. Possibly to-morrow; certainly the next day!" The mystery was thickening. Again I asked:

"What is it?" The answer came with a shock:

"Baring's! They've gone under!"

Now any one of a speculative tendency in London, or out of it, could have that day made a fortune by selling "bears"—and there is no lack of sportsmen willing to make money on a "sure thing." And yet for three days at least there must have been in business circles some uneasiness of so pronounced a character that it for the time obliterated social life with many people. Had they knowledge where the public pulse lay, and how to time its beats, they might have plucked fortune from disaster.

In the Lyceum we became wide awake to the situation. In a time of panic and disaster there is no need for mimetic tragedy; the real thing crowds it out. The very next day we arranged to change the bill on the earliest day possible. As we were booked for six weeks we arranged to change the tragic Ravenswood for Much Ado About Nothing—the brightest and cheeriest comedy in our répertoire—on Monday, January 3.

This we did with excellent result. From the day of the failure of Baring's the receipts began to dwindle. The nightly return dropped from three hundred pounds odd to two hundred pounds odd, and finally to one hundred pounds odd. With the change to Comedy they jumped up again at once to the tune of an extra hundred pounds a performance.

Except for some performances in the provinces in the autumn that was the last of Ravenswood. There was never a chance for its revival, though from that we might have expected much; it was burned in the fire at our storage in 1898—of which more anon.

III

Nance Oldfield, as Ellen Terry plays it, is the concentration of a five-act comedy into one act and one scene. It is a play that allows an adequate opportunity of the

gifts of the great actress. For Ellen Terry's gifts are of so wide a range that the mere variety of them is in itself a gift; and the congruity of them in such a play allows them to help each other and each to shine out all the stronger for the contrast.

Ellen Terry had long had in her mind Reade's play as one to be given in a single act. And now that its opportunity came over the horizon she began to prepare it. This she did herself, I having the honour of assisting her. That preparation was a fine lesson in dramatic construction. Ellen Terry has not only a divine instinct for the truth in stage art, but she is a conscious artist to her finger-tips. No one on the stage in our time—or at any other time—has seen more clearly the direct force of sympathy and understanding between the actor and the audience; but at the same time she was not herself an experienced dramatist. She knew in a general way what it was that was wanting and what she aimed at, but she could not always give it words. During rehearsal or during the play she would in a pause of her own stage work come dancing into my office to ask for help. Ellen Terry's movements, when she was not playing a sad part, always gave one the idea of a graceful dance. Looking back now to twenty-seven years of artistic companionship and eternal community of ideas, I cannot realise that she did not always actually dance. She would point to some mark which she had made in the altered script and say:

"I want two lines there, please!"

"What kind of lines? What about?" I would ask. She would laugh as she answered.

"I don't know. I haven't the least idea. You must write them!" When she would dance back again I would read her the lines. She would laugh again and say:

"All wrong. Absolutely wrong. They are too serious," or "they are too light; I should like something to convey the idea of——" and she would in some subtle way—just as Irving did—convey the sentiment, or purpose, or emotion which she wished conveyed. She would know without my saying it when I had got hold of the idea and would rush off to her work quite satisfied. And so the little play would grow and

then be cut again and grow again; till at last it was nearly complete. This last bit of it puzzled us both for a long time. At last she conveyed her idea to me that Alexander must not be left with a serious personal passion for Mrs. Oldfield and that yet she should not sink in his esteem. Finally I wrote a line which had the reward of her approbation. The actress was explaining to Mr. Alworthy how his son did not really love her:

"It was the actress he loved and not the woman!"

In this little play, which is typical of her marvellous range of varied excellences, she runs the whole gamut of human emotion. The part where the great actress, wishing to disenchant her boy lover, exemplifies her art and then turns it into ridicule, could not be adequately played by any one not great in both tragedy and comedy. Her rendering here of Juliet's great speech before taking the potion: "My dismal scene I needs must act alone," is given with the full tragic force with which she played the real part—when she swept the whole audience—and yet, without the delay of a second she says to the emotional poet: "Now, that's worth one and ninepence to me!" It is such moments as these that put an actor into history. Records are not troubled with mere excellence.

Happy, I say, should be the real dramatist who has the co-operation of Ellen Terry in a play she is to appear in—of a part she is to act.

XVIII TENNYSON AND HIS PLAYS—I

I

Irving had been a friend of Tennyson before I had first met him in 1876. When during the Bateman rule Queen Mary had been produced, he had naturally much to do with the author, and the friendship thus begun lasted during the poet's life. In my own young days Tennyson was a name of something more than reverence. Not only

was his work on our tongue-tips, but the extraordinary isolation of his personal life threw a halo of mystery over him. It is a strange thing how few of the people of his own time—and all through his long life of such amazing worth and popularity, had ever seen him. Naturally a man who knew him was envied if only from this source alone. Whenever we met in early days Irving, knowing my love and reverence for the poet, used to talk about him—always with admiration. More than once when speaking of his personality as distinguished from his work he said:

"Tennyson is like a great Newfoundland dog. He is like an incarnate truth. A great creature!"

From some persons comparison with a dog might not have seemed flattery, but to Irving a dog was the embodiment of all the virtues. Often and often he compared the abstract dog to the abstract man, very much to the detriment of the latter. And certainly Tennyson had all that noble simplicity which is hard to find in sophisticated man—that simplicity which lies in the wide field of demarcation between naked brutal truth and an unconsciousness of self. That simplicity it is which puts man on an altitude where lesser as well as greater natures respect him. To him truth was a simple thing; it was to be exact. Irving told me of an incident illustrating this. He had heard a story that not long before Tennyson had been lunching with friends of his in his own neighbourhood not far from Haslemere. His hostess, who was a most gracious and charming woman whom later I had the honour to know, said to him as they went into the dining-room:

"I have made a dish specially for you myself; I hope you will try it and tell me exactly what you think of it."

"Of course I shall," he answered. After lunch she asked him what he thought of it and he said:

"If you really wish to know, I thought it was like an old shoe!"

When they met, Irving asked him if the story were true.

"No!" he answered at once, "I didn't say that. I said something; but it wasn't that it was like an old shoe!"

"What did you say?"

"I said it was like an old boot!"

With him ethical truth was not enough; exactness was a part of the whole. I had myself an instance of his mental craving for truth on the very last day I saw him.

Irving had a wonderful knowledge of character. I have never in my own experience known him to err in this respect; though many and many a time has he acted as though he trusted when he knew right well that a basis was wanting. This was of the generosity of his nature; but be it never so great, generosity could not obscure his reason. This was shown, even at the time, by the bounds set to his trust; he never trusted beyond recall, or to an amount of serious import. He had, in the course of a lifetime spent in the exercise of his craft, which was to know men from within, given too much thought to it not to be able from internal knowledge to fathom the motives of others. In philosophy analysis precedes synthesis. On one occasion there was a man with whom we had some business dealings and who, to say the least of it, did not impress any of us favourably. Irving was very outspoken about him, so much so that I remonstrated, fearing lest he might let himself in for an action for libel. I also put it that we had not sufficient data before us to justify so harsh a view. Irving listened to me patiently and then said:

"My dear fellow, that man is a crook. I know it. I have studied too many villains not to understand!"

In another matter also Tennyson had the quality of a well-bred dog: he was a fighter. I do not mean that he was quarrelsome or that he ever even fought in any form. I simply mean that he had the quality of fighting—quite a different thing from determination. In a whole group of men of his own time Tennyson would have, to any physiognomist, stood as a fighter. A glance at his mouth would at once

enlighten any one who had the “seeing eye.” In the group might be placed a good many men, each prominent in his own way, and some of whom might not primâ facie be suspected of the quality. In the group, all of whom I have known or met, might be placed Archbishop Temple, John Bright, Gladstone, Sir Richard Burton, Sir Henry Stanley, Lord Beaconsfield, Jules Bastien Lepage, Henry Ward Beecher, Professor Blackie, Walt Whitman, Edmund Yates. I have selected a few from the many, leaving out altogether all classes of warriors in whom the fighting quality might be expected.

Tennyson had at times that lifting of the upper lip which shows the canine tooth, and which is so marked an indication of militant instinct. Of all the men I have met the one who had this indication most marked was Sir Richard Burton. Tennyson’s, though notable, was not nearly so marked.

Amongst other things which Irving told me of Tennyson in those early days was regarding the author’s own ideas of casting Queen Mary. He wanted Irving to play Cardinal Pole, a part not in the play at all as acted. One night years afterwards, January 25, 1893,, at supper in the Garrick Club with Toole and two others, he told us the same thing. I think the circumstance was recalled to him by the necessary excision of another character in Becket.

It was my good fortune to meet Tennyson personally soon after my coming to live in London. On the night of March 20, 1879, he being then in London for a short stay, he came to the Lyceum to see Hamlet. It was the sixty-ninth night of the run. James Knowles was with him and introduced me. After the third act they both came round to Irving’s dressing-room. In the course of our conversation when I saw him again at the end of the play he said to me:

“I did not think Irving could have improved his Hamlet of five years ago; but now he has improved it five degrees, and those five degrees have lifted it to heaven!”

Small wonder that I was proud to hear such an opinion from such a source.

I remember also another thing he said:

“I am seventy, and yet I don’t feel old—I wonder how it is!” I quoted as a reason his own lines from the Golden Year:

“Unto him that works, and feels he works,

The same grand year is ever at the doors.”

He seemed mightily pleased and said:

“Good!”

After this meeting I had a good many opportunities of seeing Tennyson again. Whenever he made a trip for a few days to London it was usually my good fortune to meet him and Lady Tennyson. My wife and I lunched with them; and their sons, Hallam and Lionel, spent Sunday evenings in our house in Cheyne Walk. Meeting with Tennyson and his family has given us many many happy hours in our lives, and I had the pleasure of being the guest of the great poet both at Farringford and Aldworth. I am proud to be able to call the present Lord Tennyson my friend. My wife and I were lunching with the Tennysons during their stay in London when the first copy arrived from Hubert Herkomer—now Von Herkomer—R.A., of his fine portrait etching of the Poet Laureate. It is an excellent portrait; but there is a look in the eye which did not altogether please the subject.

II

Just before the end of the season 1879–80, Irving completed with Tennyson an agreement to play The Cup. This play, which he had not long before finished, he had offered to Irving. It had not yet been seen by any one, and he was willing that it should not be published till after it had been played. The play required some small alterations for stage purposes—little things cut out here and there, and a few explanatory words inserted at other places. Tennyson assented without demur to any change suggested. As it has been said that Tennyson was absolutely set as to not

altering a line for the stage, let me say here, after an experience of his two most successful plays that any such statement was absurd. Of course he was careful of his rights. Every one ought to be careful in such a matter, and to him there was special need. His manuscript was so valuable that it was never safe; and in other ways he had to be suspicious. Years afterwards he told me that one of his poems had been sold by a critic in America with errors in it which had been corrected.

"I hate the creature! He said he was owner of the proof!"

Perhaps it was for this reason he was so careful when a play was being printed for stage use. He always wished his own copy returned with the proof.

In his agreements he had a clause that the licensee should not without his consent make any alteration in the play. This was absolutely right and wise; it is the protection of the author. The time for arranging changes is before the agreement; then both parties to the contract know what they are doing. In no case did Tennyson hesitate to give Irving permission to make changes. Like the good workman that he was, he was only too anxious to have his work at its best and highest suitability.

Tennyson had in him all the elements of a great dramatist; but unhappily he had little if any technical knowledge of the stage. Each art and each branch of art has its own technique. Though a play, like any other poem, has its birth, the means of its expression is different. A poem for reading conveys thoughts by words alone. A poem for the stage requires suitable opportunity for action and movement—both of individuals and numbers. Sound and light and scene; music, colour and form; the vibration of passion, the winning sweetness of tremulous desire, and the overwhelming obliteration that follows in the wake of fear have all their purpose and effect on the stage. Inasmuch as on the one hand there is only thought, whilst on the other there is a superadded mechanism, the two fields of poetry may be fairly taken to deal in different media. In his later years when Tennyson began to realise in his own work the power of glamour and stress and difficulty of the stage, he was willing

to enlist into his service the skill and experience of others. Had he begun practical play-writing younger, or had he had any kind of apprenticeship to or experience of stage use, he would have been a great dramatist.

In the draft agreement was an interesting clause which Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arnold White, Tennyson's solicitor, and I worked out very carefully, having regard to the rights of both parties. This was concerning the definition of the "first run" of a play. We were quite at one in intention and only wished to make the purpose textually correct. Finally we made it to read as thus:

"... first run of the said play (that is to say) during such time as the said play shall remain in the Bills of the Theatre where it is first produced announcing its continuance either nightly or at fixed periods without a break in such announcements."

III

Irving was determined to do all in his power to put The Cup worthily on the stage. Accordingly much study and research in the matter began. Galatia has ceased to exist on the map, and the period of the play is semi-mythical. The tragedy stands midway between East and West; at a period when the belief in the old gods was a vital force. For the work which Tennyson and Irving undertook, learning and experience lent their aid. James Knowles reconstructed a Temple of Artemis on the ground plan of the great Temple of Diana. The late Alexander Murray, then Assistant Keeper—afterwards Keeper—of the Greek section of the British Museum, made researches amongst the older Etruscan designs. Capable artists made drawings from vases, which were reproduced on the great amphoræ used in the Temple service. The existing base and drum of a column from Ephesus was remodelled for use, and lent its sculptured beauty to the general effect. William Telbin painted some scenes worthy of Turner; and Hawes Craven and Cuthbert made such an interior scene of the Great Temple as was surely never seen on any stage.

By the way, regarding this there was another experience of super-criticism. In judging the scene, and with considerable admiration The Architect, I think, found fault with the proportions of the columns supporting the Temple roof. They should have been of so many diameters more than were given. The critic quite overlooked the difficulty—in extremes the impossibility—of adhering to fact in fiction. For the mechanism of the stage and for purposes of lighting it is necessary that every stage interior have a roof of some sort. Now in this case there was a dilemma. If the columns were of exact proportion they would have looked skimpy in that vast edifice; and the general architecture would have been blamed instead of the detail. As it was the stage perspective allowed of the massive columns close to the proscenium appearing to tower aloft in unimaginable strength, and at once conveyed the spirit of the scene. Just as the colossal figure of Artemis far up the stage—an image of fierce majesty wrought in green bronze—was intended to impress all with the relentless power of the goddess.

But it was to Irving that the scene owed most of its beauty and grandeur. Hitherto, in all pagan ceremonials on the stage—and, indeed, in art generally—priestesses and votaries were clothed in white. But he, not finding that there was any authority for the belief, used colours and embroideries—Indian, Persian, Greek—all that might add conviction and picturesque effect. Something like a hundred beautiful young women were chosen for Vestals; and as the number of persons already employed in The Corsican Brothers was very great, the stage force available for scenic display was immense. Irving himself devised the processions and the ceremonies; in fact he invented a ritual. One of the strange things about the audience all through the run of the play was the large number of High Church clergy who attended. The effect of the entry into the Temple of the gorgeously armoured Roman officers was peculiarly strong.

IV

It is seldom given to man, however, to achieve full perfection. When The Cup had been running for a considerable time, Dr. Alexander Murray, whom at first we had in vain tried to persuade, came to see it. We were all anxious to know how the Greek-Eastern effect impressed him, and I made it a point to see him at the end of the play. When I asked him how he liked it he said:

"Oh, I liked it well enough at first; but when the Temple scene came it was different. At the beginning two girls came on bearing a great amphora; but you will hardly believe me when I tell you it had red figures on a black ground, instead of black figures on a red ground. I need not say that after that I could enjoy nothing!"

Both forms of using the colours were practised in the history of Etruscan art, and our people, since the time of the play was somewhat indeterminate, used the older one.

The dress of Ellen Terry as Camma in this scene was a difficult matter. It had for stage purposes to be one which would stand out distinct and apart from the rest. Dress after dress was tried, stuff after stuff was chosen; but all without satisfaction. At length, as the opening night drew near, she began to get seriously anxious. Finally, as a last resource, she asked me to try and find her something. I had been peculiarly lucky in coming across just such stuffs for dresses as she had seemed to want. Now I went off, hot-foot, and was fortunate enough to find, through turning over a whole stock of material at Liberty's, an Indian tissue of a sort of loosely woven cloth of gold, the wrong side of which produced the exact effect sought for. I may here say that a good many of the special effects on the Lyceum stage were got by using the inside instead of the outside of stuffs. Among them was the basis of Irving's dress as Shylock.

The Cup was produced on the evening of January 3, 1881. It was an immense success, and was played one hundred and twenty-seven times that season. It was burned in the great scenery fire in 1898.

Tennyson came himself to see it for the first time on February 26, 1881.

XIX TENNYSON AND HIS PLAYS—II

I

In their conversations, after Queen Mary and before The Cup, Irving and Tennyson had talked of the possibility of putting on the stage some other play of the Laureate's. After the success of The Cup had been assured Irving was more fixed on the matter; and later on, in 1884, when Becket had been published, he considered it then and thereafter as a possibility. He was anxious to do it if he could see his way to it. Like Tennyson, he had a conviction that there was a play in it; but he could not see its outline. In fact Becket was not written for the stage; and, that being so, it was for stage purposes much in the position of a block of Carrara marble from which the statue has to be patiently hewn. As it was first given to the world it was entirely too long for the stage. For instance, Hamlet is a play so long that it must be cut for acting, but Becket is longer still. For many reasons he was anxious to do another play of Tennyson's. The first had added much to his reputation, and now the second was a huge success. He loved Tennyson—really loved the man as well as his work—and if for this reason alone exerted all his power to please him. Moreover as a manager he saw the wisdom of such a move. Tennyson's was a great name and there had been a lot of foolish argument in journals and magazines regarding "literature" in plays, and also concerning the national need of encouraging contemporary dramatic literature. Rightly or wrongly the public interest has to be considered, and Tennyson's name was one to conjure with. Moreover he came to depend on the picturesque possibilities of Tennyson's work. The Cup had allowed of a splendid setting, and in Becket its picturesque aspect of the struggle between Court and Church might be very attractive. Beyond this again there were two episodes of the period which so belonged to the history of the nation that every school child had them in memory: the martyrdom of Becket and the romantic story of Fair Rosamund and her secret bower.

Irving took the main idea of the play into his heart and tried to work it out. He kept it by him for more than a year. He took it with him to America in the tour of 1884–5; and in the long hours of loneliness, consequent on such work as his, made it a part of his mental labour. But it was all without avail; he could not see his way to a successful issue. Again he took it in hand when going to America in 1887–8; for the conviction was still with him that the play he wanted was there, if he could only unearth it. Again long months of effort; and again failure. This time he practically gave up hope. He had often tried to get Tennyson to think of other subjects, but without avail. Tennyson would not take any subject in hand unless he felt it and could see his way to it. Now Irving tried to interest him afresh in some of his other themes. He wished him to undertake a play on the subject of Dante. Tennyson considered the matter a while and then made a memorable reply:

“A fine subject! But where is the Dante to write it?”

Again Irving asked him to do Enoch Arden; but he said that having written the poem he would rather not deal with the same subject a second time in a different way.

Then he tried King Arthur; but again Tennyson applied the same reasoning with the same result.

At last he suggested as a subject, Robin Hood. Tennyson did not acquiesce, but he said he would think it over. I remember that Irving, hoping to interest him further in the matter, got all the books treating of the subject; all the stories and plays which he could hear of. He had hopes that the romantic side of the outlaw’s life would touch the poet. In fact Tennyson did write a play, The Foresters, which has been successful in America.

II

In the autumn of 1890, in response to a kindly invitation, Irving visited Aldworth, the lovely home which Tennyson made for himself under the brow of Blackdown. It

was nine years since the two men had had opportunity for a real talk. Sunday, October 19, was fixed for the visit. I was invited to lunch also, and needless to say I looked forward to the visit, for it was to be the first opportunity I should have of seeing Tennyson in his own home.

On the Sunday morning Irving and I made an early start, leaving Victoria Station by the train at 8.45 and arriving at Haslemere a little after half-past ten. Blackdown is just under mountain height—one thousand feet; but it is high enough and steep enough to test the lungs and muscles of man or beast. It was a typically fine day in autumn. The air was dry and cold and bracing, after a slight frost whose traces the bright sun had not yet obliterated. All was bright and clear around us, but the hills in the distance were misty.

Aldworth is a wonderful spot. Tennyson chose it himself with a rare discretion. It is, I suppose, the most naturally isolated place within a hundred miles of London. Doubtless this was an element in his choice, for he is said to have had a sickening of publicity at his other home, "Farringford," at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight. The house lies just under the brow of the hill to the east and faces south. This side of the hill is very steep, and now that the trees which he planted have grown tall the house cannot be seen from anywhere above. It is necessary to go miles away to get a glimpse of it from below. When he bought the ground it was all mountain moorland and he had to make his own roads. The house is of stone with fine mullioned windows, and the spaces everywhere are gracious. In front, which faces south, is a small lawn bounded by a stone parapet with a quickset hedge below and just showing above the top of the stonework. From here you look over Sussex right away to Goodwood and the bare Downs above Brighton. A glorious expanse of country articulated with river and wood and field of seeming toy dimensions. It would, I think, be impossible to find a more ideal place for quiet work. From it the howling, pushing, strenuous world is absolutely shut out; the mind can work untrammelled, fancy free. To the west lies a beautiful garden fashioned into pleasant nooks and

winding alleys, with flower-starred walks, and bowers of roses, and spreading shrubs. Behind it rise some fine forest trees. The garden trends some way down the hillside, opening to seas of bracken and the dim shelter of pine woods. In the fringes these woods in due season are filled with a natural growth of purple foxglove, the finest I have ever seen. Just below where the garden ends is a level nook, a corner between shelving lines of tree-clad hill where a tiny stream flows from a vigorous bubbling well. Just such a nook as Old Crome or Nasmyth would have loved to paint.

Photo Dickinsons HENRY IRVING AS CHARLES I.

Hallam Tennyson met us at the door. When we entered the wide hall, one of the noticeable things was quite a number of the picturesque wide-brimmed felt hats which Tennyson always wore. I could not but notice them, for a certain similarity struck me. In the house of Walt Whitman at Camden, New Jersey, was just such a collection of hats; except that Walt Whitman's hats—he being paralysed and not naturally careful of his appearance at that time of life—were worn out. Walt only got a new hat when the old one was badly worn. But he did not part with the old ones even then.

After a short visit to Lady Tennyson in the drawing-room we were brought upstairs to Tennyson's study, a great room over the drawing-room, with mullioned windows facing south and west. We entered from behind a great eight-fold screen some seven or eight feet high. In the room were many tall bookcases. The mullioned windows let in a flood of light. Tennyson was sitting at a table in the western window writing in a book of copybook size with black cover. His writing was very firm. He had on a black skull-cap. As we entered he held up his hand saying:

"Just one minute if you don't mind. I am almost finished!" When he had done he threw down his pen and rising quickly came towards us with open-handed welcome.

I went with Hallam to his own study, leaving Irving alone with Tennyson. Half an

hour later we joined them and we all went out for a walk. In the garden Tennyson pointed out to us some blue flowering pea which had been reared from seed found in the hand of a mummy. He stooped a little as he walked; he was then eighty-two, but seemed strong and was very cheerful—sometimes even merry. With us came his great Russian wolf-hound which seemed devoted to him. We walked through the grounds and woods for some three miles altogether, Hallam and Irving walking in front. As I walked with Tennyson we had much conversation, every word of which comes back to me. I was so fond of him and admired him so much that I could not, I think, forget if I tried anything which he said. Amongst other things he mentioned a little incident at Farringford, when in his own grounds an effusive lady, a stranger, said at rather than to him, of course alluding to the berries of the wild rose, then in profusion:

"What beautiful hips!"

"I'm so glad you admire 'em, ma'am!" he had answered, and he laughed heartily at the memory. I mention this as an instance of his love of humour. He had intense enjoyment of it.

He also mentioned an error made by the writer of Tennyson Land of a dog which in Demet Vale saved the child of an old local farmer.

"It's a lie," he said, "I invented it all; though there was such a character when I was a boy. When he was dying he said:

"'Th' A'mighty couldn't be so hard. An' Squire would be so mad an' a'!'" He said it in broad Lincolnshire dialect such as he used in The Northern Farmer. Tennyson was a natural character-actor; when he read or spoke in dialect he conveyed in voice and manner a distinct impression of an individual other than himself.

Then he told me some Irish anecdotes generally bearing on that quality in the Irish nature which renders them unsatisfied. He suggested a parody of a double row of shillelaghs working automatically on each side "and then they would be

unsatisfied!" At another time he spoke to me in the same vein.

Then I told him some Irish dialect stories which were new to him and which really seemed to give him pleasure. I told him also some of the extravagant Orange toasts of former days whereat he laughed much. Then turning to me he said:

"When we go in I want to read you something which I have just finished; but you must not say anything about it yet!"

"All right!" I said, "of course I shall not. But why, may I ask, do you wish it so?"

"Well, you see," he said, "I have to be careful. If it is known that I am writing on a particular subject I get a dozen poems on it the next day. And then when mine comes out they say I plagiarised them!"

In the course of our conversation something cropped up which suggested a line of one of his poems, The Golden Year, and I quoted it. "Go on!" said Tennyson, who seemed to like to know that any one quoting him knew more than the bare quotation. I happened to know that poem and went on to the end of the lyrical portion. There I stopped:

"Go on!" he said again; so I spoke the narrative bit at the end, supposed to be spoken by the writer:

"He spoke; and, high above, I heard them blast

The steep slate-quarry, and the great echo flap

And buffet round the hills, from bluff to bluff."

Tennyson listened attentively. When I spoke the last line he shook his head and said:

"No!"

"Surely that is correct?" I said.

"No!" There was in this something which I did not understand, for I was certain that I had given the words correctly. So I ventured to say:

"Of course one must not contradict an author about his own work; but I am certain

those are the words in my edition of the poem." He answered quickly:

"Oh, the words are all right—quite correct!"

"Then what is wrong?" For answer he said:

"Have you ever been on a Welsh mountain?"

"Yes! on Snowdon!"

"Did you hear them blast a slate-quarry?"

"Yes. In Wales, and also on Coniston in Lancashire."

"And did you notice the sound?" I was altogether at fault and said:

"Won't you tell me—explain to me. I really want to understand?" Accordingly he spoke the last line; and further explanation was unnecessary. The whole gist was in his pronunciation of the word "bluff" twice repeated. He spoke the word with a sort of quick propulsive effort as though throwing the word from his mouth.

"I thought any one would understand that!" he added.

It was the exact muffled sound which the exploding charge makes in the curves of the steep valleys.

This is a good instance of Tennyson's wonderful power of onomatopœia. To him the sound had a sense of its own. I had another instance of it before the day was over.

That talk was full of very interesting memories. Perhaps it was apropos of the peas grown from the seed in the mummy hand, but Lazarus in his tomb came on the tapis. This stanza of In Memoriam had always been a favourite of mine, and when I told him so, he said:

"Repeat it!" I did so, again feeling as if I were being weighed up. When I had finished:

"He told it not; or something seal'd

The lips of that Evangelist:"

he turned to me and said:

"Do you know that when that was published they said I was scoffing. But"—here both face and voice grew very very grave—"I did not mean to scoff!"

When I told him of my wonder as to how any sane person could have taken such an idea from such a faithful, tender, understanding poem he went on to speak of faith and the need of faith. There was, speaking generally, nothing strange or original to rest in my mind. But his finishing sentence I shall never forget. Indeed had I forgotten for the time I should have remembered it from what he said the last interview I had with him just before his death:

"You know I don't believe in an eternal hell, with an All-merciful God. I believe in the All-merciful God! It would be better otherwise that men should believe they are only ephemera!"

When we returned to the house we lunched, Lady Tennyson and Mrs. Hallam Tennyson having joined us. Then we went up again to the study, and Tennyson, taking from the table the book in which he had been writing, read us the last-written poem, The Churchwarden and the Curate. He read it in the Lincolnshire dialect, which is much simpler when heard than read. The broadness of the vowels and their rustic prolongation, rather than drawl, adds force and also humour. I shall never forget the intense effect of the last lines of the tenth stanza. The shrewd worldly wisdom—which was plain sincerity of understanding without cynicism:

"But niver not speäk plaain out, if tha wants to git forrards a bit,

But creeäp along the hedge-bottoms, an' thou'll be a Bishop yit."

Tennyson was a strangely good reader. His voice was powerful and vibrant, and had that quality of individualism which is so convincing. You could not possibly mistake it for the voice of any one else. It was a potent part of the man's identity. In his reading there was a wonderful sense of time. The lines seem to swing with an elastic step—like a regiment marching.

In a little time after came his hour for midday rest; so we said good-bye and left him. Irving and I went for a smoke to Hallam's study, where he produced his phonograph and adjusted a cylinder containing a reading of his father's. Colonel Gouraud had taken special pains to have for the reception of Tennyson's voice the most perfect appliance possible, and the phonograph was one of peculiar excellence, without any of that tinny sharpness which so often changes the intentioned sound.

The reading was that of Tennyson's own poem, The Charge of the Heavy Brigade. It was strange to hear the mechanical repetition whilst the sound of the real voice, which we had so lately heard, was still ringing in our ears. It was hard to believe that we were not listening to the poet once again. The poem of Scarlett's charge is one of special excellence for phonographic recital, and also as an illustration of Tennyson's remarkable sense of time. One seems to hear the rhythmic thunder of the horses' hoofs as they ride to the attack. The ground seems to shake, and the virile voice of the reader conveys in added volume the desperate valour of the charge.

With Hallam we sat awhile and talked. Then we came away and drove to Godalming, there to catch our train for London. The afternoon sun was bright and warm, though the air was bracing; and even as we drove through the beautiful scene Irving's eyes closed and he took his afternoon doze after his usual fashion.

I think this visit fanned afresh Irving's wish to play Becket. I do not know what he and Tennyson spoke of—he never happened to mention it to me; but he began from thence to speak of the play at odd times.

III

That season was a busy one, as we had taken off Ravenswood and played répertoire. That autumn there was a provincial tour. The 1891 season saw Henry VIII. run from the beginning of the year. The long run, with only six performances a week, gave some leisure for study; and Irving once more took Becket in hand. I think that again the character he was playing had its influence on him. He was tuned to

sacerdotalism; and the robes of a churchman sat easy on him. There was a sufficient difference between Wolsey—the chancellor who happened to be a cleric, and Becket—who was cleric before all things—to obviate the danger of too exact a repetition of character and situation. At all events Irving reasoned it out in his usual quiet way, and did not speak till he was ready. It was during the customary holiday in Holy Week in 1892 that he finally made up his mind. I had been spending the vacation in Cornwall, at Boscastle, a lovely spot which I had hit upon by accident. Incidentally I so fell in love with the place and gave such a glowing account of it that Irving, later on, spent two vacations at it. I came up to London on the night of Good Friday in a blinding snowstorm, the ground white from the Cornish sea to London. Irving had evidently been waiting, for as soon as we met in the theatre about noon on Saturday he asked me if I could stop and take supper in the theatre. I said I could, and he made the same request to Loveday. After the play we had supper in the Beefsteak Room; and when we had lit our cigars, he opened a great packet of foolscap and took out Becket as he had arranged it. He had taken two copies of the book, and when he had marked the cuts in duplicate he had cut out neatly all the deleted scenes and passages. He had used two copies as he had to paste down the leaves on the sheets of foolscap. He had prepared the play in this way so that any one reading it would not see as he went along what had been cut out. Thus such a reader would be better able to follow the action as it had been arranged, unprejudiced by obvious alteration, and with a mind single of thought—for it would not be following the deleted matter as well as that remaining. He knew also that it would be more pleasant to Tennyson to read what he had written without seeing a great mass cut out. Becket as written is enormously long; the adapted play is only about five-sevenths of the original length. Before he began to read he said:

“I think I have got it at last!”

His reading was of its usual fine and enlightening quality; as he read it the story became a fascination. There was no doubting how the part of Becket appealed to

him. He was greatly moved at some of the passages, especially in the last act.

Loveday and I were delighted with the play. And when the reading was finished, we, then and there, agreed that it should be the next play produced after King Lear, which was then in hand, and which had been arranged to come on in the autumn of that year.

We sat that night until four o'clock, talking over the play and the music for it. Irving thought that Charles Villiers Stanford would be the best man to do it. We quite agreed with him. When he saw that we were taken with it, equally as himself, he became more expansive regarding the play. He said it was a true "miracle" play—a holy theme; and that he had felt already in studying it that it made him a better man.

Before we parted I had by his wish written to Hallam Tennyson at Freshwater asking him if he could see me on business if I came down to the Isle of Wight. I mentioned also Irving's wish that it might be as soon as possible.

Hallam Tennyson telegraphed up on Monday, after he had received my letter, saying that I would be expected the next day, April 19—Easter Tuesday, 1892.

In the meantime, I had read both the original play and the acting version, and was fairly familiar with the latter.

XX TENNYSON AND HIS PLAYS—III

I

I went down by the 10.30 train from Victoria and got to Freshwater about four o'clock. Hallam was attending a meeting of the County Council but came in about five. He and I went carefully over the suggested changes, in whose wisdom he seemed to acquiesce. We arranged provisionally royalties and such matters, as Irving had wished to acquire for a term of years the whole rights of the play for both Britain and America. We were absolutely at one on all points.

At a little before six he took me to see his father, who was lying on a sofa in his study. The study was a fine room with big windows. Tennyson was a little fretful at first, as he was ill with a really bad cold; but he was very interested in my message and cheered up at once. At the beginning I asked if he would allow Irving to alter Becket, so far as cutting it as he thought necessary. He answered at once:

"Irving may do whatever he pleases with it!"

"In that case, Lord Tennyson," said I, "Irving will do the play within a year!"

He seemed greatly gratified, and for a long time we sat chatting over the suggested changes, he turning the manuscript over and making a running commentary as he went along. He knew well where the cuts were; he knew every word of the play, and needed no reference to the fuller text.

When he came to the end of the scene in Northampton Castle, I put before him Irving's suggestion that he should, if he thought well of it, introduce a speech—or rather amplify the idea conveyed in the shout of the kneeling crowd: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" In our discussion of the play on the night of the reading we had all agreed that something was here wanting—something which would, from a dramatic point of view, strengthen Becket's position. If he could have the heart of the people behind him it would manifestly give him a firmer foothold in his struggle with the King. Naturally there was an opening for an impassioned voicing of the old cry, "Vox populi, vox Dei." When I ventured to suggest this he said in a doubting way:

"But where am I to get such a speech?"

As we sat we were sheltered by the Downs from the sea which thunders night and day under one of the highest cliffs in England. I pointed out towards the Downs and said:

"There it is! In the roar of the sea!" The idea was evidently already in his mind; and when he sent up to Irving a few days later the new material the mighty sound of the

surge and the blast were in his words.

II

When Tennyson had run roughly through the altered play, he seemed much better and brighter. He put the play aside and talked of other things. In the course of conversation he mentioned the subject of anonymous letters from which he had suffered. He said that one man had been writing such to him for forty-two years. He also spoke of the unscrupulous or careless way in which some writers for the press had treated him. That even Sir Edwin Arnold had written an interview without his knowledge or consent, and that it was full of lies—Tennyson never hesitated to use the word when he felt it—such as: "'Here I parted from General Gordon!' And that I had 'sent a man on horseback after him.' General Gordon was never in the place!" This subject both in general and special he alluded to also at our last meeting in 1892; it seemed to have taken a hold on his memory.

He also said:

"Irving paid me a great compliment when he said that I would have made a fine actor!"

In the morning, Hallam and I walked in the garden before breakfast. Farringford is an old feudal farm, and some of the trees are magnificent—ilex, pine, cedar; primrose and wild parsley everywhere, and underneath a great cedar a wilderness of trailing ivy. The garden gave me the idea that all the wild growth had been protected by a loving hand.

After breakfast Hallam and I walked in the beautiful wood behind the house, where beyond the hedgerows and the little wood rose the great bare rolling Down, at the back of which is a great sheer cliff five hundred feet high. We sat in the summer-house where Tennyson had written nearly all of Enoch Arden. It had been lined with wood, which Alfred Tennyson himself had carved; but now the bare

bricks were visible in places. The egregious relic hunters had whittled away piecemeal the carved wood. They had also smashed the windows, which Tennyson had painted with sea-plants and dragons; and had carried off the pieces! When we returned I was brought up to Tennyson's room.

He was not feeling well. He sat in a great chair with the cut play on his knee, one finger between the pages as though to mark a place. He had been studying the alterations; and as he did not look happy, I feared that there might be something not satisfactory with regard to some of the cuts. Presently he said to me suddenly:

"Who is God, the Virgin?"

"Who is what?" I asked, bewildered as to his meaning; I feared I could not have heard aright.

"God, the Virgin! That is what I want to know too. Here it is!"

"As he spoke he opened the play where his finger marked it. He handed it to me and there to my astonishment I read:

"I do commend my soul to God, the Virgin...."

When Irving had been cutting the speech he had omitted to draw his pencil through the last two words. The speech as written ran thus:

"I do commend my soul to God, the Virgin,

St. Denis of France, and St. Alphege of England,

And all the tutelary saints of Canterbury."

In doing the scissors-work he had been guided by the pencil-marks, and so had made the error.

The incident amused Tennyson very much, and put him in better spirits. We went downstairs into what in the house is called the "ballroom," a great sunny room with the wall away from the light covered with a great painting by Lear of a tropical scene intended for Enoch Arden. Here we walked up and down for a long time, the

old man leaning on my arm. He told me that he had often thought of making a collection of the hundred best stories.

“Tell me some of them?” I asked softly. Whereupon he told me quite a number, all excellent. Such as the following:

“A noble at the Court of Louis XVI. was extremely like the King, who on it being pointed out to him, sent for him and asked him:

“‘Was your mother ever at Court?’ Bowing low he replied:

“‘No, sire! But my father was!’”

Again:

“Colonel Jack Towers was a great crony of the Prince Regent. He was with his regiment at Portsmouth on one occasion; and was in Command of the Guard of Honour when the Prince was crossing to the Isle of Wight. The Prince had not thought of his being there, and was surprised when he saw him. After his usual manner he began to banter:

“‘Why, Jack, they tell me you are the biggest blackguard in Portsmouth!’ To which the other replied, bowing low:

“‘I trust that your Royal Highness has not come down here to take away my character!’”

Again:

“Silly Billy—the sobriquet of the Duke of Gloucester—said to a friend:

“‘You are as near a fool as you can be!’ He too bowed as he answered:

“‘Far be it from me to contradict your Royal Highness!’”

III

That evening at dinner Tennyson was, though far from well in health, exceedingly bright in his talk. To me he seemed to love an argument and supported his side with

an intellectual vigour and quickness which were delightful. He was full of insight into Irish character. He asked me if I had read his poem, The Voyage of Maeldune; and when I told him I had not yet read it he described it and repeated verses. How the Irish had sailed to island after island, finding in turn all they had longed for, from fighting to luscious fruit, but were never satisfied and came back, fewer in numbers, to their own island. In the drawing-room he said to me, as if the idea had struck him, I daresay from something I said:

"Are you Irish?" When I told him I was he said very sweetly:

"You must forgive me. If I had known that I would not have said anything that seemed to belittle Ireland."

He went to bed early after his usual custom.

That evening in the course of conversation the name of John Fiske the historian, and sometime a professor of Yale University, came up. To my great pleasure, for Fiske had been a close friend of mine for nearly ten years, Tennyson spoke of him in the most enthusiastic way. He asked me if I knew his work. And when I replied that I knew well not only the work but the man, he answered:

"You know him! Then when you next meet him will you tell John Fiske from me that I thank him—thank him most heartily and truly—for all the pleasure and profit his work has been to me!"

"I shall write to him to-morrow!" I said. "I know it will be a delight to him to have such a message from you!"

"No!" said Tennyson, "Don't write! Wait till you see him, and then tell him—direct from me through you—how much I feel indebted to him!"

I did not meet John Fiske till 1895. When the message was delivered it was from the dead.

IV

On the next morning I saw Tennyson again in his bedroom after early breakfast. He looked very unwell, and was in low spirits. Indeed he seemed too dispirited to light his pipe, which he held ready in his hand. He said that he had not yet got the lines he wanted: “The Voice of the People is the Voice of God”—or: “The Voice of the People is the Voice of England!” I think that he had been over the altered text again and that some of the cutting had worried him. Before I came away after saying good-bye he said suddenly, as if he had all at once made up his mind to speak:

“I suppose he couldn’t spare me Walter Map?”

Walter Map was a favourite character of his in the original Becket. He it is who represents scholarly humour in the play.

When I told Irving about this he was much touched, and said that he would go over the play again, and would, if he possibly could see his way to it, retain the character. He spent many days over it; but at last came to the conclusion that it would not do.

At this last meeting—at that visit—when I asked Tennyson what composer he would wish to do the music for his play he said:

“Villiers Stanford!” He and Irving had independently chosen the same man. How this belief was justified is known to all who have heard the fine Becket music.

V

On September 25 the same year, 1892, my wife and I spent the day with Lord and Lady Tennyson at Aldworth. We were to have gone a week earlier, but as Tennyson was not well the visit was postponed. We left Waterloo by the 8.45 train. At the station we were joined by Walter Leaf, the Homer scholar, who had been at Cambridge with Hallam. We had met him at Lionel Tennyson’s years before. The day was dull but the country looked very lovely; still full of green, though the leaves were here and there beginning to turn. The Indian vines were scarlet. A carriage was waiting and we drove to Aldworth, meeting Mrs. Tennyson on her way to church.

On Blackdown Common the leaves were browner than in the valley, and there was a sense of autumn in the air; but round the house, where it was sheltered, green still reigned alone. Far below us the plain was a sea of green, with dark lines of trees and hedgerows like waves. In the distance the fields were wreathed with a dark film—a sapphire mystery.

We sat awhile with Lady Tennyson, who was in the drawing-room on a sofa away from the light. She had long been an invalid. She was perhaps the most sweet and saintly woman I ever met, and had a wonderful memory. She had been helper and secretary to her husband in early days, trying to save him all the labour she could; and she told us of the enormous correspondence of even that early time. Presently Hallam took us all up to his father, who was in his study overhead.

The room was well guarded against cold, for we had to pass from the door all along one side of it through a laneway made between the bookcases and the high manifold screen. Tennyson was sitting on a sofa with his back to the big mullioned window which looked out to the south. He had on a black skull-cap, his long thin dark hair falling from under it. He seemed very feeble, a good deal changed in that way during the five months that had elapsed since I had seen him. His fine brown nervous hands lay on his lap. Irving had the finest and most expressive hands I have ever seen; Tennyson's were something like them, only bigger. When he began to talk he brightened up. Amongst other things he spoke of the error in the alteration of Becket, "God the Virgin." We did not stay very long, as manifestly quietude was best for him, and no one else but ourselves was allowed to see him that day. Presently we all went for a walk, Mrs. Allingham, the painter, who was an old and close friend of the Tennysons, joining us. As we went out we had a glimpse from the terrace of Tennyson reading; part of his book and the top of his head were visible. At that time the lawn presented a peculiar appearance. There had come a sort of visitation of slugs, and the grass was all brown in patches where paraffin had been poured on it.

VI

After lunch Hallam brought Walter Leaf and me up to the study again. Tennyson had changed his place and now sat on another sofa placed in the north-west corner of the room. He was much brighter and stronger and full of intellectual fire. He talked of Homer with Walter Leaf, and in a fine deep voice recited, in the Greek, whole passages—of the sea and the dawn rising from it. He spoke of Homeric song as "the grandest sounds that can be of the human voice." He spoke very warmly of Leaf's book, and said he would have been proud to have been quoted in it. He ridiculed the idea of any one holding that there had been no such person as Homer. He thought Ilium was a "fancy" town—the invention of Homer's own imagination. Doubts of Homer brought up doubts as to Shakespeare, and the Bacon and Shakespeare controversy which was then raging. He ridiculed the idea:

"What ridiculous stuff!" he said. "Fancy that greatest of all love-poems, Romeo and Juliet, written by a man who wrote: 'Great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion!'" (From Bacon's Essay on Love.)

I told him the story which I had heard General Horace Porter—the Ambassador of the United States to France—tell long before. It may be an old story but I venture to tell it again:

"In a hotel 'out West' a lot of men in the bar-room were discussing the Shakespeare and Bacon question. They got greatly excited and presently a lot of them had their guns out. Some one interfered and suggested that the matter should be left to arbitration. The arbitrator selected was an Irishman, who had all the time sat quiet smoking and not saying a word—which circumstance probably suggested his suitability for the office. When he had heard the arguments on both sides formally stated, he gave his decision:

"'Well, Gintlemin, me decision is this: Thim plays was not wrote be Shakespeare! But they was wrote be a man iv the saame naame!'"

Tennyson seemed delighted with the story.

Then he spoke of Shakespeare, commenting on Henry VIII., which had been running all the year at the Lyceum. He mentioned Wolsey's speech, speaking the lines:

"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition."

Then he added in a very pronounced way:

"Shakespeare never wrote that! I know it! I know it! I know it!" As he spoke he smote hard upon the table beside him.

After a long chat we left Tennyson to have his afternoon nap, and smoked in the summer-house. Then we walked to the south-west edge of Blackdown. The afternoon was very clear and we could see the hills of the Isle of Wight, which Hallam said he had never before seen from there.

VII

After tea Hallam took Leaf and me again to his father. After a while we were joined there by Mrs. Tennyson and my wife. Tennyson was then very feeble, but cheerful. He told us a lot of stories and incidents—his humour and memory were quick in him that evening.

One was of the landlord of a hotel at Stirling. He had, during a trip in Scotland, telegraphed to the hotel to have rooms kept. When he arrived he was delighted with them. They were on the first floor, airy and spacious, and in all ways desirable. He felt pleased at being treated with such consideration. After dinner he was sitting by the open window smoking his pipe when he heard a conversation going on below. One of the speakers was the landlord, the other a stranger. Said the latter:

"I hear you have Tennyson staying with you to-night?"

"Aye! That's the man's name. He telegraphed the day for rooms. Do ye ken him?"

"Know him! Why that's Alfred Tennyson, the poet!"

"The poet! I'm wishin' I had kent that!"

"Why?" asked the stranger. After a pause the answer came:

"He a poet! I'd ha' seen him dommed before I had gied him ma best rooms!"

As he was reminiscent that night his anecdotes were mostly personal. Another was of a man of the lower class in the Isle of Wight, who spoke of him in early days:

"He, a great man! Why 'e only keeps one man-servant—an' 'e don't sleep in th' 'ouse!"

Another was of a workman who was heard to say:

"Shakespeare an' Tennyson! Well, I don't think nothin' of neither on 'em!"

Another was of a Grimsby fishmonger, who said when asked by an acquisitive autograph hunter if he happened to have any letters from Tennyson:

"No! His son writes 'em. He still keeps on the business; but he ain't a patch on his faythe r!"

Tennyson was sitting on the sofa as he had been in the morning. For all his brightness and his humour, which seemed to bubble in him, he was very feeble and seemed to be suffering a good deal. He moaned now and then with pain. Gout was flying through his knees and jaws. He had then on his black skull-cap, but he presently took it off as though it were irksome to him. In front of him was a little table with one wax candle lighted. It was of that pattern which has vertical holes through it to let the overflow of melted wax fall within, not without. When the fire of pleasant memory began to flicker, he grew feeble and low in spirits. He spoke of the coming spring and that he would not live to see it. Somehow he grew lower in spirits as the light died away and the twilight deepened, as if the whole man was tuned to nature's key. Through the window we could note the changes as evening drew nearer. The rabbits were stealing out on the lawn, and the birds picking up grubs in the grass.

Once again Tennyson seemed troubled about the press, and was bitter against certain newspaper prying. He could not get free from it. It had been found out during his illness that the beggar-man who came daily for the broken meat was getting ten shillings a week from a local reporter to come and tell him the gossip of the kitchen. Turning to me he said:

“Don’t let them know how ill I am, or they’ll have me buried before twenty-four hours!” Then after a while he added:

“Can’t they all let me alone. What did they want digging up the graves of my father and mother and my grandfather and grandmother. I sometimes wish I had never written a line!” I said:

“Ah, don’t say that! Don’t think it! You have given delight to too many millions, and your words have done too much good for you to wish to take them back. And the good and the pleasure are to go on for all the future.” After a moment’s thought he said very softly:

“Well, perhaps you’re right! But can’t they leave me alone!”

We were all very still and silent for a while. The lessening twilight and the moveless flame of the close-set candle showed out his noble face and splendid head in full relief. The mullioned window behind him with the darkening sky and the fading landscape made a fitting background to the dying poet. We said good-bye with full hearts.

Outside, our tears fell. We knew that we should see him no more; we had said good-bye for ever!

XXI TENNYSON AND HIS PLAYS—IV

I

Tennyson died on Thursday, October 6, eleven days after we had seen him. Two

others only saw him after we did—with of course the exception of his own family—Mr. Craik, of Messrs. Macmillan, his publishers, and Dr. Dabbs, of the Isle of Wight, his physician.

Before he died he spoke of May—the spring seemed to be for him a time which the Lords of Life and Death would not allow him to pass. It had too some connection in his mind with his play The Promise of May. He said to Dr. Dabbs, who wrote to me about it afterwards:

"I suppose I shall never see Becket?"

"I fear not!"

"Ah!" After a long pause he said again: "They did not do me justice with The Promise of May—but——" another long pause and then half fiercely:

"I can trust Irving—he will do me justice!"

Tennyson was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey on October 12. There was a great crowd both in the Abbey and the streets without. All were still, hushed and solemn. The sense of great loss was over all. Very solemn and impressive was the service. There was gloom in the great Cathedral, and the lights were misty. Everywhere the strong odour of many flowers. A body of distinguished men of letters, science and art followed the coffin, coming behind his family. Amongst them Henry Irving, looking as usual, wherever he was, the most distinguished of all. On that sad day, Tennyson's poem, Crossing the Bar, was sung. Then his last poem, The Silent Voices. The exquisite music written for this by Lady Tennyson and arranged by Sir John Frederick Bridge was heard for the first time. The noble words ringing through the great Cathedral seemed like a solemn epitome of the teaching of the poet's life. Six years afterwards I heard Irving speak them in the crowded Senate House at Cambridge with that fervour which seemed a part of his very life. Now, from that Poet's Corner where they both rest I seem to hear the voices of the two great souls in unison, calling to the great Humanity which each in

his own way loved and which was so deep in the hearts of both:

“Call me rather, silent voices,

Forward to the starry track

Glimmering up the heights beyond me

On, and always on!”

II

Becket, having been in preparation since the end of September, was ready to take its place after the run of King Lear. The first dress rehearsal was held on the evening of February 3, 1893, beginning at 6.30 and lasting till one o’clock. It was an excellent rehearsal and all went well. The play was produced three nights later, February 6, 1893—Irving’s fifty-fifth birthday—and was a really enormous success. The public, who had been waiting since early morning at the pit and gallery, could not contain themselves; and even the more staid portions of the house lost their reserve. It was like one huge personal triumph. No one seemed to compare the play or the character to anything seen before. Not even to Henry VIII. and Cardinal Wolsey, which had held the stage for eight months the previous year.

Becket was played one hundred and twelve times that season. The entire scenery was burned in the disastrous fire of 1898. There was a new production in 1904. Altogether Tennyson’s play was performed three hundred and eight times, as follows:

London, 147; British Provinces, 92; America, 69.

III

In 1897 Irving gave a remarkable Reading of Becket. This was in the old Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral, which had been recently restored exactly to its ancient condition. Farrar was then Dean of Canterbury, and as Irving had promised

to read Becket for the benefit of the Cathedral Restoration Fund, he and I had three meetings on the subject for which he came specially from Canterbury to London on April 21 and 28 and May 5. At our first meeting the Dean suggested that the Reading should be held in the restored Chapter House, which the Prince of Wales was to open on May 29. Thus Irving's Reading of Becket would be on the first occasion which the restored room should be used. I well remember my host's dismay when he met me at the doorway of the Athenæum Club and apologised that there was not a single room in the club to which a member could ask a stranger. I do not know if that iron-clad rule still exists; a somewhat similar one existed at that time at the United Service Club, on the other side of Waterloo Place. There a member could ask a friend into the hall and there give him a glass of sherry. Such was the only measure of hospitality allowable at the "Senior." That rule has been since abandoned in the "Service" Club; the usual club hospitalities can now be extended to guests.

At these meetings, as I was authorised to speak for Irving on all matters, we arranged the necessary details. The Reading was to be given on Monday, May 31, at two o'clock, the tickets to be a guinea and half a guinea each. As time was then pressing and publicity with regard to the undertaking was necessary, we decided at the last meeting that Dean Farrar was to write a letter to the newspapers calling attention to the coming event and its beneficent purpose. I undertook if he would send me the letter to have it facsimiled and sent to four hundred newspapers.

Of course every seat was sold long ahead of the time. A place like Canterbury cannot—and cannot be expected to—furnish such an audience as would be required on such an occasion. Most of them would have to come from London and other cities and towns. When I left the Dean I saw Mr. William Forbes, one of the powers of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, who kindly undertook to arrange trains to and from Canterbury to suit the convenience of the audience, and especially to look after accommodation for Irving and his friends.

On the day of the Reading we went down by train from Victoria at 10 A.M., Ellen Terry being one of the party. Sir Henry's two sons were with him, as was also Sir John Hassard, the Secretary of the Court of Arches, and who then was the right hand of the Archbishop of Canterbury—as he had been to several of his predecessors. At Canterbury, Irving and I went to see the Chapter House. After a walk through the Cathedral we went to the County Hotel, where Irving rested for a while. A little before two o'clock we went to the Chapter House. At two punctually he stepped on the stage, and was introduced in the usual way by Dean Farrar. There was a fine audience. Every spot where one could stand was occupied. Irving got a great reception.

It was a remarkable occasion, and we could not but feel a certain solemnity from the place as well as from the subject. There were so many historic associations with regard to the great room that we could not dissociate them from the occasion.

Irving read magnificently. To the inspiration of the theme was to him the added force of the place and the occasion. The Reading lasted one hour and thirty-five minutes—a terrible tax on even the greatest strength. During all that time he held his audience spell-bound. At the conclusion he was, naturally, a good deal exhausted; such a tour de force takes all the strength one has.

We all returned to London by the 4.18 o'clock train.

The result of the Reading was an addition to the Restoration Fund of over £250.

IV

On one other historic occasion Henry Irving read Becket. This was at the King Alfred Millenary at Winchester in 1901. In the June of that year he had been selected by the Royal Institution to represent their body; and thinking that he might in addition give some practical aid to the cause, he told the authorities at Winchester that he would on the occasion give a Reading of Becket for the benefit of the

Expense Fund. Wednesday, September 18, was fixed for the event. As the Autumn tour had been arranged we would be playing in Leeds; but distance nor magnitude of effort ever came between Irving and his promise. On September 17 he played Charles I. and left for Winchester at the close of the play. At Winchester he was the guest of the then Mayor, Mr. Alfred Bowker. The next day he gave in the Castle Hall, to a great audience, a slightly compressed Reading of Becket. Winchester then thronged with strangers from all parts of the world, a large number of whom were accredited representatives of some branch or interest of the Anglo-Saxon race. Poor John Fiske was to have been one of the representatives of America. He was to have spoken, and when I had seen him last he told me that that was to be the crowning effort of his life.

At the close of the Reading Irving received an ovation and was compelled to make a speech. In it he said:

"A thousand years of the memory of a great King, who loved his country and made her loved and respected and feared, is a mighty heritage for a nation; one of which not England alone but all Christendom may well be proud. The work which King Alfred did he did for England, but the whole world benefited by it. And most of all was there benefit for that race which he adorned. In the thousand years which have elapsed since he was laid to rest in that England in whose making he had such a part, the world has grown wiser and better, and civilisation has ever marched on with mighty strides. But through all extension and all advance the land which King Alfred consolidated and the race which peopled it, have ever been to the front in freedom and enlightenment; and to-day when England and her many children, east and west and north and south, are united by one grand aspiration of human advance, it is well that we should celebrate the memory of him to whom so large a measure of that advance is due."

XXII "WATERLOO"—"KING ARTHUR"—"DON QUIXOTE"

I

One day early in March 1892, whilst we were rehearsing Tennyson's play, The Foresters, which in accordance with the author's request was produced for copyright purposes at the Lyceum, Irving came into the office in a hurry. He was a little late. He, Loveday and myself always used the same office, as we found it in all ways convenient for our perpetual consultations. As he came hurrying out to the stage, after putting on the brown soft broad-brimmed felt hat for which he usually exchanged his "topper" during rehearsals, he stopped beside my table where I was writing, and laying a parcel on it said:

"I wish you would throw an eye over that during rehearsal. It came this morning. You can tell me what you think of it when I come off!"

I took up the packet and unrolled a number of type-written sheets a little longer than foolscap. I read it with profound interest and was touched to my very heart's core by its humour and pathos. It was very short, and before Irving came in again from the stage I had read it a second time. When he came in he said presently in an unconcerned way:

"By the way, did you read that play?"

"Yes!"

"What do you think of it?"

"I think this," I said, "that that play is never going to leave the Lyceum. You must own it—at any price. It is made for you."

"So I think, too!" he said heartily. "You had better write to the author to-day and ask him what cheque we are to send. We had better buy the whole rights."

“Who is the author?”

“Conan Doyle!”

The author answered at once and the cheque was sent in due course. The play was then named A Straggler of ’15. This Irving changed to A Story of Waterloo, when the play was down for production. Later this was simplified to Waterloo.

Irving fell in love with the character, and began to study it right away. The only change in the play he made was to get Sir Arthur—then “Dr.” or “Mr.”—Conan Doyle to consolidate the matter of the first few pages into a shorter space. The rest of the MS. remained exactly as written.

It was not, however, for nearly two years that he got an opportunity of playing it. It is a difficult matter to find a place for an hour-long play in a working bill. Henry VIII., King Lear, and Becket held the Lyceum stage till the middle of 1893. Then came a tour in America lasting up to end of March 1894. The short London season was taken up with a prearranged reproduction of Faust.

Then followed a provincial tour from September to Christmas. Here was found the opportunity. The Bells is a short play, and for mere length allows of an addition.

In the first week of the tour at the Princes Theatre, Bristol, on September 21, 1894, A Story of Waterloo was given. The matter was one of considerable importance in the dramatic world; not only was Irving to play a new piece, but that piece was Conan Doyle’s first attempt at the drama. The chief newspapers of London and some of the greater provincial cities wished to be represented on the occasion; the American press also wished to send its critical contingent. Accordingly we arranged for a special train to bring the critical force. Hearing that so many of his London journalistic friends were coming an old friend of Irving’s then resident in Bristol, Mr. John Saunders, arranged to give a supper in the Liberal Club, to which they were all invited, together with many persons of local importance.

The play met with a success extraordinary even for Irving. The audience followed

with rapt attention and manifest emotion, swaying with the varying sentiments of the scene. The brief aid to memory in my diary of that day runs:

“New play enormous success. H. I. fine and great. All laughed and wept. Marvellous study of senility. Eight calls at end.”

Unfortunately the author was not present to share the triumph, for it would have been a delightful memory for him. He was on a tour in America; “and thereby hangs a tale.”

Amongst the audience who had come specially from London was Mr. H. H. Kohlsaat, owner and editor of the Chicago Times Herald, a close and valued friend of Irving and myself. He was booked to leave for America the next day. When the play was over and the curtain finally down, he hurried away just in time to catch the train for Southampton, whence the American Line boat started in the morning. He got on board all right. The following Saturday he arrived in New York, just in time to catch the “flyer,” as they call the fast train to Chicago on the New York Central line. On Sunday night a public dinner was given to Conan Doyle to which of course Kohlsaat had been bidden. He arrived too late for the dining part; but having dressed in the train he came on to the hotel just as dinner was finished and before the speeches began. He took a chair next to Doyle and said to him:

“I am delighted to tell you that your play at Bristol was an enormous success!”

“So I am told,” said Doyle modestly. “The cables are excellent.”

“They are not half enough!” answered Kohlsaat, who had been reading in the train the papers for the last week.

“Indeed! I am rejoiced to hear it!” said Conan Doyle somewhat dubiously. “May I ask if you have had any special report?”

“I didn’t need any report, I saw it!”

“Oh, come!” said Conan Doyle, who thought that he was in some way chaffing him.

“That is impossible!”

“Not to me! But I am in all human probability the only man on the American continent who was there?” Then whilst the gratified author listened he gave him a full description of the play and the scene which followed it.

To my own mind Waterloo as an acting play is perfect; and Irving’s playing in it was the high-water mark of histrionic art. Nothing was wanting in the whole gamut of human feeling. It was a cameo, with all the delicacy of touch of a master-hand working in the fine material of the layered shell. It seemed to touch all hearts always. When the dying veteran sprang from his chair to salute the colonel of his old regiment the whole house simultaneously burst into a wild roar of applause. This was often the effect at subsequent performances both at home and in America.

II

In 1897, when representatives of the Indian and Colonial troops were gathered in London for the “Diamond” Jubilee of Queen Victoria, Irving gave a special performance for them. It was a matinée on June 25. The event was a formal one, for it was given by Royal consent, and special arrangements were made by the public officials. Some two thousand troops of all kinds and classes and costumes were massed at Chelsea Barracks. The streets were cleared by the police for their passing as they marched to the Lyceum to the quickstep of the Guards’ Fife and Drum Band, the public cheering them all the way. They represented every colour and ethnological variety of the human race, from coal black through yellow and brown up to the light type of the Anglo-Saxon reared afresh in new realms beyond the seas.

Their drill seemed to be perfect, and we had made complete arrangements for their seating. Section by section they marched into the theatre, all coming by the great entrance, without once stopping or even marking time in the street.

In the boxes and stalls sat the Indian Princes and the Colonial Premiers, and some

few of the foreign guests. The house was crammed from wall to wall; from floor to ceiling; the bill was Waterloo and The Bells. No such audience could have been had for this military piece. It sounded the note of the unity of the Empire which was then in celebration; all were already tuned to it. The scene at the end was indescribable. It was a veritable ecstasy of loyal passion.

Waterloo was played by Irving eighty times in London; one hundred and seventy-seven times in the provinces; and eighty-eight times in America—in all three hundred and forty-five times, the last being at London on June 15, 1905.

III

For a long time Irving had in view of production a play on the subject of King Arthur. He broached the subject to Tennyson, but the latter could not see his way to it. He had dealt with the subject in one way and did not wish to try it in another. Then he got W. G. Willis to write a play; this he purchased from him in 1890. As, however, he did not think it would act well, he got Comyns Carr to write another some three years later.

In 1894 the production was taken in hand. Sir Edward Burne-Jones undertook to design scenes and dresses, armour and appointments. His suggestions were new lights on stage possibilities. As he was not learned in stage technique and mechanism, there were of course some seemingly insuperable difficulties; but these in the hands of artists skilled in stage work soon disappeared. To my own mind it was the first time that what must in reality be a sort of fairyland was represented as an actuality. Some of the scenes were of transcendent beauty, notably that called “The Whitethorn Wood.” The scene was all green and white—the side of a hill thick with blossoming thorn through which, down a winding path, came a bevy of maidens in flowing garments of tissue which seemed to sway and undulate with every motion and every breath of air. There was a daintiness and a sense of purity about the whole scene which was very remarkable.

The armour which Burne-Jones designed was most picturesque. I fear it would hardly have done for actual combat as the adornments of shoulder and elbow were such that in the movement of the arms they took strange positions. When some virtuoso skilled in the lore of mail asked the great painter why he fixed on such a class of armour he answered:

"To puzzle the archæologists!"

For the great Fancy Ball given by the Duchess of Devonshire in Devonshire House, the armour was lent by Irving. It furnished the men of a quadrille and was a very striking episode in a gorgeous scene.

In the preparation of the scenes we had at first some difficulty, for great scene-painters like to make their own designs. But Burne-Jones' genius together with his great reputation—to both of which all artists bow—accompanied by Irving's persuasions carried the day. When it was objected that the suggested scenes were impossible to work in accordance with stage limitations, Irving pointed out that there was in itself opportunity for the ability of the scene-painters' skill and invention. Burne-Jones suggested the effect aimed at; with them rested the carrying it out. And surely neither Hawes Craven nor Joseph Harker could have ever had any emotions except those of pleasure when the round of applause nightly welcomed each scene as the curtain went up.

The cast was a fine one; Irving as King Arthur and Johnston Forbes-Robertson as Sir Lancelot, Ellen Terry as Guinevere, and Geneviève Ward as Morgan Le Fay. Some of the parts were not easy to play. One had a difficulty all its own. In the scene where Elaine is brought in on her bier she had to remain for a considerable time stone-still in full view of the audience. All that season Miss Lena Ashwell, who played the part, never once sneezed or yielded to any other temporary convulsion.

King Arthur was produced on January 12, and ran that season for one hundred and five performances. It was played twelve times in the provinces and seventy-four

times in America. In all one hundred and ninety-one performances. It was one of those plays cut short in its prime. The scenery and appointments were burned in the stage fire of 1898.

IV

The subject of Don Quixote for a play was matter that Irving had for a long time held in mind. In 1888, he had bought from W. G. Wills the entire rights of a play on the subject which he had suggested his writing. He was not, however, satisfied with it. Don Quixote is a great name and a picturesque figure to remember. He is also a great subject for a book, and Cervantes made him the hero and centre of many entertaining and amusing adventures. But he is not in reality a figure for prolonged stage use. He is too much in one note to make effective music. If any one ever succeeds in making a "full" play with him as hero the author will have to invent a story for it, or compile one out of the materials which Cervantes has in his immortal work bequeathed to mankind. The dramatic author or adapter can thus maintain the figure in its simplicity, keeping his personality always as a deus ex machina.

When he was satisfied he could not do Wills' play in its entirety Irving got another enthusiast of the subject, Mr. J. I. C. Clarke of New York, to write a fresh play on the theme. Clarke made an admirable play, of which Irving bought the entire rights in 1894. There were some very fine points in this new play, especially in illustrating the gravity of the Don's high character and his deep understanding of a noble act. But the difficulty of the subject was again apparent; the character was too simple and too fixed for the necessary variety and development of character in a long grave play.

Recognising the limitation of the subject, Irving, being determined to essay the character, made up a one-act play from Cervantes' book, keeping as far as possible to the lines of the first act of Wills' play. There were two scenes; the first showing Don Quixote in his own house with the madness of his chivalric belief upon him. A

notable figure he looked as fully armed in rusty armour and with drawn sword in hand he sat reading a great folio of Amadis de Gaule. His own physique—tall and lean, his fine high-bred features heightened by the resources of art to an exaggerated aquiline, all helped to the efficacy of the illusion. In his old armour, his worn leather and threadbare velvet, he was indeed the Knight of La Mancha.

When in the second scene he rode into the inn yard on his skeleton steed Rosinante the effect was heightened. The scene was beautifully lit. There was a fine, rich, soft light from the moon, hung high in the semi-tropic sky. It softened everything to the possibilities of romance. One seemed to forget the unreality in the dim, quaint beauty. The very shadows seemed to be full of possibilities, and to hold a mystery of their own. No one who saw it can ever forget that spare, quaint figure marching up and down, lance on shoulder, watching his armour laid in front of the pump—a solemn, grim travesty of the vigil of a probationary knight.

V

In the preparation of Don Quixote there was an incident which was not without its humorous aspect—though not to some of those who had a part in it. When it was decided that Rosinante was to be a factor in the play, Irving told the Property Master, Arnott, to get a horse as thin and ragged-looking as he could.

“I think I know the very one, sir,” said Arnott. “It belongs to a baker who comes down Exeter Street every day. I shall look out for him to-morrow and get him to bring the horse for you to see!”

In due course he saw the baker and arranged that he should on the next day bring the horse. The morrow came; but neither the baker nor the horse. Inquiries having been made, it turned out that on the morning arranged, as the baker was leading the horse down Bow Street to bring it to the Lyceum, an officer of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals saw them, and being dissatisfied with the appearance of the animal, “ran in” both man and beast. The sitting magistrate went

out to the police yard and made inspection for himself. When he came back to court where the prisoner was waiting in the dock, he said that the case was one of the worst within his experience and gave his decision: He fined the owner of the horse ten pounds; sent the man who had been arrested whilst in charge of it to prison for a week without option of a fine; and ordered the horse to be killed!

XXIII ART AND HAZARD

I

When Irving read the report of the production of Madame Sans-Gêne in Paris, he bought the British rights; but it was not till April 10, 1897, that the new play could be given. This was the Saturday before Holy Week; not in itself a good time, but it would get the play into swing for Easter.

The part of Napoleon in the play is not one that could appeal to any great actor on grounds of dramatic force. Its relative position in the play is not even one that appeals to that measure of self-value which is, to some degree, in all of us. True, it is the part of a great man and such is pleasurable histrionically—if there be an opportunity of excellence. An actor of character finds his own pleasure in the study and representation of strong individuality. Irving had always been interested in Napoleon. As long as I can remember he had always in his room a print and a bust of him—both beautiful. He had many books regarding him, all of which he had studied. He was always delighted to talk of him. I had long taken it for granted that he had an idea of some day playing the character; but I hardly took it seriously. The very light of history which makes the character known to the public also has made known his stature. No two men could be further apart in matter of physique and identity. Napoleon, short and stout, full-faced, aggressive, coarse. Irving, tall, thin, ascetic; with manners of exquisite gentleness; with a face of such high, thoughtful distinction that it stood out in any assemblage of clever men. I have been with Irving

in many Universities—Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Chicago. I have stood by him whilst he was the host of Princes, Ambassadors, Statesmen, Soldiers, Scholars. I think I have seen him under most conditions in which man may be compared with men; but I never found his appearance, bearing or manner other than the best. How then reconcile such opposites to such beguilement of his audience that the sense of personal incongruity should not mar the effect at which he aimed. It must be by some strange tour de force that this could be accomplished; and a special effort of the kind, though in its own way a dangerous experiment to a reputation already won, has a charm of its own. Man always wants to climb, even if the only charms of climbing be difficulty and danger. He saw at once that a chance to essay Napoleon was in Madame Sans-Gêne. The play was a comedy and Napoleon's part in it was a comedy position. Matters that work against one in serious drama can be made actually to further one's purpose in comedy.

When he began to think of the part he very often spoke of it with me and took me into his confidence as to his idea of doing it.

"You see," he said to me one time, "perspective is a matter of contrast and juxtaposition. You can enlarge the appearance of anything by placing something smaller beside it, or vice versa. Of course you must choose for the contrasted object something which to common knowledge is of at least or at most a standard size. It would not make a man look big to put him next a doll's house—such you expect to be small and the sense of comparison does not strike one. The comparison must, on the part of the spectator, be unconscious."

Thus it was that in the play Napoleon in his study, when the scene opened and he made his first appearance, sat behind a huge writing-table piled with books; he sat on an exceedingly low chair so that he seemed dwarfed. The room was a vast one with pillars and pilasters which carried the eye upward from the floor. The

attendants, the soldiers on guard, the generals and statesmen who surrounded him were all big, fine men. The ladies who played the Princesses, his sisters, were of good stature, and Ellen Terry is a tall woman. He applied here to himself the lesson of juxtaposition which in Cymbeline he had used for Ellen Terry's service in the previous year. She, a tall, fine woman, had to represent a timid young girl. Matters had therefore to be so arranged that size should be made a comparative and not an absolute matter. To this end Imogen was surrounded by the tallest and biggest women obtainable. The Queen looked, and Helena was, tall, and such miscellaneous ladies as are possible in a royal entourage even in the semi-mythical days of early England were simply giantesses. Amid her surroundings her timidity seemed natural to one so sweet and tender and almost frail. The towering height and girth of the trees and the architecture and stonework lent themselves to the illusion. All the men too were tall and of massive build, so that the illusions of size and helplessness were perfect.

Irving was now face to face with the same difficulty, but reversed; there was still the matter of his own proportions. Long before, when we had spoken of the difficulties ahead of him in representing the part, he had said:

"I shall keep the proportions of Napoleon. After all it is only dressing a big doll instead of a little one. They have given me a big doll, whereas Napoleon had a little one. No one need notice the difference, unless the dolls are put together!"

This idea he carried out absolutely. He had made for him "fleshings" of great proportions. When these were on he looked like a Daniel Lambert for the white had no relief in variety; but this was but the doll which he had to dress. When the breeches—which were made to proportion by the best tailor in London—were drawn on, the thighs stood out as in De La Roche's picture. When the green coat was on and buttoned high up, the shoulders, especially at the back, were so wide and tight as to make him look podgy. That dress was certainly supremely artful. It was

so arranged that all the lines, either actual or suggested, were horizontal. The sloping of the front of the buttoned coat was from very high on the chest and the slope very generous. The waistcoat was short and the lower line of it wide and broadly marked. The concealment of real height was further effected by the red sash and many orders which were so artfully placed as to lead the eye in the wished-for direction. All that Irving required to satisfy the audience was the coup d'œil; in endeavouring to convince it does not do to start off with antagonism. So long as the first glance did not militate against him, he could depend on himself to realise their preconceived idea—which was of historical truth—by acting.

And when he did act how real it was. The little short-stepped quick run in which he moved in his restless dominance was no part of general historic record; but it fitted into the whole personality in such a way that, having seen, one cannot dissociate them. The ruthless dominance; the quick blaze of passion which recalled to our memory the whirlwind rush at Lodi or the flamelike sweep over the bridge at Arcola; the conscious acting of a part to gain his end; the typical attack on Nipperg. All these were so vivid that through the mist of their swirling memory loomed the very identity of Napoleon himself.

Strange to say the very excellence of Irving's acting, as well as his magnitude in public esteem, injured the play, quâ play. To my mind it threw it in a measure out of perspective. The play is a comedy, and a comedy of a woman at that. Napoleon is in reality but an incidental character. It is true he and his time were chosen, because of his absolutism and his personal character; he is a glorified deus ex machina, whose word is law and is to be accepted as ruling life and death. So far Irving's reputation and personality helped. He was on the mimic stage what Napoleon was on the real one. Still, after all Madame Sans-Gêne is a comedy though the authors were a little clumsy in changing it into melodrama at the end; but when Irving was present comedy, except his comedy, had to cease. Of course in the part of the scene where he and Ellen Terry played together comedy was triumphant; but here the note of

comedy was the note of the scene and nothing could be finer than the double play, each artist foiling the other, and all the time developing and explaining their respective characters. But after that Irving, as the part was written, was too big for the play. It was not in any way his fault. No modification of style or repression of action could have obviated the difficulty. It was primarily the fault of the dramatists in keeping the Emperor, who was incidental, on the stage too long.

The same reasoning applied to Cymbeline. Irving was too big for Iachino, and the better he played the worse the harm. Each little touch that helped to build up the individuality of the character helped—he being what he was in public esteem—to expand the sense of deliberate villainy. Iachino's purpose was not to injure; he only used wrong-doing, however base, as a means to an end: the winning of his wager.

In Ellen Terry's performance of Madame Sans-Gêne came an incident which I have always thought to be typically illustrative of "unconscious cerebration" in art—that "dual consciousness" which we shall by-and-by consider. The actress had steeped herself in the character; when playing the part she thought as the laundress-duchess thought. She had already played it close on a hundred times. The occasion was the first performance of the piece at Sheffield, where the audiences were enormous and the people hearty. In the scene with the dancing-master, where she is ill at ease and troubled with her unaccustomed train—"tail" she calls it—it is part of the "business" that this keeps falling or slipping from her arm. Once when she put it back its bulk seemed to attract unconsciously her troubled mind. Accordingly she began to wring it as she had been used to do with heavy articles in the days of her wash-tub. There was an instantaneous roar of applause. Half the women of the audience did their own washing and half the men knew the action; all throughout the house, both men and women, recognised the artistic perfection from which she utilised the impulse.

From that evening the action became an established usage.

II

In 1897 Laurence Irving completed his play on Peter the Great and his father purchased it from him. At that time he had in expectation a play by H. D. Traill and Robert Hichens, for which he had contracted on reading the scenario in July of that year. As, however, the latter play was not ready when arrangements had to be made for opening the London season early in January 1898, young Irving's play was put into preparation by his father before he went on the provincial tour. Naturally he wished to do all he possibly could for his son's play, and in the production neither pains nor expense was spared.

On July 24, the night after the closing of the season, he read the play in the Beefsteak Room to Loveday and myself and Johnston Forbes-Robertson, whom he hoped would play the part of Alexis. The reading took three hours and twenty minutes, and was a remarkable fine piece of work. Forbes-Robertson, however, did not see his way to the part, which was ultimately given to Robert Taber, a fine actor, then young and strong, who had just come from America, where he had played leading business.

Great pains were spent in the archæology of the play, so that when it was produced it was in its way a historical lesson. Irving cut off a whole week of his own work of the tour in order to come up to London to superintend the production personally. Miss Terry and the company played Madame Sans-Gêne at Bradford and Wolverhampton—strange to say, the last two towns he played in eight years later.

The production was certainly a very interesting one. The place and time did not allow much opportunity for beauty, but all appeared so real as to enhance the natural power of the play. The part of Peter was a terribly trying one, even to a man of Irving's "steel and whipcord" physique. I fancy it was a lesson to the dramatist—as yet not at his full skill—in saving the actor of his plays. On the seventh night the stage manager, before the play began, asked for the consideration of the audience for Irving, who was suffering from a partial loss of voice. Laurence Irving was having a

brief holiday in Paris, so we telegraphed him to return at once. On Monday night Henry Irving was unable to play and Laurence Irving took his place. It was really a wonderful effort—especially for so young a man—to play such a part on short notice. Fortunately, as author, he knew the words well; and as he had helped his father in the stage management he was familiar with the business. That night after the performance I went to see Irving and had the pleasure of telling him of his son's success.

Unfortunately the tone of the play did not suit the public taste. It was not altogether the fault of the dramatist, but rather of the originals. History is history and has to be adhered to—in some measure at any rate; and the spectacle of a father hounding his son to death is one to make to shudder those whose instincts and sympathies are normal. The history of the time lent itself to horrors. On the first night in one scene where one of the conspirators who had been tortured—off the stage, but whose screams were heard—was brought in pale and bloody, the effect was too great for some of the audience, who rose quickly and left their seats. On the next night this part of the scene was taken out and other lesser horrors modified. Towards the end of the month it became necessary to prepare for a change of bill. On the last night of the piece the Prince and Princess of Wales were present as they wished to see the play again. The Prince had already seen it twice and had expressed his appreciation of it.

III

Robespierre was produced on April 15, 1899—the date on which the Lyceum was re-opened under the management of the Lyceum Company. Irving's reception after his dangerous illness was exceptionally warm, even for him.

The play had been in hand for some time. In May 1896, whilst in New York, Irving and I went to see Miss Elizabeth Marbury, the agent for America of the French Dramatic Author's Society. The purpose of the interview was regarding the writing

by Sardou of a play on the subject. Irving suggested as a scene that in Robespierre's lodgings. He had read somewhere of Robespierre shaving himself whilst listening to a matter of life and death for many people and all the time turning to spit. This was a grim streak of character which fastened on his imagination. The suggestion was well received by Sardou and the following year Irving entered into a contract whereby he was, after previous acceptance of the scenario, to receive the play before May 1898. On his part he undertook to produce the piece in London before June 1899. In due order the scenario was sent and approved, and the script of the play finally delivered and translated into English by Laurence Irving.

Robespierre was played in London one hundred and five times—of which ninety-three were the first season; in the provinces forty-three times; and in America one hundred and nine times. In all two hundred and fifty-seven times.

Charles Dickens used to say that it was a perpetual wonder to him how small the world was. Here is an instance of how the same may be said to-day:

When we were playing the piece in New England a gentleman wrote to Irving to thank him for preserving in the play the honourable character of his ancestor, Benjamin Vaughan, M.P., one of the dramatis personæ who has an interview with Robespierre in the first act!

Robespierre was a terrific play to stage manage. There are in it no less than sixty-nine speaking parts. The rehearsals were endless, for there were required in the play a very large number of supers—more than a hundred. In the scene of the Convention, in which Robespierre is overthrown, much of the effect depends on the rush of the deputies across the floor of the house, and the series of fights for the tribune. It was a stormy scene, and was admirably done. Everywhere the piece was played it went with uncontrollable effect.

Irving's dressing of the part and that personal preparation which is known in the actor's craft as "make-up" afforded in themselves a lesson in stage art. In the first

act, where he had to strike the true note of Robespierre's character, everything was done to create the proper effect. Here Robespierre was shown in his true light: A doctrinaire, a self-seeking politician; vain, arrogant, remorseless; something of a poet; a little of an artist; an intriguer without scruple. Irving showed in face and form, in bearing, in speech and even in inflection of the voice, the true inwardness of the man. The clear-cut face with prominent chin; the pronounced stillness of bearing, except for the restless eyes; the eager suspicion of one who is watched; the gaudy colour of his well-fitting clothes. All these things had their lessons for stranger eyes. He took no chance whatever that the idea of the man's dominant qualities should not be closely and deeply marked in the minds of the audience. But after that—although the man seemed to be the same—he was gradually and perpetually changing. And all the changes were, in addition to the acting and the spoken words, unconsciously conveyed in dress, bearing and facial appearance. When the fatherhood woke in him in Act III., it seemed natural enough, though it would not have seemed out of place in the first or second acts. In Act IV., sympathy with the mother was added to intense and overwhelming anxiety for his son—and all seemed still consistent with the original conception of the character as shown. That is, there was no jarring note as things progressed. In fact he was subtly changing in the mind of the audience the original idea of the man's nature. And all the time the face was growing refined and more marked with human kindness, till in the last act he seemed to be a saintly man full of noble and generous feelings; a patriot and martyr. In the last act all the externals were changed: wig, "make-up" of face, clothing from top to toe. The harsh colour of his first-seen coat was softened to an ineffable blue, suggestive at once of distance, refinement and delicacy. Altogether, though the personality seemed always consistent, it was a figure of harsh and ruthless scheming that walked in at one end of the play, but a noble martyr who was carried out at the other!

IV

Irving had long wished to act the part of Dante if he could get a good play on the subject. To this end he had made several efforts, including that in the direction of Tennyson. In July 1894, when Madame Sans-Gêne was being played in London by Rejane, Irving had a conversation regarding a play on the subject of Dante with Emile Moreau, joint author with Victorien Sardou of the French comedy. The issue of the meeting was that Sardou and Moreau were to write a play and submit it to Irving. It was not, however, till some seven years later that the idea began to materialise. There was a good deal of correspondence spread over the time, but after an interview at the end of May 1901 in London with Miss Marbury, who had just returned from paying a prolonged visit to Sardou, the matter rose over the horizon of practicability. It was agreed that Sardou was to submit a scenario before the end of that year. Irving felt justified after the success of Robespierre to venture on another play by the same author. The scenario was sent to him in due course, and he studied it very carefully in such pauses as were in the American tour of that autumn. When we were in Chicago in December he told me that he had practically given up hope of doing Dante as he could not see his way to accepting the scenario. By his wishes I drafted a letter for him to that effect. I considered that the matter had there ended and did not have an opportunity of reading the scenario which was returned.

Much to my surprise, in the following spring Irving told me that he had decided to do the play and asked me to draw out a contract on the lines of that of Robespierre. I asked him why he had changed his mind and reminded him that from what he had told me of the original scenario, we had agreed that it was not likely to make for success. He did not, however, wish to talk about it then—he could be very secretive when he wished—but said he had sent word to Sardou that he would go on with the idea of the play. I knew it would upset him to argue about anything to which he was pledged; I said no more.

MM. Sardou and Moreau delivered the completed play in August, and forthwith Irving began to use his great imagination on its production. His son Laurence had taken the translation in hand.

The production was on a gigantic scale; the arrangements for it having been made in Paris, but not through me. The labour of preparation and rehearsal was endless, the expense enormous. The curtain went up on the night of production to an incurred expense of nearly thirteen thousand pounds.

On Monday, January 12, 1903, Irving read Dante to the actors and actresses of his company at his office in Bedford Street—the great room occupied for so many years by the Green Room Club. My contemporary note runs:

"Read it wonderfully well. Adumbrated every character!"

To me this was in one way the most interesting of all his readings to the company of a new play. Hitherto I had not read the play or even the scenario, and I am bound to say that as it went on my heart sank. The play was not a good one. It had too many characters and covered too wide a range. Indeed had it not been for Irving's wonderful reading I should not have been able to follow the plot. When I saw the play on the first night, acted by a lot of people and lacking the concentration of the whole thing passing through one skilled mind, I found a real difficulty of comprehension. Strange to say this very difficulty in one way helped the play with the less cultured part of the audience. As they could not quite understand it all they took it for granted that there was some terribly subtle meaning in everything. Omne ignotum pro magnifico.

The play was produced at Drury Lane Theatre on April 30, 1903—the last day, by the way, allowable for production in London by the contract—with great enthusiasm. There was an immense audience, and managerial hopes ran high. Irving was certainly superb. He did not merely look like Dante—he was Dante; it was like a veritable re-incarnation. His features had a natural resemblance to the great poet!

The high-bred “eagle” profile; the ascetic gauntness; the deep earnest resonant voice; the general bearing of lofty gloom of the exile—these things one and all completed a representation which can never be forgotten by any one who saw it.

The play ran during the whole season at Drury Lane, eighty-two performances. On the provincial tour the following autumn it was given twenty-one times in only three towns. Then succeeded the American tour on which it was played thirty-four times—a total of one hundred and thirty-seven performances.

When we opened in New York the civic elections, which that term were conducted with even more than usual vigour, were on. As the receipts were not up to our normal we thought that the political “colieshangie” was the sole cause; we found out the difference when the répertoire bill was put up the third week. The experience was repeated in Philadelphia, Boston, Springfield, Hartford, New Haven, Brooklyn, and Washington. The last performance in America was given at the Federal capital to a great house—the largest the piece was played to in America. Perforce we had to accept the verdict: the public did not care for the play. Accordingly we stored it in Washington and for the rest of the tour gave the répertoire plays. When the tour was over we paid the expenses of sending the scenery into Canada where we gave it away. This was cheaper than paying the duty into the United States, which we should have had to do had we left it behind us.

Altogether Dante as a venture was a fearful hazard. Before it was done I remonstrated with Irving about the production, he being then not really able to afford such an immense loss as was possible. As Chancellor of the Exchequer to his Absolute Monarchy I had to be content with his reply:

“My dear fellow, a play like this beats Monte Carlo as a hazard. Whatever one may do about losing, you certainly can’t win unless you play high!”

XXIV VANDENHOFF

Old Vandenhoff played his farewell engagement in Edinburgh, at the Queen's Theatre, in 1858. In The Merchant of Venice, Irving played Bassano to his Shylock; this was on Tuesday, February 16. In Act I, scene 3, where Shylock and Bassano enter, an odd thing occurred. I give it in Irving's words as he told me of it!

"Vandenhoff began: 'Three thousand'—there was a sort of odd click of something falling, and the speech dried up. I looked up at him and saw his mouth moving, but there was no sound. At the moment my eye caught the glitter of something golden on the stage. I stooped to pick it up, and as I did so saw that it was a whole set of false teeth. This I handed to Shylock, keeping my body between him and the audience so that no one might see the transaction. He turned away for an instant, putting both hands up to his face. As he turned back to the audience his words came out quite strong and clearly: 'Three thousand ducats—well!'"

XXV CHARLES MATHEWS

Irving had always a deep regard for Charles Mathews. Not only did he look upon him as a consummate dramatic actor—which was always in itself a sure road to his heart, but he had lively recollections of his kindness to him. The first was in his youth on the stage in Edinburgh when he played the boy in one of the plays of his répertoire. Irving had invented for himself a little piece of business; when the lad was placed in the militant position in the play he took out his handkerchief to mop his brow. As he pulled it out there came with it an orange which rolled along the stage and which he hastily followed and recovered. Charles Mathews seemed pleased. His kindly recognition was, however, opposed a little later by another actor who played the same part as Mathews. This gentleman strongly objected to what he delicately called the "tomfoolery" which he said interfered with the gravity of his own acting. When Mathews again visited Edinburgh, Irving omitted the incident, fearing it might be out of place. But at the end of the act Mathews sent for him to his

dressing-room and in a very kind manner called his attention to a piece of business of which he had made use on the last occasion, and there and then recapitulating the incident asked why he had omitted it. Irving explained that he had been held to task for it by the other actor. To his great delight Mathews spoke quite crossly of the other actor. Said he:

"He had no right to find fault! He must have been an ignorant fellow not to see that it helped his own part. The humour of the situation in the play hangs on the contrast between the boy's bellicose attitude towards the elder man whom he considers his rival, and his own extreme youthfulness. That very incident is all that is wanted to make the action complete; and since I saw you do it I have asked every other who plays the part to bring it in. I should have asked you, only that I took it of course for granted that you would repeat it. Never let any one shake you out of such an admirable piece of by-play!"

The other occasion was when he had played Doricourt at his first appearance at the St. James's Theatre in 1866. One of the first congratulations he got was from Charles Mathews, who not only sent him by hand a letter in the morning but followed it up with a visit later in the day.

Mrs. Charles Mathews was, till the day of her death, a very dear friend of Irving; and the tradition of affection was kept up till Irving's own death by the son, Sir Charles W. Mathews, the eminent barrister.

For my own part I first knew Charles Mathews in 1873, when I had the pleasure of being introduced. From that time on I met him occasionally and was always fascinated with his delightful personality. Years afterwards I was not surprised to hear an instance of its effect from the late Henry Russell, the author of the song "Cheer, boys, cheer" and a host of other dramatic and popular songs. It was after supper one night in the Beefsteak Room. Russell told his story thus:

"I was at that time tenant of the Lyceum, and had let it for a short season to Charles

Mathews. He did not pay my rent and, as I suppose you know, the freeholder, Arnold, was not one to let me off my rent on that account. The debt ran on till it grew to be quite a big one. I wrote to Mathews, but I never could get any settlement. He was always most suave and cheery; but no cash! At last I made up my mind that I would have that money; and finding that letters were of no avail, I called on him one forenoon. He was having his breakfast and asked me to join him in a cup of chocolate. I said no! that I had come on business—and pretty stern business at that; and that I would not mix it up with pleasure. I had come for cash—cash! cash! He was very pleasant, quite undisturbed by my tirade; so that presently I got a little ashamed of myself and sat down. I stayed with him an hour."

"And did you get your money?" asked Irving quietly. Russell smiled:

"Get my money! I came away leaving him a cheque for three hundred pounds which he had borrowed from me; and I never asked him for rent again!" Then after a pause he added:

"He was certainly a great artist; and a most delightful fellow!"

XXVI CHARLES DICKENS AND HENRY IRVING

Irving often spoke with pride of the fact that Charles Dickens had thought well of his acting, when he had seen him play at the St. James's Theatre in 1866 and the Queen's Theatre in 1868. Unhappily the two men never met then; and Dickens died in 1870. In later years he had the pleasure of the friendship of several of Dickens' children, and of his sister-in-law, Miss Georgina Hogarth, to whom he was so much attached. Charles Dickens the younger was an intimate friend and was often in the Beefsteak Room and elsewhere when Irving entertained his friends; Kate Dickens, the present Mrs. Perugini, was also a friend. But the youngest son, Henry Fielding Dickens, was the closest friend of all. Both he and his wife and their large family—who were all children, such of them as were then born, when I knew them

first—were devoted to Irving. In all the years of his management no suitable gathering at the Lyceum was complete without them. Whenever Irving would leave London for any long spell some of them were sure to be on the platform to see him off; when he returned their welcome was amongst the first to greet him. Indeed he held close in his heart that whole united group, Harry Dickens and his sweet family and the dear old lady whom happily they are still able to cherish and as of old call "Aunty."

Lately I asked Henry Dickens if he remembered the occasion of his father speaking of Irving. The occasion of my asking was a gathering at which he had many social duties to fulfil, so that there was no opportunity of explaining fully. But next day he wrote me the following letter:

"2 Egerton Place, S.W.

"May 29 1906.

"My dear Bram,

"I do not remember the exact year in which Hunted Down was played at the St. James's. It must have been somewhere about 1866. But I have a vivid recollection of the fact owing to the impression which Irving's performance made upon me father. He was greatly struck by it. It seemed to appeal at once to his artistic and dramatic sense:

"'Mark my words: that man will be a great actor.'

"I should not like to pledge myself to the exact words, but that is the substance of what he said after the performance.

"He also saw Irving in The Lancashire Lass, when he had been much impressed by his acting though not to the same extent.

"I do not suppose any man was more competent to give an opinion than my father. He was himself, as you know, a great actor. The fever of the footlights was always

with him. He had a large number of friends in the dramatic profession, amongst them Macready and Fechter, the two greatest actors of his time.

“What a pity he did not live long enough to add Irving’s name to that brilliant list!

“Irving was certainly one of the most striking personalities I ever met, besides being, beyond all question, the most loyal and delightful of friends as I and those who are dear to me have good reason to know.

“We shall always hold his name in loving remembrance.

“Yours very sincerely,

Henry F. Dickens.”

XXVII MR. J. M. LEVY

Amongst many loving, true friends Irving had none more loving or more helpful than the late J. M. Levy, the owner and editor of the Daily Telegraph. From the first he was a warm and consistent friend, and his great paper, which in the early days of Irving’s success was devoting to the drama care and space unwonted in those days, did much—very much—to familiarise the public with his work and to spread his fame. As a personal friend his hospitality was unsurpassed. His house was always open, and nothing pleased him better than when Irving would drop in unasked. Up to the time of Mr. Levy’s death there were many delightful evenings spent with him. These were always on Sundays, for during working days we of the theatre had no opportunity for such pleasures. But even after his death the same hospitality was extended by his children. Some are gone, but those who happily remain, Lord Burnham, Miss Matilda Levy, Lady Faudel-Phillips, Lady Campbell Clarke, were friends up to the hour of his death; and with them all his memory is and shall be green. Lord Burnham truly held as a part of his great inheritance this friendship; and he always extended to the actor the helpfulness which had been his father’s. In a thousand delicate ways he always tried to show his love and friendship. Whenever,

for instance, he had the honour of entertaining at his beautiful place, Hall Barn, Edward VII., either as Prince of Wales or King, he always included Irving in his house-party.

Such a friendship is a powerful help to any artist—and to like and cherish artists is a tradition in that family.

XXVIII VISITS TO AMERICA

I

Irving's first visit to America, in 1883, was a matter of considerable importance, not only to him, but to all of his craft and to all by whom he was held in regard. At that time the body of British people did not know much about America; and perhaps—strange as it may seem—did not care a great deal. Irving had played nearly five years continuously at the Lyceum, and his theatre had grown to be looked upon as an established institution. The great clientèle which had gathered round it, now numbering many thousands, looked on the venture with at least as much concern as he did himself. Thus the last night of the season, July 28, 1883, was a remarkable occasion. The house was jammed to suffocation and seemingly not one present but was a friend. When the curtain fell at the end of The Belle's Stratagem, there began a series of calls which seemed as though it would never end. Hand-clapping and stamping of feet seemed lost in the roar, for all over the house the audience were shouting—shouting with that detonating effect which is only to be found from a multitude animated with a common feeling. The sight and sound were moving. Wherever one looked were tears; and not from women or the young alone.

At the last, after a pause a little longer than usual—from which the audience evidently took it that the dramatic moment had arrived—came a marvellous silence. The curtain went up, showing on the stage the entire personnel of the company and

staff.

Then that audience simply went crazy. All the cheers that had been for the play seemed merely a preparation for those of the parting. The air wherever one looked was a mass of waving hands and handkerchiefs, through which came wave after wave of that wild, heart-stirring detonating sound. All were overcome, before and behind the floats alike. When the curtain fell, it did so on two thousand people swept with emotion.

HENRY IRVING BETWEEN ENGLAND AND AMERICA From a drawing by Fred Barnard, 1883, after the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds “Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy”

II

Something of the same kind was enacted across the Atlantic. When on the evening of Monday, October 29, the curtain rose on the first scene of The Bells, there was the hush of expectation, prolonged till the moment when the door of the inn parlour was thrown open and Irving seemed swept in by the rushing snowstorm. The tempest of cheers seemed just as though the prolongation of that last moment in London; and for six or seven minutes—an incredibly long time for such a matter on the stage—the cheering went on.

III

For my own part, I had a curious experience of that reception. Mr. Levy had asked me to send a cable to the Daily Telegraph describing Irving’s reception. He knew, and I knew too, that it was a close shave for such a message to reach London in time for press. For in those days printing had not reached the extreme excellence of to-day, and the multiplication of stereos in the present form had not been accomplished. The difference of longitude seemed almost an insuperable difficulty. As I had to wait till Irving had actually appeared, I arranged with the manager of the

Direct United States Cable Company to keep the wire for me. He was himself anxious to make a record, and had all in readiness. I had a man on a fleet horse waiting at the door of the theatre; and when Irving's welcome had begun, I ran out filling up the last words of my cable at the door. The horseman went off at once ventre à terre.

But my cable did not arrive in time. Another did, however, that sent to the Daily News by its correspondent, J. B. Bishop. I could not imagine how it was done, for the account cabled was a true one, manifestly written after the event.

Years afterwards, one night at supper with two men, J. B. Bishop and George Ward, then manager of the newly established Mackey-Bennett Cable, it was explained to me. They had come to know that I was cabling and in order not to be outdone Ward had had a wire brought all the way up from the Battery, and actually over the roof of the theatre and in by a side window.

Whilst my man was galloping to Lower Broadway, Bishop was quietly wording the despatch which his friend was telegraphing to his local office as he wrote!

IV

The welcome which Irving received on that night of October 29, 1883, lasted for more than twenty years—until that night of March 25, 1904, when at the Harlem Opera House he said "Good-bye" to his American friends—for ever! Go where he would, from Maine to Louisiana, from the Eastern to the Western Sea, there was always the same story of loving greeting; of appreciative and encouraging understanding; of heartfelt au revoirs, in which gratitude had no little part. As Americans of the United States have no princes of their own, they make princes of whom they love. And after eight long winters spent with Henry Irving amongst them, I can say that no more golden hospitality or affectionate belief, no greater understanding of purpose or enthusiasm regarding personality or work has ever been the lot of any artist—any visitor—in any nation. Irving was only putting into fervent

words the feeling of his own true heart, when in his parting he said:

“I go with only one feeling on my lips and one thought in my heart—God bless America!”

XXIX WILLIAM WINTER

Amongst the many journalists who were Irving’s friends, none was closer than William Winter, the dramatic critic of the New York Tribune, whose work is known all over America. Winter is not only a critic, but a writer of books of especial charm and excellence, and a poet of high order. One of his little poems which he spoke at a dinner of welcome to Irving on his first arrival at New York in 1883 is so delightful that I venture to give it—especially as it had a prophetic instinct as to the love and welcome extended to the actor throughout the whole of the United States. He and Irving had been already friends for some time, and always saw a good deal of each other during Winter’s visits to London. The occasion was the dinner given by Colonel E. A. Buck, to attend which many of the friends present came from Cleveland, Buffalo, West Point, Louisville, Chicago—distances varying from fifty to a thousand miles.

HENRY IRVING.

A Word of Welcome.

November 18, 1883.

I

If we could win from Shakespeare’s river

The music of its murmuring flow,

With all the wild-bird notes that quiver

Where Avon’s scarlet meadows glow,

If we could twine with joy at meeting

Their love who lately grieved to part,

Ah, then, indeed, our word of greeting

Might find an echo in his heart.

II

But though we cannot, in our singing,

That music and that love combine,

At least we'll set our blue-bells ringing,

And he shall hear our whispering pine;

And these shall breathe a welcome royal,

In accents tender, sweet, and kind,

From lips as fond and hearts as loyal

As any that he left behind!

William Winter.

XXX PERFORMANCE AT WEST POINT

The United States Military Academy at West Point on the Hudson River had from the time of his first visit to America a great charm for Irving. One of the first private friends he met on arriving at New York was Colonel Peter Michie, Professor of Applied Mathematics at the College. During the war he had been General Grant's chief officer of Engineers. Another friend made at the same time was Colonel Bass, Professor of Mathematics. With these two charming gentlemen we had become close friends. When Irving visited West Point he said that he would like to play to the cadets if it could be arranged. The matter came within hail in 1888, when he repeated the wish to Colonel Michie. The latter, as in duty bound, had the offer conveyed, through the Commandant, to the Secretary for War at Washington. To the

intense astonishment of every one the War Secretary not only acquiesced at once but conveyed his appreciation of Irving's offer in most handsome and generous terms. The effect at West Point was startling. The authorities there had taken it for granted that such an exception to the iron rule of discipline which governs the Military and Naval Academies of the United States would not be permitted. The professors had a feeling that the closing his theatre in New York for a night was too great a sacrifice to make. I was made aware of this feeling by an early visit from Colonel Michie on the morning after the sanction of the War Secretary had been given. At half-past seven o'clock he came into my room at the Brunswick Hotel and was almost in a state of consternation as to what he should do. He was vastly relieved when I told him that Irving's offer had, of course, been made in earnest and that nothing would please him so much. And so it was arranged that on the evening of Monday, March 19, Irving and Ellen Terry and the whole of the company should play The Merchant of Venice in the Grant Hall, the cadets' mess-room.

In the meantime an obstacle arose which covered us all with concern. On the night of Sunday, March 11, the eastern seaboard was visited by the worst blizzard on record. Between one and eight in the morning some four feet deep of snow fell, and as the wind was blowing a hundred miles an hour, as recorded by the anemometer, it was piled up in places in gigantic drifts. For some days New York and all around it was paralysed. The railways were blocked, the telegraph cut off. Even the cables had suffered. We were getting our news from Philadelphia via London—and even these had to come via Canada. West Point is sixty miles from New York and the two railways—the New York Central on the left hand and the West Shore line on the right—the West Point side—were simply obliterated with snowdrifts. The managers of these two lines and that of the New York, Ontario, and Western line—it having running powers over the West Shore—had most kindly arranged to place a special train at Irving's disposal for the West Point visit. Towards the end of the week the outlook of the journey, which had at first seemed unfavourable, grew a little

brighter; it might be possible. Possible it was, for by superhuman exertions the line was cleared in time for our journey of March 19. Our train opened the line.

Of course it was not possible to use scenery in the space available for the performance; so it was arranged that the play should be given as in Shakespeare's time. To this end notices were fastened to the curtains at the proscenium: "Venice: A Public Place"; "Belmont: Portia's House"; "Shylock's House by a Bridge," &c. As it happens, the Venetian dress of the sixteenth century was almost the same as the British; so that the costumes now used in the piece were alike to those worn by the audience as well as on the stage at the Globe Theatre in Shakespeare's time. Thus the cadets of West Point saw the play almost identically as Shakespeare had himself seen it.

I think that we all in that hall felt proud when we saw over the proscenium of the little stage the flags of Britain and America draped together and united by a branch of palm. It thrilled us to our heart's core merely to see.

It was a wonderful audience. I suppose there never was another on all fours with it. I forget how many hundreds of cadets there are—I think four or five, or more, and they were all there. As they sat in their benches they looked, at the first glance, like a solid mass of steel. Their uniforms of blue and grey with brass buttons; their bright young faces, clean-shaven; their flashing eyes—all lent force to the idea. As I looked at them I remembered with a thrill an anecdote that John Russell Young had told me after dinner the very night before. He had been with General Grant on his journey round the world and had heard the remark. At Gibraltar Grant had reviewed our troops with Lord Napier. When he saw them sweep by at the double he had turned to the great British General and said:

"Those men have the swing of conquest!"

The attention and understanding of the audience could not be surpassed. Many of these young men had never seen a play; and they were one and all chosen from

every State in the Union, each one having been already trained or being on the way to it to command an army in the field. There was not a line of the play, not a point which did not pass for its full value. This alone seemed to inspire the actors down to the least important. At the end of each act came the ringing cheers which are so inspiring to all.

When the curtain finally fell there was a pause. And then with one impulse every one of those hundreds of young men with a thunderous cheer threw up his cap; for an instant the air was darkened with them. There was a significance in this which the ordinary layman may not understand. By the American Articles of War—which govern the Military Academy—for a cadet to throw up his cap, except at the word of command given by his superior officer, is an act of insubordination punishable with expulsion. These splendid young fellows—every one of whom justified himself later on in Cuba or the Philippines—had to find some suitable means of expressing their feelings; and they did it in a way that they and their comrades understood. Strange to say, not one of the superior officers happened to notice the fearful breach of discipline. They themselves were too much engaged in something else—possibly throwing up their own caps; for they were all old West Point men.

Right sure I am that no one who had the privilege of being present on that night can ever forget it—men, women, or children; for behind the corps of cadets sat the officers with their wives and families.

When Irving came to make the little speech inevitable on such an occasion he said at the close:

“I cannot restrain a little patriotic pride now, and I will confess it. I believe the joy-bells are ringing in London to-night, because for the first time the British have captured West Point?”

He spoke later of that wonderful audience in terms of enthusiasm, and Ellen Terry was simply in a transport of delight. For my own part, though I had been in the

theatre each of the thousand times Irving and Ellen Terry played The Merchant of Venice, I never knew it to go so well.

Beyond this delightful experience, which must long be a tradition in West Point, the Academy has another source of perpetual memory. In the officers' mess hangs a picture presented by Henry Irving which they hold beyond price. It is a portrait of the great Napoleon done from life by Captain Marryat when he was a midshipman on the British warship Bellerophon which carried the Conquered Conqueror to his prison in St. Helena.

XXXI AMERICAN REPORTERS

I

I can bear the highest testimony to the bona fides of American reporters, though they do not, either individually or collectively, require any commendation from me. I have had, in the twenty years covered by our tours in America, many hundreds of "interviews" with reporters, and I never once found one that "went back" on me. I could always speak quite openly to them individually on a subject which we wished for the present to keep dark, simply telling him or them that the matter was not for present publication. Any one who knows the inner working of a newspaper, and of the keenness which exists in the competition for the acquisition of news, will know how much was implied by the silence—the scorn and contempt that would now and then be hurled at those who "couldn't get a story." I have no doubt that sometimes the engagement on the paper was imperilled, or even cancelled. Of course I always tried to let them get something. It was quite impossible at times that Irving should give interviews. Such take time, and time was not always available in the midst of strenuous work; sickness and weariness are bars to intellectual undertakings; and now and again the high policy of one's business demands silence. In Irving's case his utterances had to be carefully considered. He was one of the very few men who

was always reported verbatim. With ordinary individuals there is habitual compression and "editing" which, though it may occasionally suppress some fact or step in an argument, is protective against many errors. It is an old journalistic saying that "Parliamentary reputations are made in the Gallery!" This is almost exact; were it qualified so as to admit of exceptions it would be quite exact. In ordinary speeches, or in any form of extempore and unpremeditated utterance, there are evidences of changement during the process of thought—uncompleted sentences, confused metaphors, words ill chosen or slightly misapplied. In addition, as in almost every case Irving spoke or was interviewed on professional subjects or matters closely allied to his own work or ideas, there was always a possibility of creating a wrong impression somewhere. Also, he stood so high amongst his own craft that an omission would now and again be treated as an affront. I have known him to receive, after some speech or interview or recorded conversation where he had given a few names of actors as illustrating some part, a dozen letters asking if there was any reason why the writer's name was omitted in that connection. Irving was always most loyal to all those of his own calling and considerate of their needs and wishes; and so in all matters where he was by common consent or by general repute vested with the responsibilities of judgment he tried to hold the scales of justice balanced. In order, therefore, to see that his real views were properly set out—and incidentally for self-protection—he always took precautions with regard to speeches and interviews. The former, he always wrote out. On occasions where he had to speak as if impromptu—such as on the stage after the performance on first or last nights; any time when mere pleasant commonplaces were insufficient—he learned the speech by heart. When he could have anything before him, such as at dinners, he would have ready his speech carefully corrected, printed in very large type on small pages printed on one side only and not fastened together—so that they could be moved easily and separately. This he would place before him on the table. He would not seem to read it, and of course he would be familiar with the general

idea. But he read it all the same; with a glance he would take in a whole sentence of the big type and would use his acting power not only in its delivery but in the disguising of his effort. If there were not time to get the speech printed he would write it out himself in a big hand with thick strokes of a soft pen. With regard to interviews he always required that the proof should be submitted to him and that his changes, either by excisions or additions, should be respected. He would sign the proof if such were thought desirable. I never knew a case where the interviewer or the newspaper did not loyally hold to the undertaking. I am anxious to put this on record; for I have often heard and read diatribes by the inexperienced against not only the system of interviewing but the interviewers. Let me give an instance of the chagrin which must be felt by men, skilled in the work and with responsibilities to their newspapers, who are baffled in their undertakings by reasons which they do not understand or agree with.

In the winter of 1886 I went across to arrange a tour of Faust for the coming year. We especially wished the matter kept dark, for we had alternative plans in view. Therefore I went quietly and without telling any one. When I landed in New York my coming was some way known—I suppose I had been missed at the Lyceum and some one had guessed the purpose of my absence and cabled—and I was met by a whole cloud of interviewers, nearly all of whom I had known for some years. When we were all together in my hotel I told them frankly that I would talk to them about anything they wished except the purpose of my visit. This being their purpose, they were naturally not satisfied. I saw this and said:

“Now, look here, boys, you know I have always tried to help you in your work in any way I was free to do. I want for a few days to keep my present purpose secret. When what I want to do is through, I shall tell you all about it. It will be only a few days at most. Won’t you trust me about the wisdom of this? All I want is silence for a while; and if you will tell me that you will say nothing till I let you go ahead, I shall tell you everything—right here and now!”

One of them said at once:

“No! Don’t tell us yet. If you are silent the difficulty will be only between you and us. But if you tell us we shall each have to fight his own crowd for not telling them what we know!” The general silence vouched this as accepted by all. We sat still for perhaps a minute, no one wishing to begin. Before us was the whisky of hospitality. At last one of my guests said:

“By the way, how do you like American as compared with Irish whisky?—of course, not for publication!”

There was a roar of laughter. I felt that my reticence was forgiven, and we had a pleasant chat through a delightful half-hour. Out of that they made a “story” of some kind to suit their mission.

II

In a few instances the reporter who writes from his own side without consultation has said funny things. Two cases I remember. The first was when more than twenty years ago we made a night journey from Chicago to Detroit. When we boarded our special train I found one strange young man with a gripsack who said he was coming with us. To this I demurred, telling him that we never took any stranger with us and explaining that, as all our company was divided into little family groups they would not feel so comfortable with a stranger as when, as usual, they were among friends and comrades only. He said he was a reporter, and that he was going to write a story about the incidents of the night. I cannot imagine what kind of incidents he expected! However, I was firm and would not let him come.

When we arrived in Detroit in the morning a messenger came on board with a large letter directed to me. It contained a copy of a local paper in which was marked an article on how the Irving company travelled—a long article of over a column. It described various matters, and even made mention of the appearance en déshabille

of some members of the company. At the end was appended a note in small type to say that the paper could not vouch for the accuracy of the report as their representative had not been allowed to travel on the train. I give the whole matter from memory; but the way in which the writer dealt with myself was most amusing. It took up, perhaps, the first quarter of the article. It spoke of "an individual who called himself Bram Stoker." He was thus described:

"... who seems to occupy some anomalous position between secretary and valet. Whose manifest duties are to see that there is mustard in the sandwiches and to take the dogs out for a run; and who unites in his own person every vulgarity of the English-speaking race."

I forgave him on the spot for the whole thing on account of the last sub-sentence.

The second instance was as follows:

When on our Western tour in 1899–1900 we visited Kansas City for three nights, playing in the Opera House afterwards destroyed by fire. At that time limelight for purposes of stage effect had been largely superseded by electric light, which was beginning to be properly harnessed for the purpose. It was much easier to work with and cheaper, as every theatre had its own plant. Irving, however, preferred the limelight or calcium light, which gives softer and more varied effects; and as it was not possible to get the necessary gas-tanks in many places we took with us a whole railway waggon-load of them. These would be brought to the theatre with the other paraphernalia of our work. As we had so much stuff that it was not always possible to find room for it, we had to leave some of the less perishable goods on the sidewalk. This was easy in Kansas City, as the theatre occupied a block and its sidewalks were wide and not much used except on the main street. Accordingly the bulk of our gas-tanks were piled up outside. The scarlet colour of the oxygen tanks evidently arrested the attention of a local reporter and gave him ideas. On the morning after the first performance his paper came out with a sensational article to

the effect that at last the treasured secret was out: Henry Irving was in reality a dying man, and was only kept alive by using great quantities of oxygen, of which a waggon-load of tanks had to be carried for the purpose. The reporter went on to explain how, in order to investigate the matter properly, he had managed to get into the theatre as a stage hand and had seen the tanks scattered about the stage. Further, he went on to tell how difficult it was to get near Irving's dressing-room as rude servants ordered away any one seen standing close to the door. But he was not to be baffled. He had seen at the end of the act Irving hurry into his room to be reinvigorated. He added, with an inconceivable naïveté, that precautions were taken to prevent the escape of the life-giving oxygen—for even the keyhole was stopped up.

XXXII TOURS-DE-FORCE

I

Perhaps the greatest tour de force of Irving's life was made on the night of February 23, 1887, when at the Birkbeck Hall he read the play of Hamlet before a large audience for the benefit of the Institute. He had, of course, cut the play, just as he did for acting; indeed his cutting for the reading was a further slight curtailment, as on such an occasion there has to be a limit of time. But the cutting is in itself a tribute to his immense knowledge of the play, and is a lesson to students.

He read the play in two sections, with an interval of perhaps ten minutes between. The sustained effort must have been a frightful strain; for in such an undertaking there is not an instant's pause. Character follows character, each necessitating an instant change of personality; of voice; of method of speech and bearing and action. Irving was a great believer in the value of time in acting. He used to say that on certain occasions the time in which things were taken increased or marred the attention, emotion and eagerness of the audience. A play like Hamlet has as many

and as varying times as an opera; thus the first knowledge and intention of the reader must have been complete. Strong as he was, it was a wonder how he got through that evening. When I went round to him at the end of the first part I found him sitting down and almost gasping. He had a wonderful recuperative power, however, and like a good fighter he was up at the call of "time." With unimpaired vitality, strength and passion he went on with his work right to the very end. For my own part I have never had so illuminative an experience of the play. Irving's own performance of the title rôle I had of course seen, and with even greater effect than then; for dress and picturesque surroundings, in addition to the significance of movement and action, can intensify speech even when aided by the expression conveyed by face and hands. But the play as a whole came into riper prominence. Imagine the play with every part in it done by a great actor! It was never to be forgotten. The passionate scenes were triumphant. Knowing that he had the whole thing in his own hands and that he had not to trust to others, howsoever good they might be, he could give the reins to passion. The effect was enthralling. We of the audience sat spell-bound, hardly able to breathe.

When he ceased, almost fainting with the prolonged effort and excess of emotion, the pent-up enthusiasm burst forth like a storm.

In his dressing-room he had to sit for a while to recover himself—a rare thing indeed for him in those days. The note in my diary of that night has the following:

"Immense enthusiasm—remarkable—magnificent—every character given in masterly manner—consider it greatest tour de force of his life—even he exhausted!"

II

Eight years before, on July 25, 1879, the night of his "Benefit," as it was called after the old-time custom, he had given another wonderful example of his power. On that occasion he had taken the great and strenuous act out of each of five plays and finished up with a comedy character. The bill was: Richard III., Act I.; Richelieu,

Act IV.; Charles I., Act IV.; Louis XI., Act III.; Hamlet, Act III. (to end of Play Scene); Raising the Wind.

The strain of such a bill was very great. Not only the playing and the changing to so many complete identities each in moments of wild passion, but even the dressing and preparation for each part. Throughout the whole of that even there was not a single minute—or a portion of a minute—to spare. Such a strain of mind and body and psychic faculties all at once and so prolonged does not come into the working life of any other art or calling. Small wonder is it if the wear and tear of life to great actors is exceptionally great.

But Irving up to his sixtieth year was compact of steel and whipcord. His energy and nervous power were such as only came from a great brain; and the muscular force of that lean, lithe body must have been extraordinary. The standard of animal mechanics is “foot-pounds”—the force and heart effort necessary to raise a pound weight a foot high. An actor playing a heavy part, judged by this rule, does about as much work in an evening as a hod-man carrying bricks up a ladder. For more than forty years this man did such work almost every night of his life; with the added strain and stress of high emotion—no negligible quantity in itself. I know of no other man who could have done such work in such a way and with such astounding passion as Henry Irving on great occasions.

XXXIII CHRISTMAS

I

All through Irving’s management of the Lyceum Christmas was, with regard to the working staff and supers, kept in a patriarchal way. Every man and woman had on Christmas Eve or the night before it a basket containing a goose with “trimmings”—sage and onions and apples—and a bottle of gin. The children had

each a goose, and a cake instead of the gin. There were some four or five hundred altogether, and as they trailed away you could trace them through distant streets by their scent. On most Christmas Eves there was in the Green Room punch and cake for the company. The punch-bowl was a vast one, and was refilled as often as required. We would sometimes use a five-gallon keg of old whisky in that bowl, for a liberal supply was always left over for the stage hands.

II

Two years later we were all at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Irving arranged an “off” night Christmas and had the whole company, over a hundred persons, to dinner at the Monhongaheela House, where he was staying. We drank all the loyal and usual toasts and finished with a sing-song, wherein various members of the company and the staff exhibited hitherto unknown powers of song and dance. They did amongst them a nigger entertainment which would have passed muster anywhere.

XXXIV IRVING AS A SOCIAL FORCE

The history of the Lyceum Theatre was for a quarter of a century a part of the social history of London. A mere list of Irving’s hospitalities would be instructive. The range of his guests was impossible to any but an artist. As he never forgot or neglected his old friends there were generally at his table some present who represented the commonplace or the unsuccessful as well as the famous or the successful sides of life. The old days and the new came together cheerily under the influence of the host’s winning personality, which no amount of success had been able to spoil.

Sometimes the Beefsteak Room, which could only seat at most thirty-six people, was too small; and at such times we migrated to the stage. These occasions were interesting, sometimes even in detail. On the hundredth night of The Merchant of

Venice, February 14, 1880, there was a supper for three hundred and fifty guests. On March 25, 1882, ninety-two guests sat down to dinner to celebrate the hundredth night of Romeo and Juliet.

The Prince of Wales dined there in a party of fifty on May 7, 1883. The table was a round one, and in the centre was a glorious mass of yellow flowers with sufficient green leaves to add to its beauty. This bouquet was thirty feet across, and was in the centre only nine inches in height, so that it allowed an uninterrupted view all round the table. I remember the Prince saying that he had never seen a more lovely table. On this as on other occasions there was overhead a great tent-roof covering the entire stage. Through this hung chandeliers. On three sides were great curtains of crimson plush and painted satin ordinarily used for tableaux curtains; and on the proscenium side a forest of high palms and flowers, behind which a fine quartette band played soft music.

One charming night I remember in the Beefsteak Room when the Duke of Teck and Princess Mary and their three sons and Princess May Victoria, whose birthday it was, came to supper. In honour of the occasion the whole decorations of room and table were of pink and white may, with the birthday cake to suit. Before the Princess was an exquisite little set of Shakespeare specially bound in white vellum by Zaehnsdorf, with markers of blush-rose silk.

The ordinary hospitalities of the Beefsteak Room were simply endless. A list of the names of those who have supped with Irving there would alone fill chapters of this book. They were of all kinds and degrees. The whole social scale has been represented from the Prince to the humblest of commoners. Statesmen, travellers, explorers, ambassadors, foreign princes and potentates, poets, novelists, historians—writers of every style, shade and quality. Representatives of all the learned professions; of all the official worlds; of all the great industries. Sportsmen, landlords, agriculturists. Men and women of leisure and fashion. Scientists, thinkers,

inventors, philanthropists, divines. Egotists, ranging from harmless esteemers of their own worthiness to the very ranks of Nihilism. Philosophers. Artists of all kinds. In very truth the list was endless and kaleidoscopic.

Irving never knew how many personal friends he had, for all who ever met him claimed acquaintance for ever more—and always to his great delight. Let me give an instance: In the late "eighties" when he took a house with an enormous garden in Brook Green, Hammersmith, he had the house rebuilt and beautifully furnished; but he never lived in it. However, in the summer he thought it would be a good opportunity of giving a garden party at which he might see all his friends together. He explained to me what he would like to do:

"I want to see all my friends at once; and I wish to have it so arranged that there will be no one left out. I hope my friends will bring their young people who would like to come. Perhaps you may remember our friends better than I do; would you mind making out a list for me—so that we can send the invitations. Of course I should like to ask a few of our Lyceum audience who come much to the theatre. Some of them I know, but there are others from whom I have received endless courtesies and I want them to see that I look on them as friends."

I set to work on a list, and two days afterwards in the office he said to me:

"What about that list? We ought to be getting on with the invitations."

"No use!" I said. "You can't give that party—not as you wish it!"

"Why not?" he asked amazed; he never liked to hear that anything he wished could not be done. I held up the sheets I had been working at.

"Here is the answer," I said. "There are too many!"

"Oh, nonsense, my dear fellow. You forget it is a huge garden." I shook my head.

"The other is huger. I am not half through yet, and they total up already over five thousand!"

And so that party never came off.

He had many many close friends whose names I should like to mention here, but to attempt a full list would not be possible. Such must be incomplete; and those so neglected might be pained. And so I venture to give in this book only the names of those who belong to the structure of the incident which I am recounting.

But Irving's social power was not merely in his hospitality. He was in request for all sorts and kinds of public and semi-public functions—the detailed list of them would be a serious one; of monuments that he has unveiled; of public dinners at which he has taken the chair or spoken; of foundation and memorial stones which he has laid; of flower shows, bazaars, theatres, libraries and public galleries that he has opened.

The public banquets to him have been many. The entertainments in his honour by clubs and other organisations were multitudinous.

And wherever he went on any such occasion, whatever space there was—were it even in an open square or street—was crowded to the last point.

This very popularity entailed much work, both in preparation and execution, for he had always to make a speech. With him a speech meant writing it and having it printed so that he could read it—though he never appeared to do so.

All this opened many new ways for his successes in his art, and so aided in the growth of its honour. For instance, he was the first actor asked to speak at the annual banquet of the Royal Academy; thus through him a new toast was added to the restricted list of that very conservative body.

The "First Night" gatherings on the stage of the Lyceum after the play became almost historic; the list of the guests would form an index to those of note of the time.

There were similar gatherings of a certain national, and even international, importance; such as when the members of the Colonial Conference came en masse; when the Conference of Librarians attended the theatre; when ships of war of

foreign nations sent glad contingents to the theatre; when the Guests of the Nation were made welcome.

Some of the latter groups are, I think, worthy to be told of in detail.

XXXV VISITS OF FOREIGN WARSHIPS

I

When, in May 1894, the United States cruiser Chicago came to London whilst making her cruise of friendly intent, there was of course a warm-hearted greeting. Admiral Erben was the very soul of geniality and Captain Mahan was, through his great work on The Sea Power of England, himself a maker of history. At the banquet to them in St. James's Hall, Irving, though he was unable to attend as he had to play at the Lyceum, was nominally present. He felt that all that could possibly be done to cement the good feeling between Great Britain and America was the duty of every Englishman.

At the banquet, on the end of the hall was the legend in gigantic letters:

"BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER"

—the phrase that became historic when Admiral Erben was in China. It will be remembered that whilst a flotilla of British boats were attacking a fort on the river and had met a reverse they were aided by the crew of the American ship of war. They were on a mud flat at the mercy of the Chinese, who were wiping them out. But the crew of the neutral vessel—unaided by their officers, who had of course to show an appearance of neutrality in accord with the wisdom of international law—put off their boats and took them off. On protest being made, the answer was given in the above phrase.

Through me—I was one of the diners—Irving conveyed a warm invitation to all the officers to come to the Lyceum to see the play and stop for supper in the Beefsteak

Room. A night was fixed and they all came except Captain Mahan, who had to be away at an engagement out of London. It was a delightful evening for us all and many a new friendship began.

In addition to the officers, Irving had asked the whole crew of the Chicago to come to the play in such numbers and on such nights as might be possible. They came on three different nights. Each party came round to the office to have a drink—and a very remarkable thing it was considering that, except the petty officers, they were all ordinary seamen, marines and stokers, though they had everything that was drinkable to choose from—for Irving wished them to have full choice of the best—no man would take a second drink! They had evidently made some rule of good manners amongst themselves. A fine and hearty body of men they were—and with good memories one and all. For ten years afterwards—right up to the end of our last tour—there was hardly a week during our American touring that some of that crew did not come to make his greeting.

The return visit to the ship came on Sunday, June 3, when we went to lunch on board the Chicago. Irving took with him J. L. Toole and Thomas Nast, the American cartoonist, who had been at the supper at the Lyceum. We went down to Gravesend, where the vessel lay, and were met by the younger officers who brought us on board. There welcome reigned. It shone in the eyes of every man on the ship, from the Admiral down. The men on parade looked as if only the hold of discipline restrained them as Irving passed by with words of kindly greeting. We had a delightful time.

When late in the afternoon we were returning on shore, the whole crew were on deck. I do not believe there was a man on board who was not there. If the greeting was hearty, the farewell was touching. We had got into the boat and were just clearing the vessel, we waving our hats to those behind, when there burst out a mighty cheer, which seemed to rend the air like thunder. It pealed over the water

that still Sabbath afternoon and startled the quiet folk on the frontages at Gravesend. Cheer after cheer came ringing and resonant with a heartiness that made one's blood leap. For there is no such sound in the world as that full-throated Anglo-Saxon cheer which begins at the heart—that inspiring, resolute, intentional cheer which has through the memory of ten thousand victories and endless moments of stress and daring become the heritage of the race.

Before the Chicago left London, a little deputation came one evening to the Lyceum from the crew. To Irving they presented a fine drawing in water-colour of their ship, together with a silver box with an Address written and illuminated by themselves. It was a hearty document, redolent of the memories of crossing the Line and such quaint conceits as the deep water seaman loves.

I value dearly their gift to myself; a beautiful walking-stick of zebra-wood and silver, of which the inscription runs:

"Presented to Bram Stoker, Esq.,

By the crew of U.S. Chicago, 1894."

II

Three years after the visit of the Chicago—1897—another warship came on a similar friendly mission.

This was the battleship Fuji, of the Japanese Navy. In those days Japan was just beginning to step from her sun-lit shores down into the great world. She had awakened to the need for self-protection and had manifested her fighting power with modern weapons in the capture of Port Arthur. Captain Mimra, who commanded the Fuji, had been appointed Commandant of the fortress-city after the capture.

Irving thought it would be hospitable to ask the visitors to the play. On the night of April 2, Captain Mimra and his officers came. The play then running, Richard III., was one that took up Irving's time from first to last during the evening so that it was

not possible for him to have the privilege of meeting his guests personally. So I had to be deputy host. The party sat in the Royal box and the one next to it, the two boxes having been made into one for the occasion. After the third act of the play we all went into the "Prince of Wales's Room"—the drawing-room attached to the Royal box—and drank a glass of wine together to a toast which was prophetic:

"England and Japan!"

XXXVI IRVING'S LAST RECEPTION AT THE LYCEUM

I

At the time of the Queen's Jubilee in 1887, Irving had something to do in the celebration in a histrionic way. He was able to make welcome at the Lyceum and to entertain individually many of those who came from over seas to do honour to the occasion. The only act of general service which came within his power was to lend the bells which were played in Hyde Park on the occasion of the Children's Jubilee. These were the "hemispherical" bells which had been founded for the production of Faust, and were the largest of the kind that had ever been made. On that day it seemed as though the carillon sounded all over London.

II

Ten years later, when the "Diamond" Jubilee was kept, much more attention was paid to the Colonial and Indian guests than had ever been done before. The Nation had waked up to the importance of the "Dependencies," and the representatives of these were treated with all due honour. Irving, thinking like many others that it would be well that private hospitalities given in general form might supplement the public functions, gave a special matinée performance on June 25 for the troops of all

kinds which had been sent to represent the various parts of the Empire. The authorities fell in with the plan so thoroughly that he was encouraged to add to his service of hospitality a reception on the stage after the play on the night of June 28. To this came all the Colonial Premiers, and all those Indian Princes and such persons of local distinction throughout the world as had been named on the official lists, and all the officers taking a part in the proceedings. Besides these were a host of others, amongst whom were a large number of representatives of literature and the various arts.

III

When, in 1902, the time of the Coronation was approaching and matters were being organised for a fitting welcome to the guests of the nation, Irving, remembering the success of his little effort of five years before and the official approval of it, wrote to the Lord Chamberlain to ask if it would be in accordance with the King's wishes that the stage reception should be repeated. His Majesty not only approved of the idea, but commanded that the matter should be taken up by the India and the Colonial Offices, so that those high officials in charge of the public arrangements might have the date of the reception placed on the official list of "informal formalities." This meant that a special date was to be made certain for the occasion and that the nation's guests would attend in force. There were so many events of social importance close to the time fixed for the Coronation that there was a certain struggle for dates. Those hosts were supposed to be happy who secured that which they wished. Our date was fixed for the night of Thursday, July 3.

When, on June 26, the ceremony of the Coronation was postponed on account of the dangerous illness of the King, it was made known formally that it was His Majesty's expressed wish that all the functions of hospitality to the guests should go on as arranged. In Irving's case much pains had been taken officially. Sir William Curzon Wyllie, of the Political Department of the India Office, and Sir William

Baillie-Hamilton, at the Colonial Office, arranged matters.

When the night of July 3 arrived all possible preparations had been made at the Lyceum. As the function was to take place after the audience had gone there would be little time to spare, and we had to provide against accidents and hitches of all kinds.

The play began at eight o'clock and there was an immense audience. At ten minutes to eleven the curtain fell; and then began one of the finest pieces of carefully organised work I have ever seen. Everything had been planned out, every man was in his place, and throughout there was no scrambling or interfering with each other although the haste was positively terrific. All was done in silence, and each gang knew how to wait till their moment for exertion came.

As the audience filed out of the stalls and pit a host of carpenters edged in behind them and began to unscrew the chairs and benches. So fast did they work that as the audience left the proscenium the blocks of seats followed close behind them to the waiting carts. Following the carpenters came an array of sturdy women cleaners, who used broom and duster with an almost frantic energy, moving in a nimbus of dust of their own making. All the windows of the house had been opened the instant the curtain fell, so that the place was being aired whilst the work was going on. Behind the cleaners came a force of upholsterers with great bales of red cloth, which had already been prepared and fitted, so that an incredibly short time saw the floor of the house looking twice its usual size in its splendour of crimson. By this time the curtain had gone up showing the stage clear from front to back and from side to side. A train of carts had been waiting, and as there was a great force of men on the stage the scenes and properties seemed to move of their own accord out of the great doors at the back of the stage. On the walls right and left of the stage and at the back hung great curtains of crimson velvet and painted satin which we used in various plays. The stage was covered with crimson cloth. At each side of the orchestra was lifted in

a staircase ready prepared, some six feet wide, carpeted with crimson and with handrails covered with crimson velvet. A rail covered with velvet of the same colour protected unthinking guests from walking into the orchestra. Then came the florists. An endless train of palms and shrubs and flowers in pots seemed to move in and disperse themselves about the theatre. The boxes were filled with them and all along the front of the circles they stood in serried lines till the whole place was in waves of greenery and flowers. The orchestra was filled with palms which rose a foot or two over the place of the footlights. In the meantime the caterer's little army had brought in tables which they placed in the back of the pit, the wall of which had during the time been covered in Turkey red.

All the while another army of electricians had been at work. They had fixed some great chandeliers over the stage and had put up the "set pieces" arranged for the proscenium. These were a vast Union Jack composed of thousands of coloured lights which hung over the dress circle, and an enormous Crown placed over the upper circle. I never in my life saw anything so magnificently effective as these lights. They seemed to blaze like titanic jewels, and filled the place with a glory of light.

While all this was going on, we had the whole house searched from roof to cellar by our own servants and a force of detectives sent for the purpose. It did not do to neglect precautions on such an occasion when the spirit of anarchy stalked abroad. When this was done the detectives took their places all round the theatre, and the coming guests had to pass through a line of them. This was necessary to avoid the possibility of expert thieves gaining admission. Some of these guests were known to wear, when in State costume, jewels of great value. In fact one of the Indian Princes who was present that night wore jewels of the value of half a million sterling.

All this preparation had been made within the space of forty minutes. When the guests began to arrive a few minutes before half-past eleven, for which hour they

had been bidden, all was in order. Some of them, who had been present at the play and had waited in the vestibule, could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the change.

Irving stood in the centre of the stage, for there were three doors of entry, one at the back of the stage, the private door O.P., and the stage door which was on the prompt side. Only one door, that at the back of the stage, had been arranged, but the guests came so fast—and so many of them were of a class so distinguished as not to be accustomed to wait—that we found it necessary to open the others as well. Servants trained to announce the names of guests had been put on duty, but their task was no easy one, and there were some strange mispronunciations. I give some of the names of the thousand guests, from which the difficulty may be inferred:

His Highness Maharaj Adhiraj Sir Madho Rao Scindia, Maharaja of Gwalior.

His Highness Maharaja Sir Ganga Singh, Maharaja of Bikaner.

His Highness Sir Pertab Singh, Maharaja of Idar.

His Highness Maharaj Adhiraj Sawai Sir Mahdo Singh, Maharaja of Jeypore.

His Highness the Maharaja of Kohlapur.

Maharaja Kunwar Dolat Singh.

His Highness the Maharaja of Kooch Bahar.

Maharaj Kunwar Prodyot Kumar Tagore.

Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhai.

Raja Sir Savalai Ramaswami Mudaliyar.

Maharaja Sri Rao the Hon. Sir Venkalasvetachalapati Ranga Ras Bahadur, Raja of Bobbili.

Meherban Ganpatrao Madhavrao Vinchwikar.

The Hon. Asif Kadr Saiyid Wasif Ali Mirza, of Murshidabad.

The Hon. Nawab Mumtaz-ud-daula Muhamad Faiyaz Ali Khan, of Pahasu Bulandshahr.

Nawab Fateh Ali Khan, Kizilbash.

Gangadhar Madho Chitnavis.

Rai Jagannath Barua Bahadur.

Maung On Gaing.

Lieut.-Colonel Nawab Mahomed Aslam Khan, Khan Bahadur.

The Sultan of Perak.

King Lewanika.

H.R.H. The Crown Prince of Siam.

The Datoh Panglima Kinta.

The Datoh Sedelia Rab.

Sri Baba Khem Singh, Bedi of Kullar.

They were from every part of the world and of every race under the sun. In type and colour they would have illustrated a discourse on ethnology, or craniology. Some were from the centre of wildest Africa, not long come under the dominion of Britain. Of one of them, a king whose blackness of skin was beyond belief, I was told an anecdote. Just after his arrival in London, he had been driving out with the nobleman to whose tutelage he had been trusted. In one of the suburban squares a toxophilite society was meeting. The king stopped the carriage and turning to his companion said:

“Bows and arrows here in the heart of London! And I assure you that for more than a year I have prohibited them in my dominions.”

The Premiers of all the great Colonies were present, and a host of lesser representatives of King Edward’s dominions. Also a vast number of peers and peeresses and other representatives of the nation—statesmen, ecclesiastics, soldiers,

authors, artists, men of science and commerce.

The most gorgeous of all the guests were of course the Indian Princes. Each was dressed in the fullest dress of his nationality, state and creed. The amount of jewels they wore, cut and uncut, was perfectly astonishing.

It was very hard to keep Irving in the spot which he had chosen for himself; for as the great crowd streamed in on three sides he kept shifting a little every moment to greet some old friend, and had to be brought back to the point where he could meet all. In such cases he was always amenable to a delightful degree. Seeing the difficulty to himself he asked me to get two or three important friends to stand with him. He named Lord Aberdeen and the late Right Hon. Richard Seddon, the Premier of New Zealand. These came and stood with him, and the nucleus protected him from movement.

Lord Aberdeen was an old friend and had, when he was Governor-General of Canada, shown Irving the most conspicuous courtesy. I remember well the evening when we were leaving Toronto for Montreal after the matinée, February 21, 1894. We had got into the train and the workmen were loading up the scenery and luggage when there was a great clatter of horsemen coming at the gallop; and up rode the Governor-General with his escort. His courtesy to the distinguished guest was very pleasing to the warm-hearted Canadians.

Irving had met “Dick” Seddon five years before at the great party which Lord Northcliff—then Mr. Alfred Harmsworth—had given in his new house in Berkeley Square on the night before the Diamond Jubilee—June 21, 1897. When Irving and I arrived we followed immediately after the Colonial Premiers—I think there were eight of them—who had that day received the honour of Privy Councillorship and wore their Court dress. Mr. Seddon asked to be introduced to Irving, and at once took him away to the corner of a room where they could talk freely. I was afterwards told that when he had gone to the Opera in Covent Garden a few days

before—where with his family he was given the Royal box—he asked when the opera had gone on for a good while:

“But where is Irving? He is the man I want to see most!”

That Coronation reception was certainly a most magnificent sight. Many who were at both functions said that it was even finer than the reception at the India Office, which was a spectacle to remember. But of course the theatre had an advantage in shape and its rising tiers. When one entered at the back of the stage the coup d’œil was magnificent. The place looked of vast size; the many lights and the red seats of the tiers making for infinite distance as they gleamed through the banks of foliage. The great Crown and Union Jack seeming to flame over all; the moving mass of men and women, nearly all the men in gorgeous raiment, in uniform or Court dress, the women all brilliantly dressed and flashing with gems; with here and there many of the Ranees and others of various nationalities in their beautiful robes. Everywhere ribbons and orders, each of which meant some lofty distinction of some kind. Everywhere a sense of the unity and the glory of Empire. Dominating it all, as though it was floating on light and sound and form and colour, the thrilling sense that there, in all its bewildering myriad beauty, was the spirit mastering the heart-beat of that great Empire on which the sun never sets.

That night was the swan-song of the old Lyceum, and was a fitting one; for such a wonderful spectacle none of our generation shall ever see again. As a function it crowned Irving’s reign as Master and Host.

Two weeks later the old Lyceum as a dramatic theatre closed its doors—for ever.

XXXVII THE VOICE OF ENGLAND

In August 1880, Irving and I went on a short holiday to the Isle of Wight, where later Loveday joined us. One evening at Shanklin we went out for a stroll after dinner. It was late when we returned; but the night was so lovely that we sat for a

while under a big tree at the entrance to the Chine. It was a dark night and under the tree it was inky black; only the red tips of our cigars were to be seen. Those were early days in the Home Rule movement, and as I was a believer in it Irving was always chaffing me about it. It was not that he had any politics himself—certainly in a party sense; the nearest point to politics he ever got, so far as I know, was when he accepted his election to the Reform Club. But he loved to "draw out" any one about anything, and would at times go quite a long way about to do it. We had been talking Home Rule and he had, of course for his purpose, taken the violently opposite side to me. Presently we heard the slow, regular, heavy tramp of a policeman coming down the road; there is no mistaking the sound to any one who has ever lived in a city. Irving turned to me—I could tell the movement by his cigar—and said with an affected intensity which I had come to identify and understand:

"How calm and silent all this is! Very different, my boy, from the hideous strife of politics. It ought to be a lesson to you! Here in this quiet place, away from the roar of cities and on the very edge of the peaceful sea, there is opportunity for thought! You will not find here men galling their tempers and shortening their lives by bitter thoughts and violent deeds. Believe me, here in rural England is to be found the true inwardness of British opinion!"

I said nothing; I knew the game. Then the heavy, placid step drew closer. Irving went on:

"Here comes the Voice of England. Just listen to it and learn!" Then in a cheery, friendly voice he said to the invisible policeman:

"Tell me, officer, what is your opinion as to this trouble in Ireland?" The answer came at once, stern and full of pent-up feeling, and in an accent there was no possibility of mistaking:

"Ah, begob, it's all the fault iv the dirty Gover'mint!" His brogue might have been

cut with a hatchet. From his later conversation—for of course after that little utterance Irving led him on—one might have thought that the actor was an ardent and remorseless rebel. I came to the conclusion that Home Rule was of little moment to that guardian of the law; he was an out and out Fenian.

For many a day afterwards I managed to bring in the “Voice of England” whenever Irving began to chaff about Home Rule.

XXXVIII RIVAL TOWNS

In the course of our tour in the Far West of America in 1893–4 we had an experience which Irving now and again told with great enjoyment to his friends. From San Francisco we went to Tacoma and Seattle, two towns on Puget Sound between which is a mighty rivalry. In Seattle we were walking along the main street when we saw a crowd outside the window of a drug store and went over to see the cause. The whole window-space was cleared and covered with sheets of white paper. In the centre, raised on a little platform, was an immense Tropical American horned beetle quite three inches from feelers to tail. Behind it was propped a huge card on which was printed in ink with a brush in large letters:

“ORDINARY BED-BUG CAPTURED IN TACOMA.”

XXXIX TWO STORIES

I

Naturally the form of humour that appealed most to Irving was that based on human character. This feeling he shared with Tennyson—indeed with all in whom a deep knowledge of the “essential difference” of character is a necessity of their art. Perhaps the two following stories, of which he was exceedingly fond, will illustrate the bent of his mind. The first, having heard from some one else, he told me; the

second I told him. I have heard him tell them both several times in his own peculiar way.

II

An English excursionist was up near Balmoral in the later days of Queen Victoria. The day being hot, he went into a cottage to get a glass of water. He sat mopping his forehead, whilst the guidwife was polishing the glass and getting fresh water from the well. He commenced to talk cheerfully:

"So the Queen is a neighbour of yours!"

"Ooh, aye!"

"And she is quite neighbourly, isn't she? And comes to visit you here in your own cottages?"

"Ooh, aye! She's weel eneuch!"

"And she asks you to tea sometimes at Balmoral?"

"Ooh, aye! She's nae that bad!" The tourist was rather struck with the want of enthusiasm shown and ventured to comment on it inquiringly:

"Look here, ma'am; you don't seem very satisfied with Her Majesty! May I ask you why?"

"Weel, I'll tell ye if ye wish. The fac' is we don't leik the gangin's on at the Caastle."

"Oh, indeed, ma'am! How is that? What is it that displeases you?"

"We don't leik the way they keep—or don't keep—the Sawbath. Goin' oot in bo-ats an' rowin' on the Sawbath day!" The tourist tried to appease her and suggested:

"Oh, well! after all, ma'am, you know there is a precedent for that. You remember Our Lord, too, went out on the Sabbath——" She interrupted him:

"Ooh, aye! I ken it weel eneuch. Ye canna' tell me aught aboot Hem that I dinna ken

a'ready. An' I can tell ye this: we don't think any moor o' Hem for it either!"

III

There was a funeral in Dublin of a young married woman. The undertaker, after the wont of his craft, was arranging the whole affair according to the completest local rules of mortuary etiquette. He bustled up to the widower saying:

"You, sir, will of course go in the carriage with the mother of the deceased."

"What! Me go in the carriage with my mother-in-law! Not likely!"

"Oh, sir, but I assure you it is necessary. The rule is an inviolable one, established by precedents beyond all cavil!" expostulated the horrified undertaker. But the widower was obdurate.

"I won't go. That's flat!"

"Oh, but, my good sir, remember the gravity of the occasion—the publicity—the—the—possibility—scandal." His voice faded into a gasp. The widower stuck to his resolution and so the undertaker laid the matter before some of his intimate friends who were waiting instructions. They surrounded the chief mourner and began to remonstrate with him:

"You really must, old chap; it is necessary."

"I'll not! Go with me mother-in-law!—Rot!"

"But look here, old chap——"

"I'll not I tell ye—I'll go in any other carriage that ye wish; but not in that."

"Oh, of course, if ye won't, ye won't. But remember it beforehand that afterwards when it'll be thrown up against ye, that it'll be construed into an affront on the poor girl that's gone. Ye loved her, Jack, we all know, an' ye wouldn't like that!"

This argument prevailed. He signed to the undertaker and began to pull on his black gloves. As he began to move towards the carriage he turned to his friends and said in

a low voice:

“I’m doin’ it because ye say I ought to, and for the poor girl that’s gone. But ye’ll spoil me day!”

XL SIR RICHARD BURTON

I

When in the early morning of August 13, 1878, Irving arrived at Dublin, on his way to Belfast to give a Reading for the Samaritan Hospital, I met him at Westland Row Station. He had arranged to stay for a couple of days with my brother before going north. When the train drew up, hastening to greet him I entered the carriage. There were two other people in the compartment, a lady and a gentleman. When we had shaken hands, Irving said to his compagnons de voyage:

“Oh, let me introduce my friend Bram Stoker!” They both shook hands with me very cordially. I could not but be struck by the strangers. The lady was a big, handsome blonde woman, clever-looking and capable. But the man riveted my attention. He was dark, and forceful, and masterful, and ruthless. I have never seen so iron a countenance. I did not have much time to analyse the face; the bustle of arrival prevented that. But an instant was enough to make up my mind about him. We separated in the carriage after cordial wishes that we might meet again. When we were on the platform, I asked Irving:

“Who is that man?”

“Why,” he said, “I thought I introduced you!”

“So you did, but you did not mention the names of the others!” He looked at me for an instant and said inquiringly as though something had struck him:

“Tell me, why do you want to know?”

“Because,” I answered, “I never saw any one like him. He is steel! He would go

through you like a sword!”

“You are right!” he said. “But I thought you knew him. That is Burton—Captain Burton who went to Mecca!”

The Burtons were then paying a short visit to Lord Talbot de Malahide. After Irving went back to London, I was very busy and did not ever come across either of them. That autumn I joined Irving and went to live in London.

II

In January of next year, 1879, I met the Burtons again. They had come to London for a holiday.

The first meeting I had then with Burton was at supper with Irving in the Green Room Club—these were occasional suppers where a sort of smoking-concert followed the removal of the dishes. I sat between Burton and James Knowles, who was also Irving’s guest. It was a great pleasure to me to meet Burton familiarly, for I had been hearing about him and his wonderful exploits as long as I could remember. He talked very freely and very frankly about all sorts of things, but that night there was nothing on the tapis of an exceptionally interesting nature.

That night, by the way, I heard Irving recite The Captive for the first time. He also did Gemini and Virgo; but that I had heard him do in Trinity College, Dublin.

The Burtons remained in London till the end of February, in which month we met at supper several times. The first supper was at Irving’s rooms in Grafton Street, on the night of Saturday, February 8, the other member of the party being Mr. Aubertin. The subdued light and the quietude gave me a better opportunity of studying Burton’s face; in addition to the fact that this time I sat opposite to him and not beside him. The predominant characteristics were the darkness of the face—the desert burning; the strong mouth and nose, and jaw and forehead—the latter somewhat bold—and the strong, deep, resonant voice. My first impression of the

man as of steel was consolidated and enhanced. He told us, amongst other things, of the work he had in hand. Three great books were partially done. The translation of the Arabian Nights, the metrical translation of Camoëns, and the Book of the Sword. These were all works of vast magnitude and requiring endless research. But he lived to complete them all.

Our next meeting was just a week later, Saturday, February 15. This time Mr. Aubertin was host and there was a new member of the party, Lord Houghton, whom I then met for the first time. I remembered that amongst other good things which we had that night was some exceedingly fine old white port, to which I think we all did justice—in a decorous way. The talk that evening kept on three subjects: fencing, the life of Lord Byron, and Shakespeare. Burton was an expert and an authority on all connected with the sword; Lord Houghton was then the only man living—I think that Trelawny, who had been the only other within years, had just died—who knew Byron in his youth, so that the subject was at once an interesting one. They all knew and had ideas of Shakespeare and there was no lack of variety of opinion. Amongst other things, Burton told us that night of his life on the West Coast of Africa—"the Gold Coast"—where he was Consul and where he kept himself alive and in good health for a whole year by never going out in the midday sun if he could help it, and by drinking a whole flask of brandy every day! He also spoke of his life in South America and of the endurance based on self-control which it required.

The third supper was one given on February 21, at Bailey's Hotel, South Kensington, by Mr. Mullen the publisher. Arthur Sketchley was this time added to the party. The occasion was to celebrate the birthday of Mrs. Burton's book of travel, A.E.I. (Arabia, Egypt, India), a big book of some five hundred pages. We were each presented with a copy laid before us on the table. I sat between Lord Houghton and Burton. They were old friends—had been since boyhood. Each called the other Richard. Houghton, be it remembered, was Richard Monckton Milnes before he got his peerage in 1863. The conversation was very interesting especially

when Burton was mentioning experiences, or expounding some matters of his knowledge, or giving grounds for some theory which he held. The following fragment of conversation will explain something of his intellectual attitude:

Burton had been mentioning some of his explorations amongst old tombs and Houghton asked him if he knew the tomb of Moses. He replied that he did not know it though of course he knew its whereabouts.

“It must be found if sought for within a few years!” he added. “We know that he was buried at Shekem.” (I do not vouch for names or details—such do not matter here. I take it that Burton knew his subject and was correct in what he did say.) “The valley is narrow, and only at one side and in one place would a tomb be possible. It wouldn’t take long to explore that entire place if one went at it earnestly.” Again Houghton asked him:

“Do you know exactly where any of the Patriarchs are buried?”

“Not exactly! But I could come near some of them.”

“Do you think you could undertake to find any one of them?” Burton answered slowly and thoughtfully—to this day I can seem to hear the deep vibration of his voice:

“Well, of course I am not quite certain; and I should not like to promise anything in a matter which is, and must be, purely problematical. But I think—yes! I think I could put my hand on Joseph!” As he stopped there and did not seem as though he was going to enlarge on the subject, I said quietly as though to myself:

“There’s nothing new or odd in that!” Burton turned to me quickly:

“Do you know of any one attempting it? Has it been tried before? Do you know the explorer?”

“Yes!” I said, feeling that I was in for it, “but only by name. I cannot claim a personal acquaintance.”

“Who was it?”—this spoken eagerly.

“Mrs. Potiphar!”

The two cynics laughed heartily. The laughter of each was very characteristic. Lord Houghton’s face broadened as though he had suddenly grown fatter. On the other hand Burton’s face seemed to lengthen when he laughed; the upper lip rising instinctively and showing the right canine tooth. This was always a characteristic of his enjoyment. As he loved fighting, I can fancy that in the midst of such stress it would be even more marked than under more peaceful conditions.

The last time we met Captain Burton during that visit was on the next night, February 22, 1879, at supper with Mrs. Burton’s sister, Mrs. Van Tellen.

He was going back almost immediately to Trieste, of which he held the consulship. In those days this consulship was a pleasant sinecure—an easy berth with a fairly good salary. It was looked on as a resting-place for men of letters. Charles Lever held it before Burton. In the old days of Austrian domination Trieste was an important place and the consulship a valuable one. But its commercial prosperity began to wane after the cry Italia irredenta had been efficacious. The only thing of importance regarding the office that remained was the salary.

III

Six years elapsed before we met again. This was on June 27, 1885. The Burtons had just come to London and had asked Irving and me to take supper with them at the Café Royal after the play, Olivia. That night was something of a disappointment. All of our little partie carrée had made up our minds for a long and interesting—and thus an enjoyable—evening.

Chiefest amongst the things which Irving was longing to hear him speak of was that of the death of Edmund Henry Palmer three years earlier. Palmer had been a friend of Irving’s long before, the two men having been made known to each other by

Palmer's cousin, Edward Russell, then in Irving's service. When Arabi's revolt broke out in Egypt, Palmer was sent by the British Government on a special service to gather the friendly tribes and persuade them to protect the Canal. This, by extraordinary daring and with heroic devotion, he accomplished; but he was slain treacherously by some marauders. Burton was then sent out to bring back his body and to mete out justice to the murderers—so far as such could be done.

Just before that time Burton had in hand a work from which he expected to win great fortune both for himself and his employer, the Khedive. This was to re-open the old Midian gold mines. He had long before, with endless research, discovered their locality, which had been lost and forgotten. He had been already organising an expedition, and I had asked him to take with him my younger brother George, who wished for further adventure. He had met my suggestion very favourably, and having examined my brother's record was keen on his joining him. He wanted a doctor for his party; and a doctor who was adventurous and skilled in resource at once appealed to him. Arabi's revolt postponed such an undertaking; in Burton's case the postponement was for ever.

Our new civic brooms had been at work in London and new ordinances had been established. Punctually at midnight we were inexorably turned out. Protests, cajoleries, or bribes were of no avail. Out we had to go! I had a sort of feeling that Burton's annoyance was only restrained from adequate expression by his sense of humour. He certainly could be "adequate"—and in many languages which naturally lend themselves to invective—when he laid himself out for it. The Fates were more propitious a few months later, when Irving had a supper at the Continental Hotel, on July 30—the last night of the season and Benefit of Ellen Terry. By this time we understood the licensing law and knew what to do. Irving took a bed at the hotel and his guests were allowed to remain; this was the merit of a hotel as distinguished from a restaurant. There was plenty of material for pleasant talk in addition to Captain and Mrs. Burton, for amongst the guests was James McHenry, J. L. Toole,

Beatty Kingston (the war correspondent of the Daily Telegraph), Willie Winter, Mr. Marquand of New York, and Richard Mansfield. All was very pleasant, but there was not the charm of personal reminiscence, which could not be in so large a gathering.

IV

The following year, 1886, however, whilst the Burtons were again in London, we had two other delightful meetings. On July 9, 1886, Irving had Sir Richard and Lady Burton—he had been knighted in the meantime—to supper in the Beefsteak Room after the play, Faust. This was another partie carrée; just Sir Richard and Lady Burton, Irving and myself. That night we talked of many things, chiefly of home interest. Burton was looking forward to his retirement and was anxious that there should not be any hitch. He knew well that there were many hands against him and that if opportunity served he would not be spared. There were passages in his life which set many people against him. I remember when a lad hearing of how at a London dinner-party he told of his journey to Mecca. It was a wonderful feat, for he had to pass as a Muhammedan; the slightest breach of the multitudinous observances of that creed would call attention, and suspicion at such a time and place would be instant death. In a moment of forgetfulness, or rather inattention, he made some small breach of rule. He saw that a lad had noticed him and was quietly stealing away. He faced the situation at once, and coming after the lad in such a way as not to arouse his suspicion suddenly stuck his knife into his heart. When at the dinner he told this, some got up from the table and left the room. It was never forgotten. I asked him once about the circumstance—not the dinner-party, but the killing. He said it was quite true, and that it had never troubled him from that day to the moment at which he was speaking. Said he:

“The desert has its own laws, and there—supremely of all the East—to kill a man is a small offence. In any case what could I do? It had to be his life or mine!”

As he spoke the upper lip rose and his canine tooth showed its full length like the gleam of a dagger. Then he went on to say that such explorations as he had undertaken were not to be entered lightly if one had qualms as to taking life. That the explorer in savage places holds, day and night, his life in his hand; and if he is not prepared for every emergency, he should not attempt such adventures.

Though he had no fear in the ordinary sense of the word, he was afraid that if any attack were made on him apropos of this it might militate against his getting the pension for which he was then looking and on which he largely depended. We spoke of the matter quite freely that evening. At that time he was not well off. For years he had lived on his earnings and had not been able to put by much. The Arabian Nights brought out the year before, 1885, produced ten thousand pounds. There were only a thousand copies issued at a cost of ten guineas each. The entire edition was subscribed, the amounts being paid in full and direct to Coutts and Co., so that there were no fees or discounts. The only charge against the receipts was that of manufacturing the book. This could not have amounted to any considerable sum, for the paper was poor, the ink inferior, and the binding cheap. Burton had then in hand another set of five volumes of Persian Tales to be subscribed in the same way. Neither of the sets of books were “published” in the literal way. The issue was absolutely a private one. All Burton’s friends, myself included, thought it necessary to subscribe. Irving had two sets. The net profits of these fifteen volumes could hardly have exceeded thirteen thousand pounds.

V

Our next meeting was on September 18, 1886, when we were all Irving’s guests at the Continental once again—another partie carrée.

On this occasion the conversation was chiefly of plays. Both Sir Richard and Lady Burton impressed on Irving how much might be done with a play taken from some story, or group of stories, in the Arabian Nights. Burton had a most vivid way of

putting things—especially of the East. He had both a fine imaginative power and a memory richly stored not only from study but from personal experience. As he talked, fancy seemed to run riot in its alluring power; and the whole world of thought seemed to flame with gorgeous colour. Burton knew the East. Its brilliant dawns and sunsets; its rich tropic vegetation, and its arid fiery deserts; its cool, dark mosques and temples; its crowded bazaars; its narrow streets; its windows guarded for out-looking and from in-looking eyes; the pride and swagger of its passionate men, and the mysteries of its veiled women; its romances; its beauty; its horrors. Irving grew fired as the night wore on and it became evident that he had it in his mind from that time to produce some such play as the Burtons suggested, should occasion serve. It was probably the recollection of that night that brought back to him, so closely as to be an incentive to possibility, his own glimpse of the East as seen in Morocco and the Levant seven years before. When De Bornier published his Mahomet in Paris some few years later he was in the receptive mood to consider it as a production.

I asked Lady Burton to get me a picture of her husband. She said he had a rooted dislike to letting any one have his picture, but said she would ask him. Presently she sent me one, and with it a kindly word: “Dick said he would give it you, because it was you; but that he wouldn’t have given it to any one else!”

XLI SIR HENRY MORTON STANLEY

I

On October 22, 1882, Irving gave a little dinner to H. M. Stanley in the small private dining-room of the Garrick Club. The other guests were George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates, Col. E. A. Buck of New York, Mr. Bigelow (then British agent of the U.S. Treasury), H. D. Traill, Clement Scott, Joseph Hatton, T. H. S. Escott, Frank C. Burnand, W. A. Burdett-Coutts, J. L. Toole, and myself—fourteen in all.

The time was after Stanley had made his expedition in Africa, which he afterwards chronicled under the name of Through the Dark Continent, and had gone out again to explore the region of the Congo for the Brussels African International Association. He had returned for a short visit to Brussels and London. He had been much in Belgium in consultation with the King regarding the foundation of the Congo Free State. Every one present was anxious to hear what he had to say; and Irving, who, when he chose, was most excellent in drawing any one out, took care that he had a good leading. Indeed it was a notable evening, for we sat there after dinner till four o'clock in the morning and for most of the time he held the floor. He was always interesting and at times kept us all enthralled. He had a peculiar manner, though less marked then than it became in later years. He was slow and deliberate of speech; the habit of watchful self-control seemed even then to have eaten into the very marrow of his bones. His dark face, through which the eyes seemed by contrast to shine like jewels, emphasised his slow speech and measured accents. His eyes were comprehensive, and, in a quiet way, without appearing to rove, took in everything. He seemed to have that faculty of sight which my father had described to me of Robert Houdin, the great conjurer. At a single glance Stanley took in everything, received facts and assimilated them, gauged character in its height, and breadth, and depth, and specific gravity; formed opinion so quickly and so unerringly to the full extent of his capacity that intention based on what he saw seemed not to follow receptivity but to go hand in hand with it. Let me give an instance:

At least two of those present did not seem prepared to accept his statements in simple faith. Of course not a word was said by either to jar the harmony of the occasion or to convey doubt. But doubt at least there was; one felt it without evidence. I knew both men well and felt that it was only the consistent expression of their attitude towards the unknown. Both, so far as I knew—or know now—were strangers to him, though of course their names were familiar. I knew from Irving's

glance at me where I sat across the table from him that he understood. Irving and I were so much together that after a few years we could almost read a thought of the other; we could certainly read a glance or an expression. I have sometimes seen the same capacity in a husband and wife who have lived together for long and who are good friends, accustomed to work together and to understand each other. He had a quiet sardonic humour, and this combined with an intuitive faculty of reasoning out data before their issue was declared—together with his glance to my right where the two men sat—seemed to say:

"Look at Yates and Burnand. Stanley will be on to them presently!"

And surely enough he was on to them, and in a remarkable way. He was describing some meeting with the King of the Belgians regarding the finances of the new State, and how of those present a small section of the financiers were making negative difficulties. The way he spoke was thus:

"Amongst them two 'doubting Thomases'—as it might be you and you"—making as he spoke a casual wave of his hand without looking at either, as though choosing at random; but so manifestly meaning it that all the other men laughed in an instantaneous chorus.

Somehow that seemed to clear the air for him; and having established a position which was manifestly accepted by all, he went on to speak more earnestly.

I shall never forget that description which he gave us of the reaching that furthest point on Lake Leopold II. that white men had ever reached. He wrote of it all afterwards in his book on the Congo, though the incident which he then described differed slightly from the account in his book produced three years afterwards. No written words could convey the picturesque convincing force of that quiet utterance, with the searching still eyes to add to its power. How as the little steamer drew in shore the natives had rushed in clustering masses ready to do battle. How one nimble giant had leaped far out on an isolated rock that just showed its top above the

still water, and poised thereon for an instant had hurled a spear with such force and skill that it passed the limit they had fixed as the furthest that a missile could reach them and where they held the boat in safety. How he himself had peremptorily checked in a whisper one beside him who was preparing to shoot, and he himself took a gun and fired high in the air just to show the savages that he too had power and greater power than their own should they choose to use it. How, awed by the sound and by the steamer, the natives made signs of obeisance, whereupon he brought the boat close to the rock whence the warrior had launched his spear and laid thereon offerings of beads and coloured stuffs and implements of steel, saying as he prepared to move away:

"We shall come again!"

Then he told of the wonder of the savages; their reverence; their complete submission! How the canoe moved away in that glory of wonder which would in time grow to a legend, and then to a belief that some day white Gods who brought gifts would come to them bringing unknown good.

It was an idyll of peace; a lesson in beneficent pioneering; a page of the great book of England's wise kindliness in the civilisation of the savage which has yet been written but in part. We all sat spell-bound. There was no "doubting Thomas" then. I think, one and all, we held high regard and affection for the man who spoke.

Then encouraged by the reception of his words—and after all it was a noble audience, in kind if not in quantity, for any man to speak to—he went on at Irving's request to re-tell to us the story of his finding Livingstone. Here he did not object to any direct questioning, even when one man asked him if the report was exact of his taking off his helmet and bowing when he met the lost explorer with the memorable address:

"Dr. Livingstone, I believe?"

He laughed quietly as he answered affirmatively—a strange thing to see in that dark,

still face, where toil and danger and horror had set their seals. But it seemed to light up the man from within and show a new and quite different side to his character.

Somehow there is, I suppose—indeed must be—some subtle emanation from both character and experience. The propulsive power of the individuality takes something from the storage of the mind. Certainly some persons who have been down in deep waters of any kind convey to those who see or hear them something of the dominating note of their experience. Stanley had not only the traveller's look—the explorer's look; he seemed one whose goings had been under shadow. It may of course have been that the dark face and the still eyes and that irregular white of the hair which speaks of premature stress on vitality conveyed by inference their own lesson; but most assuredly Henry Stanley had a look of the forest gloom as marked as Dante's contemporaries described of him: that of one who had traversed Heaven and Hell.

After a long time we broke up the set formation of the dinner table, and one by one in informal turn we each had a chat with the great explorer. He told us that he wanted some strong, brave, young men to go with him to Africa, and offered to accept any one whom I could recommend.

II

The next year, on September 14, we met again when Irving had a large dinner-party—sixty-four people—at the Continental Hotel. Of course in so large a party there was little opportunity of general conversation. All that any one—except a very favoured few who sat close at hand—could speak or hear was of the commonplace of life—parting and meeting.

I did not meet Stanley again for six years, but Irving met him several times, and at one of their meetings there was a little matter which gave me much pleasure:

When we had gone to America in 1883 I had found myself so absolutely ignorant of

everything regarding that great country that I took some pains to post myself up in things exclusively and characteristically American. Our tour of 1883–4 was followed by another in 1884–5, so that in the space of more than a year which the two visits covered I had fine opportunities of study. In those days Professor James Bryce's book on The American Commonwealth had not been written—published at all events. And there was no standard source from which an absolutely ignorant stranger could draw information. I found some difficulty then in buying a copy of an Act of Congress so that I might study its form; and it was many months before I could get a copy of the Sessional Orders of Congress. However, before we left at the conclusion of our second visit I had accumulated a lot of books—histories, works on the constitution, statistics, census, school books, books of etiquette for a number of years back, Congressional reports on various subjects—all the means of reference and of more elaborate study. When I had studied sufficiently—having all through the tour consulted all sorts of persons—professors, statesmen, bankers, &c.—I wrote a lecture, which I gave at the Birkbeck Institute in 1885 and elsewhere. This I published as a pamphlet in 1886, as A Glimpse of America. Stanley had evidently got hold of it, for one night when we were in Manchester, June 4, 1890, I had supper alone with Irving and he told me that the last time he had met him, Stanley had mentioned my little book on America as admirable. He had said that I had mistaken my vocation—that I should be a literary man! Of course such praise from such a man gave me a great pleasure.

Strangely enough I had a ratification of this a year later. On March 30, 1891, I met at luncheon, in the house of the Duchess of St. Albans, Dr. Parke, who had been with Stanley on his journey In Darkest Africa; I had met him before at Edward Marston's dinner, but we had not had much opportunity of talking together. He told me that it was one of the very few books that Stanley had brought with him in his perilous journey across Africa, and that he had told him that it "had in it more information about America than any other book that had ever been written."

III

The dinner given to Stanley by Edward Marston, the publisher, on the eve of bringing out Stanley's great book, In Darkest Africa—June 26, 1890—was a memorable affair. Marston had then published two books of mine, Under the Sunset, and the little book on America, and as "one of his authors" I was a guest at the dinner. Irving was asked, but he could not go as he was then out of town on a short holiday, previous to commencing an engagement of two weeks at the Grand Theatre, Islington, whilst the Lyceum was occupied by Mr. Augustin Daly's company from New York. At the dinner I sat at an inside corner close to Sir Harry (then Mr.) Johnston, the explorer and administrator, and to Paul B. du Chaillu, the African explorer who had discovered gorillas. I had met both these gentlemen before; the first in London several times; the latter in New York, in December 1884, in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Tailer, who that night were entertaining Irving and Ellen Terry. There we had sat together at supper and he had told me much of his African experience and of his adventures with gorillas. I had of course read his books, but it was interesting to hear the stories under the magic of the adventurer's own voice and in his characteristic semi-French intonation. In the course of conversation he had said to me something which I never have forgotten—it spoke volumes:

"When I was young nothing would keep me of out Africa. Now nothing would make me go there!"

In reply to the toast of his health, Stanley spoke well and said some very interesting things:

"In my book that is coming out I have said as little as possible about Emin Pasha. He was to me a study of character. I never met the same kind of character." Again:

"I have not gone into details of the forest march and return to the sea. It was too dreary and too horrible. It will require years of time to be able to think of its picturesque side."

At that time Stanley looked dreadfully worn, and much older than when I had seen him last. The six years had more than their tally of wear for him, and had multiplied themselves. He was darker of skin than ever; and this was emphasised by the whitening of his hair. He was then under fifty years of age, but he looked nearer to eighty than fifty. His face had become more set and drawn—had more of that look of slight distortion which comes with suffering and over-long anxiety.

There were times when he looked more like a dead man than a living one. Truly the wilderness had revenged upon him the exposal of its mysteries.

XLII ARMINIUS VAMBÉRY

Amongst the interesting visitors to the Lyceum and the Beefsteak Room was Arminius Vambéry, Professor at the University of Buda-Pesth. On April 30, 1890, he came to see the play, The Dead Heart, and remained to supper. He was most interesting, and Irving was delighted with him. He had been to Central Asia, following after centuries the track of Marco Polo and was full of experiences fascinating to hear. I asked him if when in Thibet he never felt any fear. He answered:

“Fear of death—no; but I am afraid of torture. I protected myself against that, however!”

“How did you manage that?”

“I had always a poison pill fastened here, where the lappet of my coat now is. This I could always reach with my mouth in case my hands were tied. I knew they could not torture me; and then I did not care!”

He is a wonderful linguist, writes twelve languages, speaks freely sixteen, and knows over twenty. He told us once that when the Empress Eugénie remarked to him that it was odd that he who was lame should have walked so much, he replied:

“Ah, Madam, in Central Asia we travel not on the feet but on the tongue.”

We saw him again two years later, when he was being given a Degree at the Tercentenary of Dublin University. On the day on which the delegates from the various Universities of the world spoke, he shone out as a star. He soared above all the speakers, making one of the finest speeches I have ever heard. Be sure that he spoke loudly against Russian aggression—a subject to which he had largely devoted himself.

XLIII

Shortly after the publication of this book I received a letter from a gentleman, Mr. Charles Richard Ford, who had in early life been one of Irving’s companions at Thacker’s in Newgate Street. We met and a few days afterwards he sent me the following memorandum which he had written. I give it in extenso, as it bears on a period of his life but little known. This reminiscence of one who was a close friend and who had kept and valued for more than fifty years every little souvenir of their companionship—even to his visiting card—is to my mind a valuable enlightenment as to his life and nature in early days.

By Mr. Ford’s kind permission I am able to reproduce the photograph alluded to in the monograph.

AN EARLY REMINISCENCE OF SIR HENRY IRVING

BY MR. C. R. FORD

It seems evident that the numerous memoirs of the late Sir Henry Irving that have appeared in the newspapers have been intended to cover only that part of his life since he became famous: it may therefore be interesting to the many friends who have known and admired him during that period to hear something of his earlier years in London while engaged in what he himself described as a “musty City office.”

He began life at the early age of fifteen, and in 1853 was to be met most days walking down Cheapside, tall, thin and striking-looking, with that firm, long stride, since so well known, on his way to the Bank to pay in the firm's cash.

The thoroughness and carefulness so consistently displayed in all his future life were eminently apparent in his short City career: he was always punctual and regular in his attendance at 87 Newgate Street, and the whole day saw him hard at work at the books committed to his keeping. These ledgers were put away among other disused books and remained unthought of for years; some time after he became famous they were sought for but have never been found.

One of his memoirs speaks of his giving "us boys a halfpenny for mis-pronouncing words." The fact, of which this is a perversion, really showed his keenness in helping others. The staff at Messrs. Thacker's was a mixed one and contained in addition to well-educated gentlemen some who had never grasped the true pronunciation of their own language. To help the latter, the following paper was drawn up by Irving (it is still in existence in his handwriting) and signed by most of the clerks:

LIST OF FINES

Fine for not aspirating h's, whether in the beginning or in the middle of words such as house and behaviour.

Exceptions: Honour, heir, honest, herb, hour, hostler, and their derivatives.

Fine for misplacing the h such as hart for art.

Fine for not giving the pure sound to the u as dooty for duty, toone for tune and the like.

Exception: blue.

Fine for omitting the g at the end of words, as shillin for shilling.

Fine for saying jist for jest, jest for just, instid for instead and such like cockneyisms.

Fine for using the singular number instead of the plural and all ungrammatical expressions.

We, the undersigned, agree to pay the fine of one halfpenny for each breach of the foregoing rules and to appoint Mr. J. H. Brodribb as treasurer.

(Signed) John Henry Brodribb,

(and five others).

March 20th, 1856.

Only two of the other five are known to be living.

While thus most conscientiously discharging his office duties and seeking to improve others, he was hard at work after business hours in self-improvement and in fitting himself for his future career on the stage. He was a frequent attendant at the Old Sadler's Wells Theatre and often stood for more than an hour at the door in order to secure one particular corner seat in the pit, where he could watch every emotion in the face of Phelps, especially in his Shakespearean parts. His other method was to practise himself in the art of elocution by inviting his relatives and friends to some large rooms placed at his disposal by his father and mother and entertain them by reading a play through, or with a selection of recitations. His favourite play for such occasions was the Lady of Lyons, although he more than once read through (somewhat "cut") one of Shakespeare's dramas. His two recitations most impressed on the mind after fifty years were Eugene Aram and Skying the Copper, evidencing as they undoubtedly did both his remarkable tragic and comic powers. As showing his thoroughness even then in small matters, his "make up" for the servant girl in the latter piece has never been forgotten by one who helped him to rouge his bare arms to the proper red tint for a "slavey's."

The efforts he afterwards so constantly made to place the stage in what he considered its proper position in the country and its education—as witness his last speech in favour of a Municipal theatre—were really begun when still in his "teens."

A young friend had promised to open a discussion on his suggestion at a literary debating society on the question of the moral effect of theatrical representations and sought his aid in forming his arguments in their favour. He at once took a great deal of trouble, giving him many authorities and writing out long quotations in favour of the educational value of the stage when properly conducted; in fact, composing a good half of the paper subsequently read.

In 1856 he could no longer endure the privation of being kept away from the profession for which his inner consciousness told him he was fitted. As an illustration of the errors of judgment clever men may make, his old employer went to see him at Manchester some time after he left Newgate Street, and wrote to his son:

“We went to see Brodribb and did not think much of him; he would have done much better to keep to his stool in Newgate Street.”

This use of his old name brings to remembrance the fact that the name he made famous was not the first he thought of adopting: indeed he had cards printed with an entirely different one, J. Hy. Barringtone. The decision for “Irving” was a sudden one and was made known to a friend in a short note saying, “I have decided that the name shall be Irving”; but for some years after this he continued to sign his notes “J. H. B.” to his family and friends.

Nothing he enjoyed more than studying human nature in its various phases of excitement. He was found one day on the hustings of a contested election and much enjoyed pointing out how the passions of those in front of his view-point were delineated in their actions and faces. At another time he happened to be present at a provincial cricket dinner, which ended in a fiasco, and it is not easy to forget how eagerly he watched the physiognomies of those who unhappily contended around him. It was on this occasion, after he had previously electrified the company with one of his powerful recitations (he was still a City clerk), that upon being asked to

give a toast, he gave one typical of his own feelings on such occasions, “The Pleasure of Pleasing.”

The time came when he left the City—July 1856—and entered upon his new and loved profession. He was most careful in the selection of articles that would be useful to him in his future career, and the wonderful forethought and adaptation which were afterwards so successful at the Lyceum were foreshadowed in the purchases for his first small wardrobe.

Although he did not look back with much pleasure to his days in the City, he always welcomed most heartily and kindly any of his former companions who called on him at the Lyceum, and in one instance gave employment to one needing it.

One object of these reminiscences is to show his numerous friends that as a youth he developed the same kindly, thoughtful and clever characteristics which they recognised and admired in his later life.

The very early portrait of him in the possession of the writer gives clear evidence to those who knew his father in the early fifties, how closely he inherited his remarkable physiognomy, while much of his mental power was undoubtedly derived from the mother who doted on him—of whom she always spoke as “My Boy.”

One later reminiscence may be added. He was met on June 21, 1887, walking up and down opposite the Horse Guards, studying the holiday crowd and waiting for the return of the Queen’s Jubilee procession. As his salutation, his friend asked him “How is it you are not in the Abbey?” The reply was, “Oh, they have given me a seat, but I don’t think I shall go in.” The service was then about half over, but his well-known face appears in the plate published to commemorate the Jubilee, in the place assigned to him. This is only one out of many illustrations that might be given of his delight in quiet enjoyment, rather than in any desire for public notoriety. We know that the laurel pall used over his coffin in Westminster Abbey covered the ashes not only of a “dominating personality” but also of a true gentleman.

C. R. F.

XLIV IRVING'S PHILOSOPHY OF HIS ART

I

Irving and I were alone together one hot afternoon in August 1889, crossing in the steamer from Southsea to the Isle of Wight, and were talking of that phase of Stage Art which deals with the conception and development of character. In the course of our conversation, whilst he was explaining to me the absolute necessity of an actor's understanding the prime qualities of a character in order that he may make it throughout consistent, he said these words:

"If you do not pass a character through your own mind it can never be sincere!"

I was much struck with the phrase, coming as it did as the crown of an argument—the explanation of a great artist's method of working out a conceived idea. To me it was the embodiment of an artistic philosophy. Even in the midst of an interesting conversation, during which we touched upon many subjects of inner mental working, the phrase presented itself as one of endless possibilities, and hung as such in my mind. Lest I should forget the exact words I wrote them then and there in my pocket-book. I entered them later in my diary.

I think that if I had interrupted the conversation at the above words and asked my friend to expound his philosophy and elaborate it, he would have been for an instant amused, and on the impulse of the moment would have deprecated the use of such an important word. Men untrained to mental science and unfamiliar with its terminology are apt to place too much importance on abstract, wide-embracing terms, and to find the natural flow of their true thought interrupted by disconcerting fears. His amusement would have been only momentary, however. I know now, after familiar acquaintance with his intellectual method for over a quarter of a

century, that with his mental quickness—which was so marked as now and again to seem like inspiration—he would have grasped the importance of the theme as bearing upon the Art to which he had devoted himself and to his own part in it. He would have tried to explain matters as new and relevant subjects, causes or consequences, presented themselves. But such an exposition would have been—must have been—confused and incomplete. The process of a creative argument is a silent and lonely one, requiring investigation and guesses; the following up of clues in the labyrinth of thought till their utility or their falsity has been proved. The most that a striving mind can do at such a time is to keep sight of some main purpose or tendency—some perpetual recognition of its objective. If in addition the thinker has to keep eternally and consciously within his purview a lot of other subjects bearing on his main idea, each with its own attendant distractions and divergencies, his argument would to a listener seem but a jumble of undigested facts, deductions and imaginings. Moreover, it would leave in the mind of the latter a belief that the speaker is without any real conviction at all; a mere groper in the dark. If, on the other hand, the man in thinking out his problem tries to bear in mind his friend's understanding—with an eye to his ultimate approval and acceptance of his argument and conclusion—he is apt to limit himself to commonplace and accepted truths. In such case his thought is machine-made, and lacks the penetrative force which has its origin in intellectual or psychic fire. A whole history of such thought cannot equal a single glimpse or hint of an earnest mind working truly.

As Irving on that pleasant voyage spoke the words which seemed to explain his whole intellectual method I grasped instinctively the importance of the utterance, though the argument did not then present itself in its entirety.

To me the words became a text of which the whole of his work seemed the expounding. From him, as an artist, the thought was elementary and basic; explanatory and illuminative.

II

To “pass a character through your mind” requires a scientific process of some kind; some process which is natural, and therefore consistent. If we try to analyse the process we shall find that it is in accord with any other alimentative process. Nature varies in details, but her intents and objects are fixed: to fit and sustain each to its appointed task. In the animal or vegetable kingdoms, so in the mind of man. The hemlock and the apple take the juices of the earth through different processes of filtration; the one to noxious ends, the other to beneficence. Hardness and density have their purpose in the mechanism of the vegetable world; the wood rejects what the softer and more open valves or tissues receive. So too in the world of animal life. The wasp and the viper, the cuttle-fish and the stinging ray work to different ends from the sheep and the sole, the pheasant and the turtle. But one and all draw alimentative substance from common sources. But he who would understand character must draw varying results from common causes. And the only engine powerful enough in varying purposes for this duty is the human brain. Again, the worker in imagination is the one who most requires different types and varying methods of development. And still again, of all workers in imagination, the actor has most need for understanding; for on him is imposed the task of re-creating to external and material form types of character written in abstractions. It behoves him, then, primarily to understand what exactly it is that he has to materialise. To this end two forms of understanding are necessary: first, that which the poet—the creator or maker of the play—sets down for him; second, the truth of the given individual to the type or types which he is supposed to represent. This latter implies a large knowledge of types; for how can any man judge of the truth of things when to him both the type and the instance are strange. Thus it happens that an actor should be a judge of character; an understander of those differences which discriminate between classes and individuals of the class. This is an actor’s study at the beginning of his work—when he is preparing to study his Art.

Let me say at the outset of this branch of my subject, that I am trying to put into words and the words into some sort of ordered sequence, that knowledge of his craft which in a long course of years Irving conveyed to me. Sometimes the conveyance was made consciously, sometimes unconsciously. By words, by inferences, by acting; by what he added to seemingly completed work, or by what he omitted after fuller thought or experience. One by one, or group by group, these things were interesting, though often of seeming unimportance; but taken altogether they go to make up a philosophy. In trying to formulate this I am not speaking for myself. I am but following so well as I can the manifested wisdom of the master of his craft. Here and there I shall be able to quote Irving's exact words, spoken or written after mature thought and with manifest and deliberate purpose. For the rest, I can only illustrate by his acting, or at worst by the record of the impression conveyed to my own mind.

III

We may, I think, divide the subject thus:

CHARACTER A.—Its Essence {x.—The Dramatist's setting out of it {y.—Its truth to accepted type {z.—The Player's method of studying these two B.—Reticence C.—Art and Truth THE PLAY STAGE PERSPECTIVE DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS INDIVIDUALITY, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT

IV CHARACTER

A.—Its Essence

We think in abstractions, but we live in concretions. In real life an individual who is not in any way distinguishable from his fellows is but a poor creature after all and is not held of much account by anybody. That law of nature which makes the leaves of a tree or the units of any genus, any species, any variety all different—which in the animal or the vegetable world alike makes each unit or class distinguishable whilst

adhering to the type—is of paramount importance to man. Tennyson has hammered all this out and to a wonderful conclusion in those splendid stanzas of In Memoriam LIV to LVI beginning “Oh yet we trust that somehow good” to “Behind the veil, behind the veil.” Let it be sufficient for us to know and accept that there can be endless individual idiosyncrasies without violation of type. To understand these is the study of character. The differentia of each individual is an endless and absorbing study, not given to all to master. Some at least of this mastery is a necessary part of the equipment of an actor. Now there is a common saying that “the eyebrow is the actor’s feature.” This is largely true; but there is a double purpose in its truth. In the first place the eyebrow is movable at will; a certain amount of exercise can give mobility and control. It can therefore heighten expression to a very marked degree. But in addition it, when in a marked degree, is the accompaniment of large frontal sinuses—those bony ridges above the eyebrows which in the terminology of physiognomy imply the power to distinguish minute differences, and so are credited with knowledge of “character”—the difference between one and another; divergences within a common type. With this natural equipment and the study which inevitably follows—for powers are not given to men in vain—the actor can by experience know types, and endless variants and combinations of the same. So can any man who has the quality. But the actor alone has to work out the ideas given to him by this study in recognisable material types and differentiated individual instances of the same type.

x

The dramatist having, whether by instinct or reason, selected his type has in the play to give him situations which can allow opportunity for the expression of his qualities; words in which he can expound the thoughts material to him in the given situations; and such hints as to personal appearance, voice and bearing as can assist the imagination of a reader. All these things must be consistent; there must be nothing which would show to the student falsity to common knowledge. “Do men

gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" has a large application in art, and specially in stage art. It is the ignorance or neglect of this eternal law which is to my mind the weakness of some writers. Instance Ibsen who having shown in some character an essential quality through one or two acts makes the after action of the character quite at variance with it. A similar fault weakens certain of the fine work of "Ian Maclaren" when he proceeds to explain away in a later story some perfectly consistent and understandable quality of mind or action in one of his powerful and charming character stories. No after-explanation can supersede the conviction of innate character.

y

Now a dramatist is at perfect liberty to choose any type he likes and to deal with his individual creations just as he chooses. There is no law against it; however ridiculous it may be, it makes no breach of any code in accepted morals. But he should at least be true to itself. It is by such qualities that posterity as well as the juries of the living judge. The track of literary progress is littered with wreckage from breaches of this truth.

Of this we may be sure: if a character have in itself opposing qualities which cannot be reconciled, then it can never have that unity which makes for strength. Therefore the actor who has to represent the abstract idea as a concrete reality must at the beginning understand the dramatist's intention. He can by emphasis of one kind or another help to convey the dominant idea. There is an exact instance of this from Irving's own work; one which at the same time illustrates how an actor, howsoever thoughtful and experienced he may be, can learn: For a good many years he had played Shylock to universal praise; then, all at once, he altered it. Altered it in the manner of utterances of the first words he speaks: "Three thousand ducats,—well." He explained it to me when having noticed the change I asked him about it. He said that it was due to the criticism of a blind man—I think it was the Chaplain of the

American Senate, Dr. Milburn.

“What did he say?” I asked. He answered with a thoughtful smile:

“He said: ‘I thought at first that you were too amiable. I seemed to miss the harsh note of the usurer’s voice!’ He was quite right! The audience should from the first understand, if one can convey it, the dominant note of a character!”

This was distinctly in accordance with his own theory; and he always remembered gratefully the man who so enlightened him. The incident illustrates one phase of “passing a character through one’s own mind.” When it has gone through this process it takes a place as an actual thing—a sort of clothing of the player’s own identity with the attributes of another. This new-seeming identity must have at first its own limitations; the clothing does not fit—somewhere too tight, elsewhere too loose. But at last things become easier. The individuality within, being of plastic nature, adapts itself by degrees to its surroundings. And then for purposes of external expression the mastery is complete.

Experience adds much to this power of mastery. When an actor has played many parts he learns to express the dominant ideas of various characters in simple form, so that each, through a sort of artistic metonymy, becomes a type. In fact, as he goes on studying fresh characters he gets a greater easiness of expression; he is not creating every time, but is largely combining things already created. This is true Art. The etymology of the word shows that its purpose is rather to join than to create. Were it not that each mind must create the units which have to be joined, histrionic art would not be primarily a creative art.

In Irving’s own words:

“It is often supposed that great actors trust to the inspiration of the moment. Nothing can be more erroneous. There will, of course, be such moments when an actor at a white heat illumines some passages with a flood of imagination (and this mental condition, by the way, is impossible to the student sitting in his arm-chair); but the

great actor's surprises are generally well weighed, studied, and balanced.... And it is this accumulation of such effects which enables an actor, after many years, to present many great characters with remarkable completeness."

And again when he insists upon the intention of effect:

"It is necessary that the actor should learn to think before he speaks.... Let him remember, first that every sentence expresses a new thought, and, therefore, frequently demands a change of intonation; secondly, that the thought precedes the word. Of course, there are passages in which thought and language are borne along by the streams of emotion and completely intermingled. But more often it will be found that the most natural, the most seemingly accidental effects are obtained when the working of the mind is seen before the tongue gives it words."

I well remember at one of our meetings in 1876 when after dinner we had some "recitations," according to the custom of that time, Irving was very complimentary to my own work because I anticipated words by expression, particularly by the movement of my eyes.

z

So far, the study of natural types and the acceptance of the dramatist's ideas. But next the actor has to learn how to show best the development of character. It is not to the purpose of a high-grade play that each character can be at the start as though labelled thus or thus. As the story unfolds itself the new situations bring into view qualities hitherto unknown; there has been heretofore no necessity for knowing them. Here it is that the dramatist must not make contradictions. He may show opposing qualities—such make the struggles of life and passions which it is the duty of the drama to portray; but the opposing forces, though they may clash, must not deny each other's very existence. Honour and baseness do not synchronously coexist; neither do patriotism and treachery; nor truth and falshood; nor cruelty and compassion. If it be necessary in the struggles of good and bad—any of the common

phases of human nature—in the same individual to show that now and again either dominates for a time, the circumstances must be so arranged as to show preponderating cause. If the dramatist keeps up to this standard all can go well. But if his work be crude and not in itself illuminative, the actor's work becomes more complex and more difficult. He has in the manifold ways of his own craft to show from the first the possibilities of character which later on will have to be dealt with. He will have to suggest the faintest beginnings of things which later are to be of perhaps paramount importance.

This it is that Irving meant when he said that a character should be "sincere." It must not be self-contradictory. He put this point very definitely:

"... the actor must before all things form a definite conception of what he wishes to convey. It is better to be wrong and consistent, than to be right, yet hesitating and uncertain."

And thus it is that the actor's skill can so largely supplement that of the dramatist. He must add whatever the other has omitted or left undone. He must make straight the path which is in common to himself, the dramatist, and the public. He must prepare by subtle means—not too obtrusive to be distracting to the present purpose, nor too slight to pass altogether unnoticed—the coming of something as yet below the horizon. If this be done with care—and care implies both study and premeditation—the sincerity of the character will from first to last be unimpaired.

B.—Reticence

On the other side of this phase of the Art of Acting is that fine undefinable quality of all art which is known as "reticence." Restraint is almost as rare as passion. The "reticence" of the actor is perhaps its most difficult phase. For he has to express that which has in the others to be concealed; and if his expression be too marked, not only does the restraint cease to exist, but a wrong idea—that of concealment—is conveyed.

C.—Art and Truth

All these things are parts of an integral whole; they all go to the formation of an Art. Art is in itself only a part of the mechanism of truth. It is from the inner spirit that the outward seeming must derive. Rules and laws are but aids, restraints, methods of achievement; but it is after all to nature that the artist must look. In the words of Pope:

“These laws of old discover’d, not deviz’d,

Are nature still but nature methodiz’d.”

Irving put the idea thus:

“... merely to imitate is not to apply a similar method ... the greatest of all the lessons that Art can teach is this: that truth is supreme and eternal. No phase of art can achieve much on a false basis. Sincerity, which is the very touchstone of Art, is instinctively recognised by all.”

V THE PLAY

The play as a whole is a matter of prime consideration for the actor, though it only comes into his province quâ actor in a secondary way. In the working of a theatre it is the province of the stage manager to arrange the play as an entity; the actor has to deal with it only with reference to his own scenes. But the actor must understand the whole scheme so as to realise the ultimate purpose; otherwise his limitations may become hindrances to this. Irving, who was manager as well as actor, puts the matter plainly from the more comprehensive point of view:

“It is most important that an actor should learn that he is a figure in a picture, and that the least exaggeration destroys the harmony of the composition. All the members of the company should work toward a common end, with the nicest subordination of their individuality to the general purpose.”

Here we have again the lesson of restraint—of reticence. There are also various

other forms of the same need, to which he has at various times alluded. For instance, speaking of the presentation of a play he said:

“You want, above all things, to have a truthful picture which shall appeal to the eye without distracting the imagination from the purpose of the drama.”

In fact Irving took the broadest possible views of the aims and possibilities of his chosen art, and of the duties as well as of the methods of those who follow it. He even put it that the State had its duty with regard to the art of illusion:

“The mere study of the necessities and resources of theatre art—the art of illusion—should give the theatre as an educational medium a place in State economy. Just think for a moment: a comprehensive art effort which consolidates into one entity which has an end and object and purpose of its own, all the elements of which any or all of the arts and industries take cognisance—thought, speech, passion, humour, pathos, emotion, distance, substance, form, size, colour, time, force, light, illusion to each or all of the senses, sound, tone, rhythm, music, motion. Can such a work be undertaken lightly or with inadequate preparation? Why, the mere patience necessary for the production of a play might take a high place in the marvels of human effort.”

VI STAGE PERSPECTIVE

One of the things on which Irving always insisted was a knowledge and understanding of stage perspective, and of its application in the practice not only of the art of the stage in its scenic and illusive aspect but of the art of acting:

“The perspective of the stage is not that of real life, and the result of seeming is achieved by means which, judged by themselves, would seem to be indirect. It is only the raw recruit who tries to hit the bull’s eye by point-blank firing and who does not allow for elevation and windage.”

In pointing out the necessity of speaking more loudly on the stage than in a room, he

puts the same idea in a different and perhaps a broader way:

“This exaggeration applies to everything on the stage. To appear to be natural, you must in reality be much broader than natural. To act on the stage as one really would in a room would be ineffective and colourless.”

He never forgot—and never allowed any one else to forget—that the purpose of stage art is illusion. Its aim is not to present reality but its semblance; not to be, but to seem. He puts it thus:

“The function of art is to do and not to create—it is to make to seem, and not to make to be, for to make to be is the Creator’s work.”

He had before said:

“It must never be forgotten that all art has the aim or object of seeming and not of being, and to understate is as bad as to overstate the modesty or the efflorescence of nature.”

Thus we get the higher aim: to seem to be—but always in such wise that nature shall be worthily represented. Nature

“At once the end and aim and test of art.”

So Pope. Irving put the value nature as against the mere pretence thus:

“To be natural on the stage is most difficult, and yet a grain of nature is worth a bushel of artifice.... Nature may be overdone by triviality in conditions that demand exaltation.... Like the practised orator, the actor rises and descends with his sentiment, and cannot be always in a fine frenzy.”

How true this is; how consistent with eternal truth! Nature has her moods, why not man; has her means of expressing them, why not man also? Nature has her tones; and with these why may not the heart of man vibrate and express itself?

In this connection and with the same illustration—the orator compared with the actor—Irving put a new phase of the same idea:

"It matters little whether the actor sheds tears or not, so long as he can make his audience shed them; but if tears can be summoned at will and subject to his control it is true art to utilise such a power, and happy is the actor whose sensibility has at once such delicacy and discipline. In this respect the actor is like the orator. Eloquence is all the more moving when it is animated and directed by a fine and subtle sympathy which affects the spectator though it does not master him."

VII DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The last-mentioned utterance of Irving's brings us at once to the deepest problem in the art of acting: the value and use of sensibility. Throughout his later life, from the time he first entered the polemics of his art, he held consistently to one theory. To him the main disputants were Diderot and Talma; any other was merely a supporter of the theory of either.

Diderot in his Paradox of Acting held that for good acting there must be no real feeling on the part of the actor:

"Extreme sensibility makes middling actors; middling sensibility makes the ruck of bad actors; in complete absence of sensibility is the possibility of a sublime actor."

Irving's comment on this theory is:

"The exaltation of sensibility in Art may be difficult to define, but it is none the less real to all who have felt its power."

Talma[1] held quite the opposite view to that of Diderot. To him one of the first qualifications of an actor is sensibility, which indeed he considered the very source of imagination. To this quality, he held, there must be added intelligence:

1. When Irving began to consider this branch of the "true inwardness" of his work he was so much struck with the argument of Talma that he had it translated and inserted in The Theatre. This was easy of accomplishment, for with regard to that magazine he had only to ask.

As a matter of fact The Theatre at that time belonged to him. He had long considered it advisable that there should be some organ in which matters deeply concerning the stage could be set forth. He accordingly arranged with the late Mr. F. W. Hawkins, then a sub-editor of the Times, to take the work in hand. Hawkins had already by his work shown his interest in the stage; Irving had a high opinion of his "Life of Edmund Kean" and of his book on the French stage which he had then well in hand. He trusted Hawkins entirely; gave him a free hand, and never interfered with him in any possible way except to suggest some useful article of a neutral kind. He would never even give a hint of his own opinion regarding any one of his own profession, but kept studiously out of the theatrical party-politics of the day. Hawkins had his own views which he was perfectly well able to support; he could take care of himself. Irving was content that the magazine should exist, and footed the bills. Later on when the editorship was vacant Irving made a present of the whole thing to Clement Scott who said that he would like to see what he could do with it.

The Talma articles appeared in The Theatre for the 30th January and 6th and 13th February 1877. This was before I came to Irving. It was long afterwards when I read them.

In 1883 Walter Herries Pollock, then editor of the Saturday Review, a great friend of Irving, produced an edition of the Paradox of Acting to which Irving wrote a preface. In this he set out his own views in his comments on the work of Diderot.

"To form a great actor ... the union of sensibility and intelligence is required."

Irving used his knowledge of the controversy to this effect:

"I do not recommend actors to allow their feelings to carry them away ...; but it is necessary to warn you against the theory, expounded with brilliant ingenuity by Diderot, that the actor never feels.... Has not the actor who can ... make his feelings a part of his art an advantage over the actor who never feels, but makes his

observations solely from the feelings of others? It is necessary to this art that the mind should have, as it were, a double consciousness, in which all the emotions proper to the occasion may have full swing, while the actor is all the time on the alert for every detail of his method.... The actor who combines the electric force of a strong personality with a mastery of the resources of his art, must have a greater power over his audiences than the passionless actor who gives a most artistic simulation of the emotions he never experiences."

The sentence printed in italics is a really valuable addition to the philosophy of acting. It is Irving's own and is, as may be seen, a development or corollary of Talma's conclusion. Talma required as a necessity of good acting both sensibility and intelligence. But Irving claimed that in the practice of the art they must exist and act synchronously. This belief he cherished, and on it he acted with excellent result. I have myself seen a hundred instances of its efficiency in the way of protective self-control; of conscious freedom of effort; of self-reliance; of confidence in giving the reins to passion within the set bounds of art.[2]

2. I have seen a good many times Irving illustrate and prove the theory of the dual consciousness in and during his own acting; when he has gone on with his work heedless of a fire on the stage and its quelling: when a gas-tank underneath the stage exploded and actually dispersed some of the boarding close to him, he all the time proceeding without even a moment's pause or a falter in his voice. One other occasion was typical. During a performance of The Lyons Mail, whilst Dubose surrounded by his gang was breaking open the iron strong-box conveyed in the mail-cart the horses standing behind him began to get restive and plunged about wildly, making a situation of considerable danger. The other members of the murderous gang were quickly off the stage, and the dead body of the postillion rolled away to the wings. But Irving never even looked round. He went calmly on with his work of counting the billets de banque, whilst he interlarded the words of the play with admonitions to his comrades not to be frightened but to come back and

attend to their work of robbing. Not for an instant did he cease to be Dubose though in addition he became manager of the theatre.

In speaking of other branches of the subject Irving said:

“An actor must either think for himself or imitate some one else.”

And again:

“For the purely monkey arts of life there is no future—they stand only in the crude glare of the present, and there is no softness for them, in the twilight of either hope or memory. With the true artist the internal force is the first requisite—the external appearance being merely the medium through which this is made known to others.”

VIII INDIVIDUALITY, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT

If an actor has to learn of others—often primarily—through his own emotions, it is surely necessary that he learn first to know himself. He need not take himself as a standard of perfection—though poor human nature is apt to lean that way; but he can accept himself as something that he knows. If he cannot get that far he will never know anything. With himself then, and his self-knowledge as a foothold, he may begin to understand others.[3]

3. As an instance of the efficacy of the method, let any one try to tell character by handwriting. It is very simple, after all. Let him take the strange writing, and after making himself familiar with it, measure it by himself, asking himself: “Under stress of what emotion would my own writing most nearly resemble that?” Let him repeat this with each sign of divergence from his own caligraphy: and in a short time he will be astonished with the result. So it is with all studies of character. Without any standard the task is impossible; but weigh each against your own self-knowledge and you at once begin to acquire comparative knowledge of simple qualities capable of being combined endlessly.

Γνῶθι σεαυτὸν Know thyself! It is, after all, the base of all knowledge—the foothold

for all forward thought. Commenting on the speech of Polonius: “To thine own self be true,” Irving said:

“But how can a man be true to himself if he does not know himself? ‘Know thyself’ was a wisdom of the Ancients. But how can a man know himself if he mistrusts his own identity, and if he puts aside his special gifts in order to render himself an imperfect similitude of some one else?”

IX

Thus we have come back to Irving’s original proposition:

“If you do not pass a character through your own mind it can never be sincere.” The logical wheel has gone its full round and is back at the starting-place. Begin with the argument where you will it must come sooner or later to the same end: “To know others know yourself.” Your own identity is that which you must, for histrionic purposes, clothe with attributes not your own. You must have before your mind some definite image of what you would portray; and your own feeling must be ultimately its quickening force.

So far, the resolution of the poet’s thought into a moving, breathing, visible, tangible character. But that is not the completion of the endeavour. In the philosophy of histrionic art are rarer heights than mere embodiment, mere vitality, mere illusion. The stage is a world of its own, and has its own ambitions, its own duties. Truth either to natural types or to the arbitrary creations of the dramatist is not sufficient. For the altitudes something else is required. Irving set it forth thus:

“Finally in the consideration of the Art of Acting, it must never be forgotten that its ultimate aim is beauty. Truth itself is only an element of beauty, and to merely reproduce things vile and squalid and mean is a debasement of art.”

Here he supports the theory of Taine that art, like nature, has its own selective power; and that in the wisdom of its choosing is its power for good. Does it not

march with that sublime apothegm of Burke: “Vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness”?

Finally Irving summed up the whole Philosophy of his Art and of its place amongst the sister Arts in a few sentences:

“In painting and in the drama the methods of the workers are so entirely opposed, and the materials with which they work are so different, that a mutual study of the other work cannot but be of service to each. Your painter works in mouldable materials, inanimate, not sensitive but yielding to the lightest touch. His creation is the embodiment of the phantasm of his imagination, for in art the purpose is to glorify and not merely to reproduce. He uses forms and facts of nature that he may not err against nature’s laws. But such natural facts as he assimilates are reproduced in his work, deified by the strength of his own imagination. Actors, on the other hand, have to work with materials which are all natural, and not all plastic, but are all sensitive—with some of the strength and all the weakness of flesh and blood. The actor has first to receive in his own mind the phantasmal image which is conveyed to him by the words of the poet; and this he has to reproduce as well as he can with the faulty material which nature has given to him. Thus the painter and the poet begin from different ends of the gamut of natural possibilities—the one starts from nature to reach imagination, the other from imagination to reach at reality. And if the means be not inadequate, and if the effort be sincere, both can reach that veritable ground where reality and imagination join. This is the true realism towards which all should aim—the holy ground whereon is reared the Pantheon of all the Arts.”

XLV THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

I

For fourteen years, from 1881 to 1895, Mr. Gladstone was a visitor at the Lyceum. The first occasion was on the First night of The Cup, January 3, 1881, of which I have already written. He had known Irving before, but this was the first time he had been behind the Lyceum scenes. He was very interested in everything, especially those matters of which up to then he knew little such as the setting of the scenes. His fund of information was prodigious and one could feel that he took a delight in adding to it. He was on that occasion very complimentary about all he saw and very anxious to know of the reality—as distinguished from the seeming—of things such as food and drink used, &c. That night his visit to the stage was only a passing one as he sat through the active part of the play in his own box, except during a part of one scene.

He seemed ever afterwards to take a great interest in Irving and all he did. On July 8 of the same year he came to the Lyceum and brought Lord Northbrook with him. Whenever he visited the theatre after 1881 he always came and went by the private door in Burleigh Street, and he always managed to visit Irving on the stage or in his dressing-room or both. The public seemed to take a delight in seeing him at the theatre, and he appeared to take a delight in coming. I honestly believe that he found in it, now and again, an intellectual stimulant—either an excitement or a pausing-time before some great effort, or a relief of change from fact to fancy after it. For instance: On April 8, 1886, Thursday, he made his great speech in the House of Commons introducing the Home Rule Bill—amid a time of great excitement. Two nights after, Saturday night, he came to the Lyceum—and received an immense ovation. Again, in the time of bitter regret and anxiety when Parnell made the violent attack on him in his Manifesto, November 29, 1890, Saturday, he took his earliest opportunity, Tuesday, December 2, of coming to the Lyceum.

Photo Window & Grove ELLEN TERRY AS IMOGEN, 1896

This visit was a somewhat special one, for it was the first time that Mr. Gladstone

came to sit behind the scenes in the O.P.[4] proscenium corner which then became known as “Mr. Gladstone’s seat.” The occasion of it was thus: I had the year previously written an Irish novel, The Snake’s Pass, which after running as a serial through the London People and several provincial papers had now been published in book form. I had done myself the pleasure of sending an early copy to Mr. Gladstone, whose magnificent power and ability and character I had all my life so much admired. Having met and conversed with him several times I felt in a way justified in so doing. He had at once written; I received his letter the same day—that of publication, November 18, 1890. I give his letter, which was in the post-card form then usual to him. I think it is a good example of his method of correspondence, kind and thoughtful and courteous—a model of style. I had as may be gathered written with some diffidence, or delicacy of feeling:

4. Opposite prompt.

“Dear Mr. Bram Stoker,—My social memory is indeed a bad one, yet not so bad as to prevent my recollection of our various meetings. I thank you much for your work, and for your sympathy; and I hope to have perused all your pages before we meet again. When that will be I know not; but I am so fond a lover of The Bride of Lammermoor that I may take the desperate step of asking Mr. Irving whether he will some night, if it is on, let me sit behind the stage pillar—a post which C. Kean once gave me, and which alone would make me sure to hear.—Yours faithfully,

“W.E. Gladstone.

“N. 18, 90.”

Some days later, after a most cordial invitation from Irving, it was arranged that he should choose exactly what date he wished and that all should be ready for him. There could be no difficulty, as Ravenswood was the only play then in the bill and would hold it alone till the beginning of the new year. When he did come I met him and Mrs. Gladstone at the private door and piloted them across the stage, which was

the nearest way to Irving's box. The door to it was beside the corner where Mr. Gladstone would sit.

Possibly it was that as Mr. Gladstone was then full of Irish matters my book, being of Ireland and dealing with Irish ways and specially of a case of oppression by a "gombeen" man under a loan secured on land, interested him, for he had evidently read it carefully. As we walked across the stage he spoke to me of it very kindly and very searchingly. Of course I was more than pleased when he said:

"That scene at Mrs. Kelligan's is fine—very fine indeed!"

Now it must be remembered that, in the interval between his getting the book and when we met, had occurred one of the greatest troubles and trials of his whole political life. The hopes which he had built through the slow progress of years for the happy settlement of centuries-old Irish troubles had been suddenly almost shattered by a bolt from the blue, and his great intellect and enormous powers of work and concentration had been for many days strained to the utmost to keep the road of the future clear from the possibility of permanent destruction following on temporary embarrassment. And yet in the midst of all he found time to read—and remember, even to details and names—the work of an unimportant friend.

When it had been known on the stage that Mr. Gladstone was coming that night to sit behind the scenes the men seemed determined to make it a gala occasion. They had prepared the corner where he was to sit as though it were for Royalty. They had not only swept and dusted but had scrubbed the floor; and they had rigged up a sort of canopy of crimson velvet so that neither dust nor draught should come to the old man. His chair was nicely padded and made comfortable. The stage men were all, as though by chance, on the stage and all in their Sunday clothes. As the Premier came in all hats went off. I showed Mr. Gladstone his nook and told him, to his immense gratification, how the men had prepared it on their own initiative. We chatted till the time drew near for the curtain to go up. Then I fixed him in his place and showed

him how to watch for and avoid the drop-scene, the great roller of which would descend guided by the steel cord drawn taut beside him. Lest there should be any danger through his unfamiliarity with the ways of theatres, I signalled the Master Carpenter to come to me and thus cautioned him:

“Would it not be well,” I said, “if some one stood near here in case of accident?”

“It’s all right, sir, we have provided for that. The two best and steadiest men in the theatre are here ready!” I looked round and they were—alert and watchful. And there they remained all night. There was not going to be any chance of mishap to Mr. Gladstone that night!

I went always to join him between the acts, and Irving, when he had opportunity from his dressing—of which there was a good deal in Ravenswood—would come to talk with him. We were all, whatever our political opinions individually, full of the Parnell Manifesto and its many bearings on political life. For myself, though I was a philosophical Home-Ruler, I was much surprised and both angry at and sorry for Parnell’s attitude, and I told Mr. Gladstone my opinion. He said with great earnestness and considerable feeling:

“I am very angry, but I assure you I am even more sorry.”

On that particular night he was very chatty, and in commenting on the play compared, strangely enough, Caleb Balderstone with Falstaff. He was interested and eager about everything round him and asked innumerable questions. In the course of conversation he said that he had always taken it for granted that the stage word “properties” included costumes.

He was seemingly delighted with that visit, and from that time on whenever he came to the theatre he always occupied the same place, Mrs. Gladstone and whoever might be with him sitting in Irving’s box close at hand.

II

The next time he came, which was on January 29 of the next year, 1891, he generously brought Irving a cheque for ten pounds for the Actors' Benevolent Fund. That evening too he was delighted with the play, Much Ado About Nothing, which he had seen before in 1882, in the ordinary way. He applauded loudly, just as he used to do when sitting in the front of the house.

III

He came again in 1892, May 7, when we were playing Henry VIII., and in the course of conversation commented on Froude's estimate of the population of England in the sixteenth century, which according to his ideas had been stated much below the mark. He also spoke of Dante being in Oxford—a subject about which he wrote in the Nineteenth Century in the next month.

Another instance of Mr. Gladstone's visit to the Lyceum: on the evening of February 25, 1893, he came to see Becket. He had introduced his second Home Rule Bill on the thirteenth of the month, and as it was being discussed he was naturally full of it—so were we all. By the way the Bill was carried in the Commons at the end of August of that year. That night when speaking of his new Bill, he said to me:

"I will venture to say that in four or five years those who oppose it will wonder what it was that they opposed!"

He was delighted with Becket, and seemed specially to rejoice in the success of Tennyson's work.

IV

He was as usual much interested in matters of cost. Irving talked with him very freely, and amongst other things mentioned the increasing expenses of working a theatre, especially with regard to the salaries of actors which had, he said, almost been doubled of late years. Gladstone seemed instantly struck with this. When Irving had gone to change his dress, Gladstone said to me suddenly:

"You told me, I think, that you are Chancellor of the Exchequer here."

"Yes!" I said. "As in your own case, Mr. Gladstone, that is one of my functions!"

"Then would you mind answering me a few questions?" On my giving a hearty acquiescence he began to inquire exhaustively with regard to different classes of actors and others, and seemed to be weighing in his mind the relative advances. In fact his queries covered the whole ground, for now and again he asked as to the quality of materials used. I knew he was omnivorous with regard to finance, but to-night I was something surprised at the magnitude and persistence of his interests. The reason came shortly. Three days after the visit, 28th February, Sir Henry Meysey-Thompson, M.P. for Handsworth, voiced in the House the wishes then floating of the Bi-Metallists for an International Monetary Conference. Mr. Gladstone replied to him in a great speech, the immediate effect of which was to relegate the matter to the Greek Kalends. In this speech he began with the standard of value, and by figures arrived at gold as the least variable standard. Then he went on to the values and change of various commodities, leading him to what he called "the greatest commodity of the world—human labour." This he broadly differentiated into three classes of work which were dependent on ordinary trade laws and conditions, and of a more limited class which seemed to illustrate the natural changes of the laws of value, inasmuch as the earners were not influenced to any degree by the course of events or the cost of materials. This, broadly speaking, was his sequence of ideas. When he had got so far he said:

"Take also the limited class about whom I happened to hear the other day—the theatrical profession. I have it on unquestionable authority that the ordinary payments received by actors and actresses have risen largely."

With his keen instinct for both finance and argument he had seized at once on Irving's remark about the increase of salaries, recognising on the instant its suitability as an illustration in the setting forth of his views. And I doubt if he could

have found any other class of wage-earning so isolated from commercial changes.

V

Irving told me of an interesting conversation which he had in those days with Lord Randolph Churchill in which the latter mentioned Gladstone in a striking way. Answering a query following on some previous remark, he said:

“The fact is we are all afraid of him!”

“How is that—and why?” asked Irving.

“Well, you see, he is a first-class man. And the rest of us are only second class—at best!”

Mr. Gladstone was a really good playgoer and he seemed to love the theatre. When he came he and Mrs. Gladstone were always in good time. I once asked him, thinking that he might have mistaken the hour, in which case I would have borne it in mind to advise him on another occasion, if he liked to come early, and he said:

“Yes. I have always made it a practice to come early. I like to be in my place, and composed, before they begin to tune the fiddles!”

This is the true spirit in which to enjoy the play. No one who has ever sat in eager expectation can forget the imaginative forcefulness of that acre of green baize which hid all the delightful mysteries of the stage. It was in itself a sort of introduction to wonderland, making all the seeming that came after as if quickened into reality.

XLVI THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

I

I never saw Benjamin Disraeli (except from the Gallery of the House of Commons) but on the one occasion when he came to see The Corsican Brothers. Irving, however, met him often and liked to talk about him. He admired, of course, his

power and courage and address; but it was, I think, the Actor that was in the man that appealed to him. I think also that Beaconsfield liked him, and gauged his interest and delight in matters of character. Somehow the stories which he told him conveyed this idea.

One was of an ambitious young clergyman, son of an old friend of the statesman, who asked him to use his influence in having him appointed a Chaplain to the Queen. This he had effected in due course. The Premier, to his surprise, some time afterwards received a visit from his protégé, who said he had, on the ground of the kindness already extended to him, to ask a further favour. When asked what it was he answered:

"I have through your kindness—for which I am eternally grateful—been notified that I am to preach before Her Majesty on Sunday week. So I have come to ask you if you would very kindly give me some sort of hint in the matter!" The Premier, after a moment's thought, had answered:

"Well, you see, I am not much in the habit of preaching sermons myself so I must leave that altogether to your own discretion. But I can tell you this: If you will preach for fifteen minutes the Queen will listen to you. If you will preach for ten minutes she will listen with interest. But if you will preach for five minutes you will be the most popular chaplain that has ever been at Court."

"And what do you think," he went on, "this egregious young man said:

"'But, Mr. Disraeli, how can I do myself justice in five minutes!'" Then came the super cynical remark of the statesman-of-the-world:

"Fancy wanting to do himself justice—and before the Queen!"

II

Sir George Elliott, Bart., M.P., the great coal-owner, was a friend of Irving's and used to come to the Lyceum. One night—4th December 1890—at supper in the

Beefsteak Room, he told us of a visit he paid to Lord Beaconsfield at Hughenden Manor. Disraeli had taken a fancy to the old gentleman, who was, I believe, a self-made man—all honour to him. He was the only guest on that week-end visit. His host took him over the house and showed him his various treasures. In the course of their going about, Beaconsfield asked him:

"How do you like this room?" It was the dining-room, a large and handsome chamber; in it were two portraits, the Queen and the Countess Beaconsfield—Disraeli had had her title conferred whilst he was still in the Commons. At the time of Sir George's visit he was a widower.

"I thought it odd," said Sir George, "that the Queen's picture should hang on the side wall whilst another was over the chimney-piece, which was the place of honour, and asked Dizzy if they should not be changed." He smiled as he said, after a pause:

"Well, Her Majesty did me the honour of visiting me twice at Hughenden; but she did not make the suggestion!"

"He said it very sweetly. It was a gentle rebuke. I don't know how I came to make such a blunder."

There is another reading of the speech which I think he did not see.

III

Disraeli was always good to his Countess, who loved and admired him devotedly. She must, however, have been at times something of a trial to him, for she was outspoken in a way which must now and again have galled a man with his sense of humour; no man is insensitive to ridicule. One night at supper in the Beefsteak Room, a member of Parliament, who knew most things about his contemporaries, told us of one evening at a big dinner-party at which Disraeli and Lady Beaconsfield were present. Some man had been speaking of a new beauty and was expatiating on her charms—the softness of her eyes, her dimples, her pearly teeth, the

magnificence of her hair, the whiteness of her skin—here he was interrupted by a remark of Lady Beaconsfield made across the table:

“Ah! you should see my Dizzy in his bath!”

IV

James McHenry told me an anecdote of Disraeli which illustrates his astuteness in getting out of difficulties. The matter happened to a lady of his acquaintance. This lady was very anxious that her husband should get an appointment for which he was a candidate—one of those good things that distinctly goes by favour. One evening, to her great joy, she found that she was to sit at dinner next the Premier. She was a very attractive woman whom most men liked to serve. The opportunity was too good to lose, and as her neighbour “took” to her at once she began to have great hopes. Having “ground-baited” the locality with personal charm she began to get her hooks and tackle ready. She led the conversation to the subject in her mind, Disraeli talking quite freely. Then despite her efforts the conversation drifted away to something else. She tried again; but when just close to her objective it drifted again. Thus attack and repulse kept on during dinner. Do what she would, she could not get on the subject by gentle means. She felt at last that she was up against a master of that craft. Time ran out, and when came that premonitory hush and glance round the table which shows that the ladies are about to withdraw she grew desperate. Boldly attacking once more the arbiter of her husband’s destiny, she asked him point blank to give the appointment. He looked at her admiringly; and just as the move came he said to her in an impressive whisper:

“Oh, you are a darling!”

V

Irving told me this:

He was giving sittings for his bust to Count Gleichen, who was also doing a bust of

Lord Beaconsfield. One day when he came the sculptor, looking at his watch, said:

"I'm afraid our sitting to-day must be a short one—indeed it may be interrupted at any moment. You won't mind, I hope?"

"Not at all!" said Irving. "What is it?"

"The Premier has sent me word that he must come at an earlier hour than he fixed as he has a Cabinet Meeting." He had already unswathed the clay so as not to waste in preparation the time of the statesman when he should come. Irving was looking at it when something struck him. Turning to Count Gleichen he said:

"That seems something like myself—you know we actors have to study our own faces a good deal, so that we come to know them."

Just then Disraeli came in. When they had shaken hands, the sculptor said to the new-comer:

"Mr. Irving says that he sees in your bust a resemblance to himself.

Disraeli looked at Irving a moment with a pleased expression. Then he walked over to where Irving's bust was still uncovered. He examined it critically for a few moments; and then turning to Count Gleichen said:

"What a striking and distinguished physiognomy!"

XLVII SIR WILLIAM PEARCE, BART.

I

Sir William Pearce—made a Baronet in 1887—was a close friend of Irving. He was the head of the great Glasgow shipbuilding firm of John Elder & Co. In fact he was John Elder & Co., for he owned the whole great business. He went to Glasgow as a shipwright and entered the works at Fairfield. He was a man of such commanding force and ability that he climbed up through the whole concern right up to the top,

and in time—and not a long time either for such a purpose—owned the whole thing. He built many superb yachts, notably the Lady Torfrida and the Lady Torfrida the Second. The first-named was in his own use when we were playing in Glasgow in the early autumn of 1883. We accepted Mr. Pearce's invitation to go on a week-end yachting tour, to begin after the play on the following Saturday night, 1st September.

II

The Lady Torfrida was berthed in the estuary of the Clyde off Greenock; so a little after eleven o'clock we all set off for Greenock.

It had been a blustering evening in Glasgow; but here in the open it seemed a gale. I think that the hearts of all the landsmen of our party sank when we saw the black water lashed into foam by the fierce wind. Pearce had met us at the station and came with us. Of the yachting party were his son the present Baronet, and a College friend of his, Mr. Bradbury. With the bluff heartiness of a yachtsman Pearce now assured us that everything was smooth and easy. At the stairs we found a trim boat with its oarsmen fending her off as with every rising wave she made violent dashes at the stonework. One of the men stood on the steps holding the painter; he dared not fasten it to the ring. From near the level of the water the estuary looked like a wide sea and the water so cold and dark and boisterous that it seemed like madness going out on such a night in such a boat for pleasure. There were several of us, however, and we were afraid of frightening each other; I do not think that any of us were afraid for ourselves. Ellen Terry whispered to me to take her son, who was only a little chap, next to me, as she knew me and would have confidence in me.

We managed to get into the boat without any of us getting all wet, and pushed off. We drove out into the teeth of the wind, the waves seeming much bigger now we were amongst them and out in the open Firth. Not a sign of yacht could be seen. To us strangers the whole thing was an act of faith. Presently Pearce gave an order and we burned a blue light, which was after a while answered from far off—a long, long

distance off, we thought, as we looked across the waste of black troubled water, looking more deadly than ever in the blue light—though it looked even more deadly when the last of the light fell hissing into the wave. By this time matters were getting really serious. Some one had to keep baling all the time, and on the weather side we had to sit shoulder to shoulder as close as we could so that the waves might break on our backs and not over the gunwale. It was just about as unpleasant an experience as one could have. I drew the lad next to me as close as I could, partly to comfort him and more particularly lest he should get frightened and try to leave his place. And yet all the time we were a merry party. Ellen Terry with the strong motherhood in her all awake—a lesson and a hallowed memory—was making cheery remarks and pointing out to her boy the many natural beauties with which we were surrounded: the distant lights, the dim line of light above the shore line, the lurid light of Greenock on the sky. She thought of only one thing, her little boy, and that he might not suffer the pain of fear. The place seemed to become beautiful in the glow of her maternity. He did not say much in answer—not in any enthusiastic way; but he was not much frightened. Cold waves of exceeding violence, driven up your back by a fierce wind which beats the spray into your neck, hardly make a cheerful help to the enjoyment of the æsthetic!

Irving sat stolid and made casual remarks such as he would have made at his own fireside. His quiet calm, I think, allayed nervous tremors in some of the others. I really think he enjoyed the situation—in a way. As for Pearce, who held the tiller himself, he was absolutely boisterous with joviality, though he once whispered in my ear:

“Keep it up! We shall be all right; but I don’t want any of them to get frightened. It is pretty serious!” I think we settled in time into a sort of that calm acceptance of fact which is so real a tribute to Belief. It certainly startled us a little when we heard a voice hailing us with a speaking-trumpet—a voice which seemed close to us. Then a light flashed out and we saw the Lady Torfrida rising high from the water whereon

she floated gracefully, just swaying with wave and wind. She was a big yacht with 600 h.p. engines, after the model of those of the Alaska, one of Pearce's building, then known as the "Greyhound of the ocean!"

I think we were all rejoiced; even Pearce, who told me before we went to our cabins in the early morning that all through that miserable voyage in the dark the sense of his responsibility was heavy upon him.

"Just fancy," he said, "if anything had happened to Irving or Ellen Terry! And it might have, easily! We had no right to come out in such a small boat on such a night; we were absolutely in danger at times!"

We were not long in getting aboard. The whole yacht seemed by comparison with the darkness we emerged from to be blazing with light and filled with alert, powerful men. We were pulled, jerked, or thrown on board, I hardly knew which; and found ourselves hurried down to our luxurious cabins where everything was ready for our dressing. Our things had fortunately been sent on board during the day; anything coming in the boat would have had a poor chance of arriving dry.

III

In a very short time we were sitting in the saloon, light and warm and doing ample justice to one of the most perfect meals I ever sat down to. It was now after one o'clock and we were all hungry. After supper we sat and talked; and after the ladies had retired we sat on still till the September sun began to look in through the silk curtains that veiled the ports.

Pearce was a man full of interesting memories and experiences, and that night he seemed to lay the treasures of them at the feet of his guests. But of all that he told—we listening eagerly—none was so fascinating as his account of the building and trial trip of the Livadia.

This was the great yacht which the Czar Alexander II. had built from the designs of

Admiral Popoff of his own navy. It was of an entirely new pattern of naval construction; a turtle with a house on its back. The work of building had been entrusted to the Fairfield yard with carte blanche in the doing of it. No expense was to be spared in having everything of the best. Under the circumstances it could not be contracted for; the builder was paid by a fixed percentage of the prime cost. The only thing that the builder had to guarantee was the speed. But that was so arranged that beyond a certain point there was to be a rising bonus; the shipbuilder made an extra £20,000 on this alone. Pearce told us that it was the hope of the Czar to be able to evade the Nihilists, who were then very active and had attempted his life several times. The Livadia was really a palace of the sea whereon he could live in comfort and luxury for long periods; and in which by keeping his own counsel he could go about the world without the knowledge of his enemies. It was known that the Nihilists regarded very jealously the building of the ship, and careful watch was kept in the yard. One day when the ship was finished and was partly coaled, there came a wire from the Russian Embassy that it was reported that there were two Nihilists in the shipyard. When the men were coming back from dinner, tally was kept at the gate where the Russian detectives were on watch. I have seen that return from dinner. Through the great gates seven thousand men poured in like a huge living stream. On this occasion the check showed that two men were missing. The Nihilists also had their own Embassy and secret police!

It then became necessary to examine the ship in every part. Those were the days of the Thomassin “infernal machine,” which was suspected of having been the means by which many ships had been sent to the bottom. These machines were exploded by clockwork set for a certain time, and were made in such fashion as would not excite suspicion. Some were in the form of irregularly shaped lumps of coal. The first thing to be done was therefore to take out all the coal which had already been put in. When the bunkers were empty and all the searchable portions of the ship had been carefully examined inch by inch, a picked staff of men opened and examined

the watertight compartments. This was in itself a job, for there were, so well as I remember, something like a hundred and fifty of them. However, as each was done Pearce himself set his own seal upon it. At last he was able to assure the Grand Duke, who was in command and who had arrived to take the boat in charge, that she was so far safe from attack from concealed explosives. When she was starting the Grand Duke told Pearce that the Czar expected that he would go on the trial trip. In his own words:

"It is not any part of a shipbuilder's business to go on trial trips unless he so wishes. But in this case I could not have thought of refusing. The Czar's relations with me and his kindness to me were such that I could not do anything but what would please him!"

So the Livadia started from the Clyde with sealed orders. Her first call was at Holyhead. There they met with a despatch which ordered an immediate journey to Plymouth. At Plymouth she was again directed with secret orders to go to Brest, whither she set out at once.

At Brest there was an "easy," and certain of the officers and men were allowed shore leave. The "easy" should have been for several days; but suddenly word was received to leave Brest at once; it was said that some suspected Nihilists were in the way. The men on shore were peremptorily recalled and in haste preparations were made for an immediate start for the south. Pearce's own words explain the situation:

"I went at once to the Grand Duke Nicholas and remonstrated with him. 'I can answer for the workmanship of the Livadia,' I said; 'but the design is not mine, and so far as I know the principle on which she has been constructed has never been tested. There is no possibility of knowing what a ship of the pattern will do in bad weather, and that we have ahead of us. It is dirty now in the Bay and a storm is reported coming up. Does your Highness really think it wise to attempt the Bay of Biscay under the conditions?' To my astonishment not only the Grand Duke but

some of his officers who were present, who had not hitherto shown any disposition to despise danger, spoke loudly in favour of going on at once. Of course I said no more. I had built the ship, and though I was not responsible for her I felt that if necessary I should go down in her. We had a terrible experience in the Bay, but got through safely to Ferrol. There she was laid up in a land-locked bay, round the shores of which guards were posted night and day for months. It was necessary that she should lie up somewhere as the dock at Sebastopol—the only dock in the world large enough to hold her—was not ready.

"And whilst she lay there the Czar was assassinated." This was on 13th March, 1881.

IV

Then he went on to tell us how once already the Livadia had been the means of saving the Czar's life:

"When she was getting on I had a model of her made—in fact, two; one of them," he said, turning to me, "you saw the other day in my office. These models are troublesome and costly things to make. The one which I intended as a present to the Czar cost five hundred pounds. It was my present to his Majesty on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his succession. It arrived the day before, 17th February—29th February old style. The Czar was delighted with it. That evening there was a banquet in the Winter Palace, where he was then in residence. He had been threatened for some time by means of a black-edged letter finding its way every morning into the Palace, warning him in explicit terms that if his oppression did not cease he would not live past the anniversary of his accession, which would be the following day. When he was leading the way to the dining-hall from the drawing-room he turned to the lady with him—Princess Dolgoruki, his morganatic wife—and said:

"'By the way I want to show you my new toy!' The model had been placed in the salon at the head of the grand staircase and they stopped to examine it.

"As they were doing so the staircase down which they would have been otherwise passing was blown up. The Nihilists, knowing the exact routine of the Court and the rigid adherence to hours, had timed the explosion for the passage of the staircase!"

We spent a delightful Sunday going around Arran. We dined at anchor in Wemyss Bay and slept on board. On the forenoon of Monday we went back to Glasgow.

XLVIII STEPNIAK

I

On the evening of 8th July 1892, after the play, Faust, Irving had some friends to supper in the Beefsteak Room. I think that, all told, it was as odd a congeries of personalities as could well be. Sarah Bernhardt, Darmont, Ellen Terry and her daughter, Toole, Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Aldrich of Boston, two Miss Casellas—and Stepniak. It was odd that the man was known only by the one name; no one ever used his first name, Sergius. Other men have second names of some sort; but this one, though he signed himself S. Stepniak, I never heard spoken of except by the one word. I sat next to him at supper and we had a great deal of conversation together, chiefly about the state of affairs in Russia generally and the Revolutionary party in especial. He, who had presumably been in the very heart of the Revolutionary party and in all the secrets of Nihilism, told me some of his views and aspirations and those of the party—or rather the parties—of which he was a unit.

II

Stepniak was a very large man—large of that type that the line of the shoulders is high so that the bulk of the body stands out solid. He had a close beard and very thick hair, and strongly marked features with a suggestion of the Kalmuck type. He was very strong and had a great voice. On 1st May of that year, 1892, I had heard him speak at the great meeting in Hyde Park for the "Eight-hour" movement. There

were in the Park that day not far from a quarter of a million of people, so that from any of the tribunes—which were carts—no one could be heard that was not strong of voice. The only three men whom I could hear were John Burns, Stepniak, and Frederick Rogers—the latter a working bookbinder and President of the Elizabethan Society—also one of the very finest speakers—judged by any standard—I have ever heard.

In our conversation at supper that night he told me of the letters which they were receiving from the far-off northern shores of Siberia. It was a most sad and pitiful tale. Men of learning and culture, mostly University professors, men of blameless life and takers of no active part in revolution or conspiracy—simply theorists of freedom, patriots at heart—sent away to the terrible muddy shores of the Arctic sea, ill housed, ill fed, overworked—where life was one long, sordid, degrading struggle for bare life in that inhospitable region. I could not but be interested and moved by his telling. He saw that I was sympathetic, and said he would like to send me something to read on the subject. It came some weeks later, as the following letter will show:

"31 Blandford Road,

Bedford Park, W.,

August 2, 1892.

"Dear Mr. Stoker,—It is a long time that I wanted to write to you since that delightful party at the Lyceum. But I was so busy, and the parcel I wanted to send to you for one reason or another could never be ready, and so it dragged on. What I send to you is the paper, Free Russia, I am editing. Since you have read all my books and have been so kind and indulgent for them, and so interested in the Russian Cause, I suppose you will be interested in the attempt to give a practical expression to English sympathies. Unfortunately the collection of Free Russia is incomplete (No. 1 is quite out of print). But what you will have is quite sufficient to give you an

idea of the whole.

“May I ask whether you live permanently in London and whether I may hope to see you some day once again?—Yours very truly,

S. Stepniak.”

III

In February 1893 Stepniak saw Irving and Ellen Terry play in King Lear. The following excerpts are from a letter which he sent to Irving—a long letter of fourteen pages. I was so struck with it when Irving showed it to me that I asked leave to make a copy. Whereupon he gave me the letter.

This was after a habit of his; he generally gave me things which would be of interest to me—and to others. In the letter Stepniak said:

“The actor is a joint creator with the author—even with such an author as Shakespeare. He has a right of his own in interpretation, and the only point is how far he makes good his claims, and that you have done to a wonderful extent. Yours was not acting: it was life itself, so true, natural and convincing was every word, every shade of expression upon your face or in your voice. The gradual transformation of the man, his humbling himself, the revelation of his better, sympathetic self—it was all a wonder of realism, nature and subtlety. Your acting reminded me of the pictures of the great Flemish master who seems to paint not with a brush but with a needle. Yet this astonishing subtlety was in no way prejudicial to the completeness and the power and masterliness of the great whole.... I cannot forbear from asking you to transmit my compliments and admiration to Miss Ellen Terry—if you think that she may care about such a humble tribute. There is a passage from ‘I love your Majesty according to my bonds, not more or less’ and the following monologue, which I am bold enough to say are the weakest in the play: too cold and dry and forward and elaborate for Cordelia. But in her rendering there

was nothing of that: it was all simplicity, tenderness, spontaneous emotion. The charm of her personality and character, which she has such a unique gift of infusing into everything, has partially improved the original text. I hope you will not consider my saying so too sacrilegious. There are spots upon the sun. And the scene in the French camp! Her ‘No cause, no cause!’ was quite a stroke of genius. I would not believe before I saw her in that, that words can produce such an emotion.”

And this was the man who stood for wiping tyrants from the face of the earth; who aided in the task, if Underground Russia be even based on truth. This gentle, appreciative, keenly critical, sympathetic man!

Strange it was that he who must have gone through such appalling dangers as beset hourly the workers in the Nihilist cause and come through them all unscathed was finally killed in the commonplace way of being run over by a train on the underground railway.

IV

It reminds me of another experience with Irving and a surprising dénouement. When we were in California in 1893 a gentleman called to see Irving at his hotel. He was a countryman of Stepniak, but of quite the opposite degree—a Prince claiming blood kin with the Czar, Nicholas Galitzin. He supped with Irving and some others, forty-five in all, at the Café Riche, 13th September, when he gave Irving a very charming souvenir in the shape of a gold match-box set with gems. Several times after we met at supper and came to be quite friends. Prince Galitzin was a mighty hunter and had slain much big game, including even grizzlies and other bears. He told us many interesting hunting adventures. He had lost one arm. He had not mentioned any adventure bearing on this, and Irving asked him if it was by a mischance in a hunting adventure that he had suffered the loss. He said with a laugh:

“No! No! Nothing of the kind. It was a damn stupid fellow who let a Saratoga trunk fall on me over the staircase of a hotel!”

XLIX E. ONSLOW FORD, R.A.

One morning—it was 12th January 1880—I got a note from Irving sent down by cab from his rooms. In it he said:

"There is a certain Mr. Onslow Ford coming to the theatre this morning. Please see him for me and give him some fatherly or brotherly advice."

I left word with the hall-keeper to send for me whenever the gentleman came. I did not know who he was or what he wanted: but I did know what "fatherly or brotherly advice" meant. At that period of his life the demands made on Irving's time were fearful. There was no end to them; no limit to the range of their wants. And I was the "fatherly adviser" in such cases.

A little after noon I was sent for; the expected stranger had arrived. In those days the stage door in Exeter Street was very small and absolutely inconvenient. There was comfortable room for Sergeant Barry, the hall-keeper, who was a fine, big, bulky man; two in the room crowded it. Barry waited outside and I went in. The stranger was a young man of medium height, thin, dark haired. His hair rose back from his forehead without parting of any kind, in the way which we in those days associated in our minds with French artists. His face was pale, a little sallow, fine in profile and moulding; a nose of distinction with sensitive nostrils. He had a small beard and moustache. His eyes were dark and concentrated—distinctly "seeing" eyes. My heart warmed to him at once. He was young and earnest and fine; I knew at a glance that he was an artist, and with a future. Still I had to be on guard. One of my functions at the theatre, as I had come to know after a year of exceedingly arduous work, was to act as a barrier. I was "the Spirit that Denies!" In fact I had to be. No one likes to say "no!"—a very few are constitutionally able to. I had set myself to help Irving in his work and this was one of the best ways I could help him. He recognised gratefully the utility of the service, and as he trusted absolutely in my discretion. I gradually fell into the habit of using my own decision in the great

majority of cases.

When Mr. Onslow Ford told me that he wished to make a statuette of Henry Irving as Hamlet I felt that the time for "advice" had come, and began to pave the way for a non possumus, strong in intention though gentle in expression. The young sculptor, however, had thought the matter all over for himself. He knew the demands on Irving's time and how vastly difficult it would be to get sittings so many and so long as would be required for the work he had projected. I listened of course and thought better of him and his chance in that he knew his difficulties at the beginning.

Presently he put his hand in his pocket and took out something rolled in paper—a parcel about as big as a pork pie. When he had unrolled it he held up a rough clay model of a seated figure.

"This," said he, "is something of the idea. I have been several times in the front row of the stalls watching as closely as I could. One cannot well model clay in the stalls of a theatre. But I did this after the first time, and I have had it with me on each other occasion. I compared it on such opportunities as I had—you do keep the Lyceum dark all but the stage; and I think I can see my way. I don't want to waste Irving's time or my own opportunities if I am so fortunate as to get sittings!"

That was the sort of artist that needed none of my "advice"—fatherly, brotherly, or otherwise. My mind was already made up.

"Would you mind waiting here a while?" I asked. In those early days we had only the one office and no waiting-room except the stage. He waited gladly, whilst I went back to the office. Irving had by this time arrived. I told him I had seen Mr. Ford.

"I hope you put it nicely to him that I can't possibly give him sittings," he said.

"That is why I came to see if you had arrived."

"How do you mean," he asked again. So I said:

"I think you had better see him, and if you think as I do you will give him sittings!"

“Oh, my dear fellow, I can’t. I am really too pressed with work.”

“Well, see him any way!” I said; “I have asked him to wait on purpose.” He looked at me keenly for an instant as though I had somehow “gone back” on him. Then he smiled:

“All right. I’ll see him now!”

I brought Onslow Ford. When the two men met, Irving did share my opinion. He did give sittings for a bronze statuette. The result was so fine that he gave quite another series of sittings for him to do the life-size marble statue of “Irving as Hamlet” now in the Library of the London Guildhall. It is a magnificent work, and will perhaps best of all his works perpetuate the memory of the great Sculptor who died all too young.

Irving gave many sittings for the statue. With the experience of his first work Onslow Ford could begin with knowledge of the face so necessary in portrait art. I often went with him and it was an intense pleasure to see Onslow Ford’s fine hands at work. They seemed like living things working as though they had their own brains and initiation.

I was even able to be of some little assistance. I knew Irving’s face so well from seeing it so perpetually under almost all possible phases of emotion that I could notice any error of effect if not of measurement. Often either Irving or Onslow Ford would ask me and I would give my opinion. For instance:

“I think the right jowl is not right!” The sculptor examined it thoughtfully for quite a while. Then he said suddenly:

“Quite right! but not in that way. I see what it is!” and he proceeded to add to the left of the forehead.

After all, effect is comparative; this is one of the great principles of art!

On 31st March 1906, one of the Academy view days of those not yet Royal

Academicians, I went to Onslow Ford's old studio in Acacia Road, now in possession of his son, Wolfram the painter, to see his portrait of his beautiful young wife, the daughter of George Henschel. Whilst we were talking of old days he unearthed treasures which I did not know existed: casts from life of Henry Irving's hands.

No other such relics of the actor exist; and these are of supreme interest. Irving had the finest man's hands I have ever seen. Later on he sent me a cast of one of them in bronze; a rare and beautiful thing which I shall always value. Size and shape, proportion and articulation were all alike beautiful and distinguished and distinctive. It would be hard to mistake them for those of any other man. With them he could speak. It was not possible to doubt the meaning which he intended to convey. With such models to work on a few lines of pencil or brush made for the actor an enlightening identity of character. The weakness of Charles I., which not all the skill of Vandyck could hide; the vulture grip of Shylock; the fossilised age of Gregory Brewster; the asceticism of Becket.

What, after the face, can compare with the hand for character, or intention, or illustration. It can be an index to the working of the mind.

L SIR LAURENCE ALMA-TADEMA, R.A.

I

In his speech at the close of the second "season" at the Lyceum, 25th July, 1879, Irving announced amongst the old plays which he intended to do, Coriolanus. He never announced any play, then or thereafter, without having thought it well over and come to some conclusion as to its practicability. In this instance he had already made up his mind to ask Laurence Alma-Tadema to make designs for the play and to superintend its production. The experience of having a free hand in such matters,

now that he was his own master in regard to stage productions, had shown to him the great possibilities of effect to be produced by the great masters of technique. There had in the past been great painters who had worked for the stage. Loutherbourg and Clarkson Stanfield, for instance, had made fame in both ways of picturesque art, the gallery and the stage. But the idea was new of getting specialists in various periods to apply their personal skill as well as their archæological knowledge to stage effect. Indeed up to that time even great painters were not always historically accurate. A survey of the work of most of the painters of the first half of the Victorian epoch will show such glaring instances of anachronism and such manifest breaches of geographical, ethnological, and technological exactness as to illustrate the extraordinary change for the better in the way of accuracy in the work of to-day. The National Gallery and Holland House have instances of errors in costumes incorrect as to alleged nationality and date. Irving wanted things to be correct, well knowing that as every age has its own suitabilities to its own needs that which is accurate is most likely to convince. Alma-Tadema had made a speciality of artistic archæology of Ancient Rome. In working from his knowledge he had reformed the whole artistic ideas of the time. He had so studied the life of old Rome that he had for his own purposes reconstructed it. Up to his time, for instance, the toga was in art depicted as a thin linen robe of somewhat scanty proportions. Look at the picture of Kemble as Cato by Lawrence, or indeed of any ancient Roman by any one. Irving had become possessed of the toga of Macready, and anything more absurd one could hardly imagine; it was something like a voluminous night-shirt. Of course the audience also were ignorant of the real thing, and so it did not matter; the great actor’s powers were unlessened by the common ignorance. In his studying for his art Alma-Tadema had taken from many statues and fragments the folds as well as the texture of the toga. With infinite patience he had gathered up details of various kinds, till at last, with a mind stored with knowledge, he set to himself the task of reconstruction; to restore the toga so that it would answer all the conditions

evidenced in contemporary statuary. And the result? Not a flimsy covering which would have become draggle-tailed in a day or an hour of strenuous work; but a huge garment of heavy cloth which would allow of infinite varieties of wearing, and which would preserve the body from the burning heat of the day and the reacting chills of night. Even for the purposes of pictorial art the revived toga made a new condition of things, in all ways harmonising with the accepted facts. There is on record plenty of marble and stone work of old Rome; of work in bronze and brass and iron and copper; in silver and gold; in jewels and crystals—in fact in all those materials which do not yield to the ravages of time. All this Alma-Tadema had studied till he knew it. He was familiar with the kinds of marble and stone used in Roman architecture, statuary, and domestic service. The kinds of glass and crystal; of armour and arms; of furniture; of lighting; sacerdotal and public and domestic service. He knew how a velarium should be made and of what, and how adorned; how it should be put up and secured. He was learned of boats and chariots; of carts and carriages, and of the trappings of horses. Implements of agriculture and trade and manufacture and for domestic use were familiar to him. He was a master of the many ceremonial undertakings which had such a part in Roman life.... In fact, Alma-Tadema's artistic reconstruction was like that of Owen; he reconciled fragments and brought to light proof of the unities and harmonies and suitabilities of ancient life.

II

Irving felt that with such an artist to help—archæologist, specialist, and genius in one—he would be able to put before an audience such work as would not only charm them by its beauty and interest them in its novelty, but would convince by its suitability. For there is an enormous aid to conviction in a story when those who follow it accept from the beginning in good faith the things of common knowledge and use which are put before them. I often say myself that the faith which still exists

is to be found more often in a theatre than in a church. When an audience go into a playhouse which is not connected in their minds with the habit of deceit they are unconsciously prepared to accept all things ab initio in the simple and direct manner of childhood. When therefore what they see is vraisemblable—with the manifest appearance of truth to something—all the powers of intellectual examination and working habit come into force in the right direction.

In that summer of 1879 when Irving announced Coriolanus he also announced several other plays.

It was not, of course, his intention to produce these plays all at once, but one by one as occasion served. As has been seen, the putting on of The Merchant of Venice and its phenomenal success shelved or postponed most of the plays then announced; but Irving did not lose sight of Coriolanus. One morning in the following winter, whilst Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, as he himself told me, was in his studio in his house in North Gate, Regent's Park, he heard the sound of sleigh bells coming over the bridge. Naturally his thoughts went back to The Bells and Irving, for no one who has seen the play can hear the sound unexpectedly without the thought. He heard the sound stop at his own gate; and whilst wondering what it could mean Irving was announced. He was accompanied by Mr. W. L. Ashmead Bartlett, who afterwards took his present name on his marriage to the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. Irving at once entered upon the subject of his visit; and the great painter was charmed to entertain it. As was usual with him when working on a new play, Irving had a rough scenario in his mind, and he and Alma-Tadema spoke of it then and there. Irving could tell him of the scenes he wanted and give some hints not only as to their practical use but of the ideas which he wished them to convey. When he had gone Alma-Tadema took down his Shakespeare and began his own study of the play. The continuous success of The Merchant of Venice gave him ample time, and his studies and designs were unique and lovely.

III

As we know, the production of Coriolanus did not take place till twenty-two years later; but all through 1880 and 1881 Alma-Tadema had the matter in hand. In those years the high policy of his theatre management was a good deal changed. When Irving had experience of Ellen Terry's remarkable powers and gifts he wisely determined to devote to them, so far as was possible, the remaining years of her youth. She had now been twenty-five years on the stage; and though she began in her very babyhood—at eight years old—the flight of time has to be considered, for the future if not for the past. She was now thirty-three years of age; in the very height of her beauty and charm, and to all seeming still in her girlhood. He therefore arranged Romeo and Juliet as the next Shakespearean production. This was followed in time by Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, Olivia, Faust—all plays that showed her in her brightness and pathos; and so Coriolanus was kept postponed. But well into 1881 it was still being worked on, and in those days I had many visits to the studio of Alma-Tadema.

IV

Let me give an instance of his thoroughness in his art work.

Once when in his studio I saw him occupied on a beautiful piece of painting, a shrub with a myriad of branches laden with berries and but few leaves, through which was seen the detail of the architecture of the marble building beyond. The picture was then almost finished. The next time I came I found him still hard at work on the same painting; but it was not nearly so far advanced. Dissatisfied with the total effect, he had painted out the entire background and was engaged on a new and quite different one. The labour involved in this stupendous change almost made me shudder. It needs but a small amount of thought to understand the infinite care and delicacy of touch to complete an elaborate architectural drawing between the gaps of those hundreds of spreading twigs.

V

This devotion to his art is often one of the touchstones of the success of an artist in any medium; the actor, or the singer, or the musician as well as the worker in any of the plastic arts.

I remember Irving telling me of a conversation he had with the late W. H. Vanderbilt when, after lunch in his own house in Fifth Avenue, the great millionaire took him round his beautiful picture gallery. He was pointing out the portrait of himself finished not long before by Meissonier, and gave many details of how the great painter did his work and the extraordinary care which he took. Vanderbilt used to give long sittings, and Meissonier, to aid the tedium of his posing, had mirrors fitted up in such a way that he could see the work being executed. “Do you know,” the millionaire concluded, “that sometimes after a long sitting he would take his cloth and wipe out everything he had done in the day’s work. And I calculated roughly that every touch of his brush cost me five dollars!”

VI

When in 1896 Irving produced Cymbeline, Alma-Tadema undertook to design and supervise the picturesque side; or, as it was by his wish announced in the programme: “kindly acted as adviser in the production of the play.”

He chose a time of England when architecture expressed itself mainly in wood; natural enough when it was a country of forest. It is not a play allowing of much display of fine dresses, and Irving never under any circumstances wished a play to be unsuitably mounted. The opportunities of picturesque effect came, in this instance, in beautiful scenery.

LI SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES, BART.

I

It was to Irving an intense pleasure to work with Sir Edward Burne-Jones. The painter seemed to bring to whatever he had in hand a sort of concentration of all his great gifts, and to apply them with unsparing purpose and energy. His energy was of that kind which seems to accomplish without strenuous effort; after all it is the waste of force and not its use which proclaims itself in the doing. This man had such mighty gifts that in his work there was no waste; all the creations of his teeming brain were so fine in themselves that they simply stood ready for artistic use. His imagination working out through perfected art, peopled a whole world of its own and filled that world around them with beautiful things. This world had been opened to Irving as to every one else who admired it. But when the player came adventuring into it, the painter displayed to him a vast of hidden treasures. There was simply no end to his imaginative ideas, his artistic efforts, his working into material beauty the thoughts which flitted through his mind. As a colourist he was supreme, and he could use colour as a medium of conveying ideas to the same effect as others used form. His own power of dealing with the beauties of form was supreme.

To work with such an artist was to Irving a real joy. He simply revelled in the task. Every time they met it was to him a fresh stimulation. Burne-Jones, too, seemed to be stimulated; the stage had always been to him a fairyland of its own, but he had not had artistic dealings with it. Now he entered it with full power to let himself run free. The play which he undertook for Irving, King Arthur, was of the period which he had made his own: that mystic time when life had single purposes and the noblest prevailed the most; when beauty was a symbol of inner worth; when love in some dainty as well as some holy form showed that even flesh, which was God’s handiwork, was not base.

In the working out of the play each day saw some new evidence of the painter’s thought; the roughest sketch given as a direction or a light to scene-painter or

property maker or costumier was in itself a thing of beauty. I veritably believe that Irving was sorry when the production of the play was complete. He so enjoyed the creative process that the completion was a lesser good.

Regarding human nature, which was Irving's own especial study, Burne-Jones had a mind tuned to the same key as his own. To them both the things which were basic and typal were closest. The varieties of mankind were of lesser importance than the species. The individual was the particular method and opportunity of conveyance of an idea; and, as such, was of original importance. To each of the two great artists such individual grew in his mind, and ever grew; till in the end, on canvas or before the footlights, the being lived.

II

It would be hard to better illustrate the mental attitude of both to men and type and individual than by some of the stories which Burne-Jones loved to tell and Irving to hear. The painter had an endless collection of stories of all sorts; but those relating to children seemed closest to his heart. In our meetings on the stage or at supper in the Beefsteak Room, or on those delightful Sunday afternoons when he allowed a friend to stroll with him round his studio, there was always some little tale breathing the very essence of human nature.

I remember once when he told us an incident in the life of his daughter, who was then a most beautiful girl and is now a most beautiful woman, Mrs. J. W. Mackail. When she was quite a little girl, she came home from school one day and with thoughtful eyes and puckered brows asked her mother:

"Mother, can you tell me why it is that whenever I see a little boy crying in the street I always want to kiss him; and when I see a little girl crying I want to slap her?"

III

Another story was of a little boy, one of a large family. This little chap on one

occasion asked to be allowed to go to bed at the children's tea time, a circumstance so unique as to puzzle the domestic authorities. The mother refused, but the child whimpered and persevered—and succeeded. The father was presently in his study at the back of the house looking out on the garden when he saw the child in his little night-shirt come secretly down the steps and steal to a corner of the garden behind some shrubs. He had a garden fork in his hand. After a lapse of some minutes he came out again and stole quietly upstairs. The father's curiosity was aroused, and he too went behind the shrubs to see what had happened. He found some freshly turned earth, and began to investigate. Some few inches down was a closed envelope which the child had buried. On opening it he found a lucifer match and a slip of paper on which was written in pencil in a sprawling hand:

"Dear Devil,—Please take away Aunt Julia."

IV

Another story related to a little baby child, the first in the household. There was a dinner party, and the child, curious as to what was going on, lay awake with torturing thoughts. At last, when a favourable opportunity came through the nurse's absence, she got quietly from her cot and stole downstairs just as she was. The dining-room door was ajar, and before the agonised nurse could effect a capture she had slipped into the room. There she was, of course, made much of. She was taken in turn on each one's knees and kissed. Mother frowned, of course, but father gave her a grape and a wee drop of wine and water. Then she was kissed again and taken to the waiting nurse. Safe in the nursery her guardian berated her:

"Oh, Miss Angy, this is very dreadful. Going down to the dining-room!—And in your nighty!—And before strangers!—Before Gentlemen! You must never let any gentleman see you in your nighty!—Never! Never! Never! That is Wicked!—Awful!" And so on!

A few nights afterwards the father, when going from his dressing-room for dinner,

went into the nursery to say another “good-night” to baby. When he went in she was saying her prayers at nurse’s knees, in long night-robe and with folded hands like the picture of the Infant Samuel. Hearing the footstep she turned her head round, and on catching sight of her father jumped up crying: “Nau’ty—nau’ty—nau’ty!” and ran behind a screen. The father looked at the nurse puzzled:

“What is it, nurse?”

“I don’t know, sir! I haven’t the faintest idea!” she answered, equally puzzled.

“I’ll wait a few minutes and see,” he said, as he sat down. Half a minute later the little tot ran from behind the screen, quite naked, and running over to him threw herself on his knee. She snuggled in close to him with her arms round his neck, and putting her little rosebud of a mouth close to his ear whispered wooingly:

“Pap-pa, me dood girl now!”

LII EDWIN A. ABBEY, R.A.

I

When Irving was having the enforced rest consequent to the accident to his knee in December 1896, he made up his mind that his next Shakespearean production should be Richard II. For a long time he had had it in view and already formed his opinion as to what the leading features of such a production as was necessary should be. He knew that it could not in any case be made into a strong play, for the indeterminate character of Richard would not allow of such. The strong thing that is in the play is, of course, his suffering; but such, when the outcome of one’s own nature, is not the same as when it is effected by Fate, or external oppression. He knew therefore that the play would want all the help he could give it. Now he set himself to work out the text to acting shape, as he considered it would be best. Despite what any one may say to the contrary—and it is only faddists that say

it—there is not a play of Shakespeare's which does not need arranging or cutting for the stage. So much can now be expressed by pictorial effect—by costume, by lighting and properties and music—which in Shakespeare's time had to be expressed in words, that compression is at least advisable. Then again, the existence of varied scenery and dresses requires time for changes, which can sometimes be effected only by the transposition of parts of the play. In his spare time, therefore, of 1897 he began the arrangement with a definite idea of production in 1899. When he had the general scheme prepared—for later on there are always changes in readings and minor details—he approached the man who in his mind would be the best to design and advise concerning the artistic side: Edwin A. Abbey, R.A.

II

Irving and Abbey were close friends; and I am proud to say I can say the same of myself and Abbey for the last twenty-five years. Irving had a great admiration for his work, especially with regard to Shakespeare's plays, many of which he illustrated for Harper's Magazine. The two men had been often thrown together as members of "The Kinsmen," a little dining club of literary and artistic men of British and American nationality. Abbey and George Boughton and John Sargent represented in London the American painters of the group. Naturally in the intimate companionship which such a club affords, men understand more of the wishes and aims and ambitions of their friends. Irving had instinctive belief that the painter who thought out his work so carefully and produced effects at once so picturesque and so illuminative of character would or might care for stage work where everything has to seem real and regarding which there must be an intelligent purpose somewhere. Irving, having already produced Richard III. with the limited resources of the Bateman days, knew the difficulties of the play and the effects which he wished to produce. When afterwards Abbey painted his great picture of the funeral of Henry VI., Irving recognised a master-hand of scenic purpose. Years afterwards when he

reproduced the play he availed himself, to the best of his own ability and the possibilities of the stage, of the painter's original work. It was not possible to realise on the stage Abbey's great conception. It is possible to use in the illusion of a picture a perspective forbidden on the stage by limited space and the non-compressible actuality of human bodies.

When he came to think over Richard II., he at once began to rely on Abbey's imagination and genius for the historical aspect of the play. He approached him; and the work was undertaken.

III

Abbey has since told me of the delight he had in co-operating with Irving. Not only was he proud and glad to work with such a man in such a position which he had won for himself, but the actual working together as artists in different media to one common end was pleasure to him. Irving came to him with every detail of the play ready, so that he could get into his mind at one time both the broad dominating ideas and the necessary requirements and limitations of the scenes. The whole play was charted for him at the start. Irving could defend every position he had taken; knew the force and guidance of every passage; and had so studied the period and its history that he could add external illumination to the poet's intention.

In addition, the painter found that his own suggestions were so quickly and so heartily seized that he felt from the first that he himself and his work were from the very start prime factors in the creation of the mise en scène. In his words:

"Irving made me understand him; and he understood me! We seemed to be thoroughly at one in everything. My own idea of the centre point of the play was Richard's poignant feeling at realising that Bolingbroke's power and splendour were taking the place of his own. The speech beginning:

"'O God! O God! that ere this tongue of mine,

That laid the sentence of dread banishment....'

"This seemed to be exactly Irving's view also—only that he seemed to have thought out every jot and tittle of it right down to the 'nth.' He had been working out in his own mind the realisation of everything whilst my own ideas had been scattered, vague, and nebulous. As we grew to know the play together it all seemed so natural that a lot of my work seemed to do itself. I had only to put down in form and colour such things as were requisite. Of course there had to be much consulting of authorities, much study of a technical kind, and many evasive experiments before I reached what I wanted. But after I had talked the play over with Irving I never had to be in doubt."

To my humble mind this setting out of Abbey's experience—which is in his own words as he talked on the subject with me—is about as truthful and exhaustive an illustration of the purpose and process of artistic co-operation as we are ever likely to get.

IV

In his designs Abbey brought home to one the cachet of mediæval life. What he implied as well as what he showed told at a glance the conditions and restrictions—the dominant forces of that strenuous time: the fierceness and cruelty; the suspicion and distrust; the horrible crampedness of fortress life; the contempt of death which came with the grim uncertainties of daily life. In one of his scenes was pictured by inference the life of the ladies in such a time and place in the way which one could never forget. It was a corner in the interior of a castle, high up and out of reach of arrow or catapult; a quiet nook where the women could go in safety for a breath of fresh air. Only the sky above them was open, for danger would come from any side exposed. The most had been made of the little space available for the cultivation of a few plants. Every little "coign of vantage" made by the unequal tiers of the building was seized on for the growth of flowers. The strictness of the little

high-walled bower of peace conveyed forcibly what must have been the life of which this was the liberty. It was exceedingly picturesque; a grace to the eye as well as an interest to the mind. There was a charming effect in a great copper vase in a niche of rough stonework, wherein blossomed a handful of marigolds.

V

In this play Irving was very decided as to the "attack." He had often talked with me about the proper note to strike at the beginning of the play. To him, it should seem to be stately seriousness. In Richard's time the "Justice" of the King was no light matter; not to take it seriously was to do away with the ultimate power of the Monarch. Richard, as is afterwards shown, meant to use his kingly power unscrupulously. He feared both Bolingbroke and Norfolk, and meant to get rid of them. So meaning, he would of course shroud his unscrupulous intent in the ermine of Justice. A hypocrite who proclaims himself as such at the very start is not so dangerous as he might be, for at once he sounds the note of warning to his victims. This, pace the critics, makes the action of Bolingbroke simple enough. He saw through the weaker Richard's intent of treachery, and knew that his only chance lay in counter-treachery. A King without scruple was a dangerous opponent in the fourteenth century. It was not until Richard had violated his pledge regarding the succession and right of Lancaster—thus further intending to cripple the banished Duke—that the new Lancaster took arms as his only chance.

In Irving's reading of the character of Richard this intentional hypocrisy did not oppose his florid, almost flamboyant, self-torturing vapouring of his pain and woe. He is a creature of exaggerations of his greatness, as of his own self-surrender.

As the production of the play progressed Irving began to build greater and greater hopes on it. Already when he was taken ill at Glasgow in 1898 he had expended on the scenery alone—for the time for costumes and properties had not arrived—a sum of over sixteen hundred pounds. It was a bitter grief to him that he had to abandon

the idea of playing the part. But he still cherished the hope that his son Harry might yet play it on the lines he had so studiously prepared. To this end he wished to retain the freshness of Abbey's work, and when during his long illness, another manager, believing that he intended abandoning the production, wished to secure Abbey's co-operation, the painter refused the offer so that Irving might later use the work for his son. Abbey, though no fee or reward for all his labour had yet passed, considered the work done as in some way joint property. This generous view endeared him more than ever to Irving, who up to the day of his death regarded him as one of the best and kindest and most thoughtful of his friends.

LIII J. BERNARD PARTRIDGE

For a good many years Bernard Partridge was a persona grata at the Lyceum Theatre. He made the drawings of Irving and Ellen Terry for the souvenirs which we issued for the following plays, Macbeth, The Dead Heart, Ravenswood, Henry VIII., King Lear, Becket, and King Arthur. He has a wonderful gift of "remembering with his eyes." This was particularly useful in working any drawing of Henry Irving, whose expression altered so much when anything interested him that he became the despair of most draughtsmen. Partridge used to stand on the stage and watch him; or sit with him in his dressing-room for a chat. He would make certain notes with pen and pencil, and then go home and draw him. In the meantime Hawes Craven, the scene-painter, would make sketches in monochrome of the scenes chosen for the souvenir, putting in the figures but leaving the faces vacant. Then would come Bernard Partridge with his own fine brushes and Hawes Craven's palette and put in the likeness of the various actors. These were so admirably done that any one taking up any of the souvenirs can say who were the actors—if, of course, the individuality of the latter be known to him. He used to laugh whenever I spoke of his "putting in the noses." Of course, the single figures were his own work entirely. I think in all

the years of Irving's management Bernard Partridge was the only person outside the personnel of the Company or staff who was allowed to pass in and out of the stage door just as he wished. He used to be present at rehearsals from which all others were forbidden.

Thus he came to have an exceptional knowledge of Irving's face in pretty well all its moods and phases. For this reason, too, the coloured frontispiece of this book is of exceptional interest. It was the last work of art done from Irving's sitting before his death. Later on, he was, of course, photographed; the last sun picture done of him was of him sitting alongside John Hare, with whom he was staying at his place in Overstrand two months before he died. But Partridge's pastel was the last art study from life. On the evening of 17th July 1905, he was dining with Mr. and Mrs. Partridge in their pretty house in Church Street, Chelsea. Sir Francis and Lady Burnand were there and Anstey Guthrie, and Mr. Plowden, the magistrate. Irving enjoyed the evening much—one can see it by the happy look in his face. Partridge, in the fashion customary to him, made his "eye notes" as Irving sat back in his arm-chair with the front of his shirt bulging out after the manner usual to such a pose. Early next morning Partridge did the pastel.

To me it is of priceless worth, not only from its pictorial excellence, but because it is the last artistic record of my dear friend; and because it shows him in one of the happy moods which, alas! grew rarer with his failing health. It gives, of course, a true impression of his age—he was then in his sixty-eighth year; but all the beauty and intelligence and sweetness of his face is there.

LIV ROBERT BROWNING

It was quite a treat to hear Irving and Robert Browning talking. Their conversation, no matter how it began, usually swerved round to Shakespeare; as they were both excellent scholars of the subject the talk was on a high plane. It was not of

double-endings or rhyming lines, or of any of the points or objects of that intellectual dissection which forms the work of a certain order of scholars who seem to always want to prove to themselves that Shakespeare was Shakespeare and no one else—and that he was the same man at the end of his life that he had been at the beginning. These two men took large views. Their ideas were of the loftiness and truth of his thought; of the magic music of his verse; of the light which his work threw on human nature. Each could quote passages to support whatever view he was sustaining. And whenever those two men talked, a quiet little group grew round them; all were content to listen when they spoke.

We used to meet Browning at the houses of George Boughton, the Royal Academician, and of Arthur Lewis, the husband of Kate, the eldest sister of Ellen Terry. Both lived on Campden Hill, and the houses of both were famous for hospitality amongst a large circle of friends radiating out from the artistic classes.

Robert Browning once made Irving a present which he valued very much. This was the purse, quite void of anything in the shape of money, which was found, after his death, in the pocket of Edmund Kean. It was of knitted green silk with steel rings. Charles Kean gave it to John Foster who gave it to Browning who gave it to Irving. It was sold at Christie’s at the sale of Irving’s curios, with already an illustrious record of possessors.

Irving loved everything which had belonged to Edmund Kean, whom he always held to be the greatest of British actors. He had quite a collection of things which had been his. In addition to this purse he had a malacca cane which had come from Garrick, to Kean; the knife which Kean wore as Shylock; his sword and sandals worn by him as Lucius Brutus; a gold medal presented to him in 1827; his Richard III. sword and boots; the Circassian dagger presented to him by Lord Byron.

He had had also two Kean pictures on which he set great store. One of large size was the scene from A New Way to Pay Old Debts, in which Kean appeared as Sir Giles.

The other was the portrait done by George Clint as the study for Kean in the picture. This latter was the only picture for which Edmund Kean ever sat, and Irving valued it accordingly. He gave the large picture to the Garrick Club; but the portrait he kept for himself. It was sold at the sale of his effects at Christie's where I had the good fortune to be able to purchase it. To me it is of inestimable value, for of all his possessions Irving valued it most.

LV WALT WHITMAN

I

In the early afternoon of Thursday, 20th March, 1884, I drove with Irving to the house of Thomas Donaldson, 326 North 40th Street, Philadelphia. We went by appointment. Thomas Donaldson it was who had, at the dinner given to Irving by the Clover Club on December 6, 1883, presented him with Edwin Forrest's watch.

When we arrived Donaldson met us in the hall. Irving went into the "parlour"; Hatton, who was with us, and I talked for a minute or so with our host. When we went in Irving was looking at a fine picture by Moran of the Great Valley of the Yellowstone which hung over the fireplace. On the opposite side of the room sat an old man of leonine appearance. He was burly, with a large head and high forehead slightly bald. Great shaggy masses of grey-white hair fell over his collar. His moustache was large and thick and fell over his mouth so as to mingle with the top of the mass of the bushy flowing beard. I knew at once who it was, but just as I looked Donaldson, who had hurried on in front, said:

"Mr. Irving, I want you to know Mr. Walt Whitman." His anxiety beforehand and his jubilation in making the introduction satisfied me that the occasion of Irving's coming had been made one for the meeting with the Poet.

When he heard the name Irving strode quickly across the room with outstretched

hand. “I am delighted to meet you!” he said, and the two shook hands warmly. When my turn came and Donaldson said “Bram Stoker,” Walt Whitman leaned forward suddenly, and held out his hand eagerly as he said:

“Bram Stoker—Abraham Stoker is it?” I acquiesced and we shook hands as old friends—as indeed we were. “Thereby hangs a tale.”

II

In 1868 when William Michael Rossetti brought out his Selected Poems of Walt Whitman it raised a regular storm in British literary circles. The bitter-minded critics of the time absolutely flew at the Poet and his work as watch-dogs do at a ragged beggar. Unfortunately there were passages in the Leaves of Grass which allowed of attacks, and those who did not or could not understand the broad spirit of the group of poems took samples of detail which were at least deterrent. Doubtless they thought that it was a case for ferocious attack; as from these excerpts it would seem that the book was as offensive to morals as to taste. They did not scruple to give the ipsissima verba of the most repugnant passages.

In my own University the book was received with cynical laughter, and more than a few of the students sent over to Trübner’s for copies of the complete Leaves of Grass—that being the only place where they could then be had. Needless to say that amongst young men the objectionable passages were searched for and more noxious ones expected. For days we all talked of Walt Whitman and the new poetry with scorn—especially those of us who had not seen the book. One day I met a man in the Quad who had a copy, and I asked him to let me look at it. He acquiesced readily:

“Take the damned thing,” he said; “I’ve had enough of it!”

I took the book with me into the Park and in the shade of an elm-tree began to read it. Very shortly my own opinion began to form; it was diametrically opposed to that

which I had been hearing. From that hour I became a lover of Walt Whitman. There were a few of us who, quite independently of each other, took the same view. We had quite a fight over it with our companions who used to assail us with shafts of their humour on all occasions. Somehow, we learned, I think, a good deal in having perpetually to argue without being able to deny—in so far as quotation went at all events—the premises of our opponents.

However, we were ourselves satisfied, and that was much. Young men are, as a rule, very tenacious of such established ideas as they have—perhaps it is a fortunate thing, for them and others; and we did not expect to convince our friends all at once. Fortunately also the feeling of intellectual superiority which comes with the honest acceptance of an idea which others have refused is an anodyne to the pain of ridicule. We Walt-Whitmanites had in the main more satisfaction than our opponents. Edward Dowden was one of the few who in those days took the large and liberal view of the Leaves of Grass, and as he was Professor of English Literature at the University his opinion carried great weight in such a matter. He brought the poems before the more cultured of the students by a paper at the Philosophical Society on May 4, 1871, on "Walt Whitman and the Poetry of Democracy." To me was given the honour of opening the debate on the paper.

For seven years the struggle in our circle went on. Little by little we got recruits amongst the abler young men till at last a little cult was established. But the attack still went on. I well remember a militant evening at the "Fortnightly Club"—a club of Dublin men, meeting occasionally for free discussions. Occasionally there were meetings for both sexes. This particular evening—February 14, 1876—was, perhaps fortunately, not a "Ladies' Night." The paper was on "Walt Whitman" and was by a man of some standing socially; a man who had had a fair University record and was then a county gentleman of position in his own county. He was exceedingly able; a good scholar, well versed in both classic and English literature, and a brilliant humorist. His paper at the "Fortnightly" was a violent, incisive attack on Walt

Whitman; had we not been accustomed to such for years it would have seemed outrageous. I am bound to say it was very clever; by confining himself almost entirely to the group of poems, “Children of Adam,” he made out, in one way, a strong case. But he went too far. In challenging the existence in the whole collection of poems for mention of one decent woman—which is in itself ridiculous, for Walt Whitman honoured women—he drew an impassioned speech from Edward Dowden, who finished by reading a few verses from the poem “Faces.” It was the last section of the poem, that which describes a noble figure of an old Quaker mother. It ends:

“The melodious character of the earth,

The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go,

and does not wish to go,

The justified mother of men.”

I followed Dowden in the speaking and we carried the question. I find a note in my diary, which if egotistical has at least that merit of sincerity which is to be found now and again in a man’s diary—when he is young:

“Spoke—I think well.”

III

That night before I went to bed—three o’clock—I wrote a long letter to Walt Whitman. I had written to him before, but never so freely; my letters were only of the usual pattern and did not call for answer. But this letter was one in which I poured out my heart. I had long wished to do so but was, somehow, ashamed or diffident—the qualities are much alike. That night I spoke out; the stress of the evening had given me courage.

Mails were fewer and slower thirty years ago than they are to-day. My letter was written in the early morning of February 15. Walt Whitman wrote in answer on March 6, and I received it exactly two weeks later; so that he must have written very

soon after receipt of my letter. Here is his reply:

"431 Stevens St.

Cor. West.

Camden, N. Jersey,

U.S. America,

March 6, '76.

"Bram Stoker,—My dear young man,—Your letters have been most welcome to me—welcome to me as a Person and then as Author—I don't know which most. You did well to write to me so unconventionally, so fresh, so manly, and so affectionately too. I, too, hope (though it is not probable) that we shall one day personally meet each other. Meantime I send you my friendship and thanks.

"Edward Dowden's letter containing among others your subscription for a copy of my new edition has just been rec'd. I shall send the book very soon by express in a package to his address. I have just written to E. D.

"My physique is entirely shatter'd—doubtless permanently—from paralysis and other ailments. But I am up and dress'd, and get out every day a little, live here quite lonesome, but hearty, and good spirits.—Write to me again.

"Walt Whitman."

In 1871 a correspondence had begun between Walt Whitman and Tennyson which lasted for some years. In the first of Tennyson's letters, July 12, 1871, he had said:

"I trust that if you visit England, you will grant me the pleasure of receiving and entertaining you under my own roof."

This kind invitation took root in Walt Whitman's mind and blossomed into intention. He was arranging to come to England, and Edward Dowden asked him to prolong his stay and come to Ireland also. This was provisionally arranged with him. When he should have paid his visit to Tennyson he was to come on to Dublin, where

his visit was to have been shared between Dowden and myself. Dowden was a married man with a house of his own. I was a bachelor, living in the top rooms of a house, which I had furnished myself. We knew that Walt Whitman lived a peculiarly isolated life, and the opportunity which either one or other of us could afford him would fairly suit his taste. He could then repeat his visit to either, and prolong it as he wished. We had also made provisional arrangements for his giving a lecture whilst in Dublin; and as the friends whom we asked were eager to take tickets, he would be assured of a sum of at least a hundred pounds sterling—a large sum to him in those days.

But alas!

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men

Gang aft agley."

At the very beginning of 1873 Walt Whitman was struck down by a stroke of paralysis which left him a wreck for the rest of his days. He could at best move but a very little; the joys of travel and visiting distant friends were not to be for him.

IV

At the meeting in 1884 he and Irving became friends at once. He knew some at least of Walt Whitman's work, for we often spoke of it; I myself gave him a two-volume edition. Walt Whitman was sitting on a sofa and Irving drew up a chair, a large rocker, beside him. They talked together for a good while and seemed to take to each other mightily. Irving doubtless struck by his height, his poetic appearance, his voice, and breadth of manner, said presently:

"You know you are like Tennyson in several ways. You quite remind me of him!" Then knowing that many people like their identity to be unique and not comparable with any one else, however great, he added:

"You don't mind that, do you?" The answer came quickly:

"Mind it! I like it!—I am very proud to be told so! I like to be tickled!" He actually beamed and chuckled with delight at the praise. He always had a lofty idea of Tennyson and respect as well as love for him and his work; and he was hugely pleased at the comparison. He stood up so that Irving might gauge his height comparatively with Tennyson's.

Donaldson in his book on Walt Whitman, published after the Poet's death, wrote of the interview:

"Mr. Whitman was greatly pleased with Mr. Irving, and remarked to me how little of the actor there was in his manner or talk. Frequently, after this, Mr. Whitman expressed to me his admiration for Mr. Irving, now Sir Henry Irving, for his gentle and unaffected manners and his evident intellectual power and heart."

Be it remembered that Walt Whitman was fond of the theatre and went to it a good deal before he was incapacitated by his paralysis; but he did not like the vulgarity of certain actors in their posing off the stage. When he met the great actor, with whose praise the whole country was then ringing, and found that he was gentle and restrained and unassuming in manner the whole craft rose in his estimation.

When it came to my own turn to have a chat with Walt Whitman I found him all that I had ever dreamed of, or wished for in him: large-minded, broad-viewed, tolerant to the last degree; incarnate sympathy; understanding with an insight that seemed more than human. Small wonder, I thought, that in that terrible war of '61–5 this man made a place for himself in the world of aid to the suffering, which was unique. No wonder that men opened their hearts to him—told him their secrets, their woes and hopes and griefs and loves! A man amongst men! With a herculean physical strength and stamina; with courage and hope and belief that never seemed to tire or stale he moved amongst those legions of the wounded and sick like a very angel of comfort materialised to an understanding man.

To me he was an old friend, and on his part he made me feel that I was one. We

spoke of Dublin and those friends there who had manifested themselves to him. He remembered all their names and asked me many questions as to their various personalities. Before we parted he asked me to come to see him at his home in Camden whenever I could manage it. Need I say that I promised.

V

It was not till after two years that I had opportunity to pay my visit to Walt Whitman. The cares and responsibilities of a theatre are always exacting, and the demands on the time of any one concerned in management are so endless that the few hours of leisure necessary for such a visit are rare.

At last came a time when I could see my way. On 23rd October 1886 I left London for New York, arriving on 31st. I had come over to make out a tour for Faust to commence next year. On 2nd November I went to Philadelphia by an early train. There after I had done my work at the theatre I met Donaldson, and as I had time to spare we went over to Camden to pay the visit to which I had looked forward so long.

His house, 328 Mickle Street, was a small ordinary one in a row, built of the usual fine red brick which marks Philadelphia and gives it an appearance so peculiarly Dutch. It was a small house, though large enough for his needs. He sat in the front room in a big rocking-chair which Donaldson's children had given him; it had been specially made for him, as he was a man of over six feet high and very thick-set. He was dressed all in grey, the trousers cut straight and wide, and the coat loose. All the cloth was a sort of thick smooth frieze. His shirt was of rather coarse cotton, unstarched, with a very wide full collar open low—very low in the neck and fastened with a big white stud. The old lady who cared for him and nursed him had for him a manifest admiration. She evidently liked to add on her own account some little adornment; she had fastened a bit of cheap narrow lace on his wide soft shirt cuffs and at the neck of his collar. It was clumsily sewn on and was pathetic to see,

for it marked a limited but devoted intelligence used for his care. The cuffs of his coat were unusually deep and wide and were stuck here and there with pins which he used for his work. His hair seemed longer and wilder and shaggier and whiter than when I had seen him two years before. He seemed feebler, and when he rose from his chair or moved about the room did so with difficulty. I could notice his eyes better now. They were not so quick and searching as before; tireder-looking, I thought, with the blue paler and the grey less warm in colour. Altogether the whole man looked more worn out. There was not, however, any symptom of wear or tire in his intellectual or psychic faculties.

He seemed genuinely glad to see me. He was most hearty in his manner and interested about everything. He asked much about London and its people, specially those of the literary world; and spoke of Irving in a way that delighted me. Our conversation presently drifted towards Abraham Lincoln for whom he had an almost idolatrous affection. I confess that in this I shared; and it was another bond of union between us. He said:

“No one will ever know the real Abraham Lincoln or his place in history!”

I had of course read his wonderful description of the assassination by Wilkes Booth given in his Memoranda during the War, published in the volume called Two Rivulets in the Centennial Edition of his works in 1876. This is so startlingly vivid that I thought that the man who had written it could tell me more. So I asked him if he were present at the time. He said:

“No, I was not present at the time of the assassination; but I was close to the theatre and was one of the first in when the news came. Then I afterwards spent the better part of the night interviewing many of those who were present and of the President’s Guard, who, when the terrible word came out that he had been murdered, stormed the house with fixed bayonets. It was a wonder that there was not a holocaust, for it was a wild frenzy of grief and rage. It might have been that the old sagas had been

enacted again when amongst the Vikings a Chief went to the Valhalla with a legion of spirits around him!”

The memory of that room will never leave me. The small, close room—it was cold that day and when we came in he had lit his stove, which soon grew almost red-hot; the poor furniture; the dim light of the winter afternoon struggling in through the not-over-large window shadowed as it was by the bare plane-tree on the sidewalk, whose branches creaked in the harsh wind; the floor strewn in places knee-deep with piles of newspapers and books and all the odds and ends of a literary working room. Amongst them were quite a number of old hats—of the soft grey wide-brimmed felt which he always wore.

Donaldson and I had arrived at Mickle Street about three, and at four we left. I think Walt Whitman was really sorry to have us go. Thomas Donaldson describes the visit in his book Walt Whitman as I knew him.

VI

The opportunity for my next visit to Walt Whitman came in the winter of 1887 when we were playing in Philadelphia. On the 22nd December Donaldson and I again found our way over to Mickle Street. In the meantime I had had much conversation about Walt Whitman with many of his friends. The week after my last interview I had been again in Philadelphia for a day, on the evening of which I had dined with his friend and mine, Talcott Williams of the Press. During the evening we talked much of Walt Whitman, and we agreed that it was a great pity that he did not cut certain lines and passages out of the poems. Talcott Williams said he would do it if permitted, and I said I would speak to Walt Whitman about it whenever we should meet again. The following year, 1887, I breakfasted with Talcott Williams, 19th December, and in much intimate conversation we spoke of the subject again.

We found Walt Whitman hale and well. His hair was more snowy white than ever and more picturesque. He looked like King Lear in Ford Madox Brown’s picture. He

seemed very glad to see me and greeted me quite affectionately. He said he was "in good heart," and looked bright though his body had distinctly grown feebler.

I ventured to speak to him what was in my mind as to certain excisions in his work. I said:

"If you will only allow your friends to do this—they will only want to cut about a hundred lines in all—your books will go into every house in America. Is not that worth the sacrifice?" He answered at once, as though his mind had long ago been made up and he did not want any special thinking:

"It would not be any sacrifice. So far as I am concerned they might cut a thousand. It is not that—it is quite another matter:"—here both face and voice grew rather solemn—"when I wrote as I did I thought I was doing right and right makes for good. I think so still. I think that all that God made is for good—that the work of His hands is clean in all ways if used as He intended! If I was wrong I have done harm. And for that I deserve to be punished by being forgotten! It has been and cannot not be. No, I shall never cut a line so long as I live!"

One had to respect a decision so made and on such grounds. I said no more.

When we were going he held up his hand saying, "Wait a minute." He got up laboriously and hobbled out of the room and to his bedroom overhead. There we heard him moving about and shifting things. It was nearly a quarter of an hour when he came down holding in his hand a thin green-covered volume and a printed picture of himself. He wrote on the picture with his indelible blue pencil. Then he handed to me both book and picture, saying:

"Take these and keep them from me and Good-bye!"

The book was the 1872 edition of the Leaves of Grass—"As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free"—and contained his autograph in ink. The portrait was a photograph by Gutekunst, of Philadelphia. On it he had written:

To

Bram Stoker.

Walt Whitman. Dec. 22, ’87.

That was the last time I ever saw the man who for nearly twenty years had held my heart as a dear friend.

VII

When I had come to New York after my visit to Walt Whitman in 1886 I made it my business to see Augustus St. Gaudens, the sculptor, regarding a project which had occurred to me. That was to have him do a bust of Walt Whitman. He jumped at the idea, and said it would be a delight to him—that there ought to be such a record of the great Poet and that he would be proud to do it. I arranged that I should ask if he could have the necessary facilities from Walt Whitman. We thought that I could do it best as I knew him and those of his friends who were closest to him. I made inquiries at once through Donaldson, and when business took me again to Philadelphia, on 8th and 9th November, we arranged the matter. Walt Whitman acquiesced and was very pleased at the idea. I wrote the necessary letters and left addresses and so forth with St. Gaudens. He was at that time very busy with his great statue of Abraham Lincoln for Chicago. Incidentally I saw in his studio the life mask and hands of Lincoln made by the sculptor Volk before he went to Washington for his first Presidency. The mould had just been found by the sculptor’s son twenty-five years after their making. Twenty men joined to purchase the models and present them to the nation. St. Gaudens made casts in bronze of the face and hands with a set for each of the twenty subscribers with his name in each case cast in the bronze. Henry Irving and I had the honour of being two of the twenty. The bronze mask and hands, together with the original plaster moulds, rest in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington with a bronze plate recording the history and the names of the donors. I felt proud when, some years later, I saw by chance my own name in such a place, in such company, and for such a cause.

Unhappily, for want of time—for he was overwhelmed with work—and other causes, St. Gaudens could not get to Philadelphia for a long time. Then Walt Whitman got another stroke of paralysis early in 1888. Before the combination of possibilities came when he could sit to the sculptor and the latter could give the time to the work he died.

VIII

I was not in America between the spring of 1888 and the early fall of 1893 at which time Irving opened the tour in San Francisco. We did not reach Philadelphia till towards the end of January 1894. In the meantime Walt Whitman had died, March 26, 1892. On 4th February I spent the afternoon with Donaldson in his home. Shortly after I came in he went away for a minute and came back with a large envelope which he handed to me:

“That is for you from Walt Whitman. I have been keeping it till I should see you.”

The envelope contained in a rough card folio pasted down on thick paper the original notes from which he delivered his lecture on Abraham Lincoln at the Chestnut Street Opera House on April 15, 1886.

“With it was a letter to Donaldson, in which he said:

“Enclosed I send a full report of my Lincoln Lecture for our friend Bram Stoker.”

This was my Message from the Dead.

LVI JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Irving, like all who have ever known him, loved the “Hoosier” poet. We saw a great deal of him when he was in London; and whenever we were in Indianapolis, to meet him was one of the expected pleasures. Riley is one of the most dramatic reciters that live, and when he gives one of his own poems it is an intellectual delight. I remember two specially delightful occasions in which he was a participant. Once in

Indianapolis when he came and supped on the car with us whilst we were waiting after the play for the luggage to be loaded. He was in great form, and Irving sat all the time with an expectant smile whilst Riley told us of some of his experiences amongst the hill folk of Indiana where conditions of life are almost primitive. One tale gave Irving intense pleasure—that in which he told of how he had asked a mountaineer who was going down to the nearest town to bring him back some tobacco. This the man had done gladly; but when Riley went to pay him the cost of it he drew his gun on him. When the other asked the cause of offence, which he did not intend or even understand, the mountaineer answered:

"Didn't I do what ye asked me! Then why do you go for to insult me. I ain't a tobacker dealer. I bought it for ye, an' I give it to ye free and glad. I ain't sellin' it!"

The other occasion was a dinner at the Savoy Hotel, July 29, 1891, to which Irving had asked some friends to meet him. "Jamesy"—for so his friends call him—recited several of his poems, most exquisitely. His rendering of the powerful little poem, "Good-bye, Jim," made every one of the other eight men at the table weep.

LVII ERNEST RENAN

On April 3, 1880, when we were playing The Merchant of Venice, Ernest Renan came to the Lyceum; the Rev. H. R. Haweis was with him. At the end of the third act they both came round to Irving's dressing-room. It was interesting to note the progress through the long Royal passage of that strangely assorted pair. Haweis was diminutive, and had an extraordinary head of black hair. Renan was ponderously fat and bald as a billiard ball. The historian waddled along with an odd rolling gait, whilst the preacher, who was lame, hopped along like a sort of jackdaw. The conversation between Irving and Renan was a strange one to listen to. Neither knew the other's language; but each kept talking his own with, strange to say, the result that they really understood something of what was said. When I was alone with

Irving and remarked on it he said:

“If you don’t know the other person’s language, keep on speaking your own. Do not get hurried or flustered, but keep as natural as you can; your intonation, being natural, will convey something. You have a far better chance of being understood than if you try to talk a language you don’t know!”

LVIII HALL CAINE

I

The early relations between Irving and Hall Caine are especially interesting, considering the positions which both men afterwards attained. They began in 1874. On the 16th of October in that year Irving wrote to him a very kindly and friendly letter in answer to Hall Caine’s request that he should allow his portrait to be inserted in a monthly magazine which he was projecting.

A fortnight later Hall Caine, as critic of the Liverpool Town Crier, attended the first night of Hamlet at the Lyceum—31st October, 1874. His criticism was by many friends thought so excellent that he was asked to reprint it. This was done in the shape of a broad-sheet pamphlet. The critique is throughout keen and appreciative. The last two paragraphs are worthy of preservation:

“To conclude. Throughout this work (which is not confined to the language of terror and pity, the language of impassioned intellect, but includes also the words of everyday life), every passage has its proper pulse and receives from the actor its characteristic mode of expression. Every speech is good and weighty, correct and dignified, and treated with feeling. The variety, strength and splendour of the whole conception have left impressions which neither time nor circumstance can ever efface. They are happy, indeed, who hear Hamlet first from Mr. Irving. They may see other actors essay the part (a very improbable circumstance whilst Mr. Irving

holds his claim to it), but the memory of the noble embodiment of the character will never leave them.

"We will not say that Mr. Irving is the Betterton, Garrick, or Kemble of his age. In consideration of this performance we claim for him a position altogether distinct and unborrowed. Mr. Irving will, we judge, be the leader of a school of actors now eagerly enlisting themselves under his name. The object will be—the triumph of mental over physical histrionic art."

This critical forecast is very remarkable considering the writer's age. At that time he was only in his twenty-second year. He had already been writing and lecturing for some time and making a little place for himself locally as a man of letters.

Two years later they had a meeting by Irving's request. This was during a visit to Liverpool whilst the actor was on tour. There began a close friendship which lasted till Irving's death. Caine seemed to intuitively understand not only Irving's work but his aim and method. Irving felt this and had a high opinion of Caine's powers. I do not know any one whose opinions interested him more. There was to both men a natural expression of intellectual frankness, as if they held the purpose as well as the facts of ideas in common. The two men were very much alike in certain intellectual ways. To both was given an almost abnormal faculty of self-abstraction and of concentrating all their powers on a given subject for any length of time. To both was illimitable patience in the doing of their work. And in yet one other way their powers were similar: a faculty of getting up and ultimately applying to the work in hand an amazing amount of information. When Irving undertook a character he set himself to work to inform himself of the facts appertaining to it; when the time for acting it came, it was found that he knew pretty well all that could be known about. Hall Caine was also a "glutton" in the same way. He absorbed facts and ideas almost by an instinct and assimilated them with natural ease. For instance, when he went to Morocco to get local colour before writing The Scapegoat he so steeped himself in

the knowledge of Jewish life and ideas and ritual that those who read his book almost accepted him as an authority on the subject.

II

When Hall Caine published The Deemster in 1887 Irving was one of its most appreciative admirers. We were then on tour in America and he naturally got hold of the book a little later than its great and sudden English success. Still he read it unprejudiced by its success and thought it would make a fine play. When we got back to England early in April 1888, he took his earliest opportunity of approaching the author; but only to find that he had already entered into an arrangement with Wilson Barrett with regard to dramatisation of the novel.

Irving's view of this was different to that of both Caine and Barrett. To him the dramatic centre and pivotal point of the play that would be most effective was the Bishop. Had the novel been available he would—Caine being willing to dramatise it or to allow it to be dramatised by some one else—have played it on those lines.

I think it was a great pity that this could not be, for Irving and Hall Caine would have made a wonderful team. The latter was compact of imagination and—then undeveloped—dramatic force. With Irving to learn from, in the way of acting needs and development, he would surely have done some dramatic work of wonderful introspection and intensity.—As he will do yet; though his road has been a rough one.

From that time on, Irving had a strong desire that Caine should write some play that he could act. Time after time he suggested subjects; theories that he could deal with; characters good to act. But there seemed to be always some impasse set by Fate. For instance, Irving had had for a long time a desire to act the part of Mahomet, and after the publication in France of the play on the subject by De Bornier it seemed to be feasible. Herein too came the memory of the promptings and urging of Sir Richard Burton of some three years before as to the production of an Eastern play.

De Bornier's play he found would not suit his purpose; so he suggested to Hall Caine that he should write one on the subject. Caine jumped at the idea—he too had a desire to deal with an Eastern theme. He thought the matter out, and had before long evolved a scenario. Well do I remember the time he put it before me. At that time he was staying with me, and on the afternoon of Sunday, January 26, 1890, he said he would like to give his idea of the play. He had already had a somewhat trying morning, for he had made an appointment with an interviewer and had had a long meeting with him. Work, however, was—is—always a stimulant to Hall Caine. The use of his brain seems to urge and stimulate it "as if increase of appetite had grown by what it fed on." Now in the dim twilight of the late January afternoon, sitting in front of a good fire of blazing billets of old ship timber, the oak so impregnated with salt and saltpetre that the flames leaped in rainbow colours, he told the story as he saw it. Hall Caine always knows his work so well and has such a fine memory that he never needs to look at a note. That evening he was all on fire. His image rises now before me. He sits on a low chair in front of the fire; his face is pale, something waxen-looking in the changing blues of the flame. His red hair, fine and long, and pushed back from his high forehead, is so thin that through it as the flames leap we can see the white line of the head so like to Shakespeare's. He is himself all aflame. His hands have a natural eloquence—something like Irving's; they foretell and emphasise the coming thoughts. His large eyes shine like jewels as the firelight flashes. Only my wife and I are present, sitting like Darby and Joan at either side of the fireplace. As he goes on he gets more and more afire till at last he is like a living flame. We sit quite still; we fear to interrupt him. The end of his story leaves us fired and exalted too....

He was quite done up; the man exhausts himself in narrative as I have never seen with any one else. Indeed when he had finished a novel he used to seem as exhausted as a woman after childbirth. At such times he would be in a terrible state of nerves—trembling and sleepless. At that very time he had not quite got through

the nervous crisis after the completion of The Bondman. At such times everything seemed to worry him; things that he would shortly after laugh at. This is part of the penalty that genius pays to great effort.

III

The next day, January 27, 1890, in the office at the Lyceum, Caine told—not read—to Irving the story of his play on Mahomet. Irving was very pleased with it, and it was of course understood that Caine was to go on and carry out the idea. He set to work on it with his usual fiery energy, and in a few months had evolved a scenario so complete that it was a volume in itself. By this time it was becoming known that Irving had in mind the playing of Mahomet. The very fact of approaching De Bornier regarding his play had somehow leaked out. As often happens in matters theatrical there came a bolt from the blue. None of us had the slightest idea that there could be any objection in a professedly Christian nation to a play on the subject. A letter was received from the Lord Chamberlain's department, which controls the licences of theatres and plays, asking that such a play should not be undertaken. The reason given was that protest had been made by a large number of our Mahometan fellow subjects. The Mahometan faith holds it sacrilege to represent in any form the image of the Prophet. The Lord Chamberlain's department does its spiriting very gently; all that those in contact with it are made aware of is the velvet glove. But the steel hand works all the same—perhaps better than if stark. It is an understood thing that the Lord Chamberlain's request is a command in matters under his jurisdiction. Britain with her seventy millions of Mahometan subjects does not wish—and cannot afford—to offend their sensibilities for the sake of a stage play. Irving submitted gracefully at once, of course. Caine was more than nice on the matter; he refused to accept fee or reward of any kind for his work. He simply preserved his work by privately printing, three years later, the scenario as a story in dramatic form. He altered it sufficiently to change the personnel of the time

and place of Mahomet, laying the story of The Mahdi in modern Morocco.

This was not Irving's first experience of the action on a political basis of the Lord Chamberlain. I shall have something to say of it when treating of Frank Marshall's play, Robert Emmett.

IV

During Caine's visit to me in Edinburgh in 1891 he and Irving saw much of one another. On the 18th we took supper with Dr. Andrew Wilson, an old friend of us all, at the Northern Club. That night both Irving and Caine were in great form and the conversation was decidedly interesting. It began with a sort of discussion about Shakespeare as a dramatist—on the working side; his practical execution of his own imaginative intention. Hall Caine held that Shakespeare would not have put in his plays certain descriptions if he had had modern stage advantages to explain without his telling. Irving said that it would be good for moderns if they would but take Shakespeare's lesson in this matter. Later on the conversation tended towards weird subjects. Caine told of seeing in a mirror a reflection not his own. Irving followed by telling us of his noticing an accidental effect in a mirror, which he afterwards used in the Macbeth ghost: that of holding the head up. The evening was altogether a fascinating one; it was four o'clock when we broke up.

V

On November 19, 1892, Hall Caine supped with Irving in the Beefsteak Room, bringing his young son Ralph with him. The only other guest was Sir (then Mr.) Alexander Mackenzie. It was a delightful evening, a long, pleasant, home-like chat. Irving was very quiet and listened attentively to all Caine said. The latter told us the story of the novel he had just then projected. The scene was to be laid in Cracow to which he was shortly to make his way.

Irving was hugely interested. Any form of oppression was noxious to him; and

certainly the Jewish "Exodus" that was just then going on came under that heading. I think that he had in his mind the possibilities of a new and powerful play. As I said, he was most anxious to have a play by Hall Caine, and after the abortive attempt at Mahomet, he was more set on it than ever.

He had before this suggested to Caine that he should do a play on the subject of the "Flying Dutchman." The play which he had done in 1878, Vanderdecken, was no good as a play, though he played in it admirably. For my own part I believed in the subject and always wanted him to try it again—the play, of course, being tinkered into something like good shape, or a new play altogether written. The character, as Irving created it, was there fit for any setting; and so long as the play should be fairly sufficient the result ought to be good. Irving had a great opinion of Caine's imagination, and always said that he would write a great work of weirdness some day. He knew already his ability and his fire and his zeal. He believed also in the convincing force of the man.

VI

In 1894 Hall Caine wrote a poem called The Demon Lover, in which he found material for a play. He made a scenario, which he told rather than read to Irving after supper in the Beefsteak Room on St. Valentine's day of the next year, 1895. Irving was much impressed by it but thought that the part would of necessity be too young for him—he was then fifty-six. He asked Caine again to try the "Flying Dutchman."

In the June of next year 1896 we were in Manchester in the course of a tour. Hall Caine came over from the Isle of Man to stay with me, bringing with him the scenario of a play on the "Flying Dutchman" and also the scenario of a new play which he had just completed, Home, Sweet Home. He read, or rather told, me the latter with the MS. open before him. He never, however, turned the pages. The next forenoon we went by previous arrangement to Irving's rooms at the Queen's Hotel. There he read—or told from his script—the scenario of his play on the "Flying

Dutchman." We discussed it then, and afterwards during a carriage drive. Irving asked Caine if he could not make the character of Vanderdecken more sympathetic and less brutal at the start. Caine having promised to go into this and see what he could do, then told the story of Home, Sweet Home. Irving feared from the description that the play would not do for him. In Act I. the character was too young; in Act II. too rough; and in Act III. too tall. For his objection in the last case he gave a reason, enlightening in the matter of stagecraft:

"There is no general sympathy on the stage for tall old men!"

Finally Caine told us the story of his coming novel, which was afterwards called The Christian. He knew it in his own mind by the tentative title which he used, "Glory and John Storm."

VII

In the afternoon we all went to the Bellevue Gardens to see a wonderful chimpanzee, "Jock," a powerful animal and more clever even than "Sally," who was then the great public pet at the "Zoo" in Regent's Park. Ellen Terry came with us and also Comyns Carr, who had arrived from London. Jock was certainly an abnormal brute. He rode about the grounds on a tricycle of his own! He ate his food from a plate with knife and fork and spoon! He slept in a bed with sheets and blankets! He smoked cigarettes! And he drank wine—when he could get it! His favourite tipple was port wine and lemonade, and he was very conservative in his rights regarding it. Indeed in this case it was very nearly productive of a grim tragedy.

We went into a little room close to the keeper's house; a sort of general refreshment room with wooden benches round it and a table in the centre. Jock had his cigarette; then his grog was mixed to his great and anxious interest. The keeper handed him the tumbler, which he held tight in both paws whilst he went through some hanky-panky pantomime of thanks—usually, I took it, productive of pennies. Irving

said to the keeper:

"Would he give you some of that, now?" The man shook his head as he answered:

"He doesn't like to, but he will if I ask him. I have to be careful though." He asked Jock, who very unwillingly let him take the tumbler, following it with his paws. The arms stretched out as it went farther from him; but the paws always remained close to the glass. The man just put the edge of the glass to his mouth and then handed it back quickly. The monkey had acted with considerable self-restraint, and looked immensely relieved when he had his drink safe back again. Then Irving said:

"Let me see if he will let me have some!" The keeper spoke to the monkey, keeping his eye fixedly on him. Irving took the glass from his manifestly unwilling paws and raised it to his own lips. Being a better actor than the keeper he did his part more realistically, actually letting the liquid rise over his shut lips.

The instant the monkey saw his beloved liquor touch the mouth he became a savage—a veritable, red-eyed, restrainless demon. With a sudden hideous screech he dashed out his arms, one paw catching Irving by the throat, the other seizing the glass. It made us all gasp and grow pale. The brute was so strong and so savage that it might have torn his windpipe before a hand could have been raised. Fortunately Irving did instinctively the only thing that could be done; he yelled suddenly in the face of the monkey—an appalling yell which seemed to push the brute back. At the same moment he thrust away from him the glass in the animal's other paw. The monkey, loosing his hold on his throat, jumped back across the wide table with incredible quickness without losing its seated attitude, and sat clutching the tumbler close to his breast and showing his teeth whilst he manifested his rage in a hideous trumpeting.

Before that, at our first coming into the room he had nearly frightened the life out of Ellen Terry. She had sat down on the bench along the wall. The monkey looked at her and seemed attracted by her golden hair. He came and sat by her on the bench

and, turning over, laid his head in her lap, looking up at her and at the same time putting up his paw as big as a man's hand and as black and shiny as though covered with an undertaker's funeral glove. She looked down, saw his eyes, and with a scream made a jump for the doorway. The monkey laughed. He had a sense of humour—of his own kind, which was not of a high kind.

A little later he regained his good temper and forgave us all. When we went round the gardens he got on his tricycle and came with us. In the monkey house was a great cage as large as an ordinary room, and here were a large number of monkeys of a mixed kind. Our gorilla—for such he really was—started to amuse himself with them. He got a great stick and standing close to the cage hammered furiously at the bars, all the while trumpeting horribly. In the midst of it he would look at us with a grin, as much as to say:

"See how I am frightening these inferior creatures!" They were in an agony of fear, crouching in the farthest corners of the great cage, moaning and shivering.

VIII

Irving had had an incident with a monkey some years before. On June 16, 1887, we went to Stratford-on-Avon, where he was to open a fountain the next day. We stayed with Mr. C. E. Flower, at Avonbank, his beautiful place on the river. In his conservatory was a somewhat untamed monkey; not a very large one, but with anger enough for a wilderness of monkeys. Frank Marshall, who was of our party, would irritate the monkey when we went to smoke in there after dinner. It got so angry with his puffing his smoke at it that it shook the cage to such an extent that we thought it would topple over. We persuaded Marshall to come away, and then Irving, who loved animals, went over to pacify the monkey.

The latter, however, did not discriminate between malice and good intent, and when Irving bent down to say soothing things to it a long arm flashed out and catching him by the hair began to drag his head towards the cage, the other paw coming out

towards his eyes. It was an anxious moment; but this time, as on the later occasion, a sudden screech of full lung power from the actor frightened the monkey into releasing him.

IX

Irving loved all animals, and did not, I think, realise the difference between pets and feræ naturæ. I remember once at Baltimore—it was the 1st January 1900—when he and I went to Hagenbach's menagerie which was then in winter quarters. The hall was a big one, the shape of one of those great panorama buildings which used to be so popular in America. There were some very fine lions; and to one of them he took a great fancy. It was a fine African, young and in good condition with magnificent locks and whiskers and eyebrows, and whatsoever beauties on a hairy basis there are to the lion kind. It was sleeping calmly in its cage with its head up against the bars. The keeper recognised Irving and came up to talk and explain things very eagerly. Irving asked him about the lion; if it was good-tempered and so forth. The man said it was a very good-tempered animal, and offered to make him stand up and show himself off. His method of doing so was the most unceremonious thing of the kind I ever saw; it showed absolutely no consideration whatever for the lion's amour-propre or fine feelings. He caught up a broom that leaned against the cage—a birch broom with the business end not of resilient twigs but of thin branches cut off with a sharp knife. It was the sort of scrubbing broom that would take the surface off an ordinary deal flooring. This he seized and drove it with the utmost violence in his power right into the animal's face. I should have thought that no eye could have escaped from such an attack. He repeated the assault as often as there was time before the lion had risen and jumped back.

Irving was very indignant, and spoke out his mind very freely. The keeper answered him very civilly indeed I thought. His manner was genuinely respectful as he said:

"That's all very well, Mr. Irving; but it doesn't work with lions! There's only one

thing such animals respect; and that's force. Why, that treatment that you complain of will save my life some day. It wouldn't be worth a week's purchase without it!"

Irving realised the justice of his words—he was always just; and when we came away the gratuity was perhaps a little higher than usual, to compensate for any injured feelings.

LIX IRVING AND DRAMATISTS

I

Only those who are or have been concerned in theatrical management can have the least idea of the difficulty of obtaining plays suitable for acting. There are plenty of plays to be had. When any one goes into management—indeed from the time the fact of his intention is announced—plays begin to rain in on him. All those rejected consistently throughout a generation are tried afresh on the new victim, for the hope of the unacted dramatist never dies. There is just a sufficient percentage of ultimate success in the case of long-neglected plays to obviate despair. Every one who writes a play sends it on and on to manager after manager. When a player makes some abnormal success every aspirant to dramatic fame tries his hand at a play for him. It is all natural enough. The work is congenial, and the rewards—when there are rewards—are occasionally great. There is, I suppose, no form of literary work which seems so easy and is so difficult—which while seeming to only require the common knowledge of life, needs in reality great technical knowledge and skill. From the experience alone which we had in the Lyceum one might well have come to the conclusion that to write a play of some kind is an instinct of human nature. To Irving were sent plays from every phase and condition of life. Not only from writers whose work lay in other lines of effort; historians, lyric poets, divines from the curate to the bishop, but from professional men, merchants, manufacturers, traders, clerks. He has had them sent by domestic servants, and from as far down the social scale as a

workhouse boy.

But from all these multitudinous and varied sources we had very few plays indeed which afforded even a hope or promise. Irving was always anxious for good plays, and spared neither trouble nor expense to get them. Every play that was sent was read; very many commissions were given and purchase-money or advance fees paid. In such cases subjects were often suggested, scenario being the basis. In addition to the plays in which he or Ellen Terry took part and which he produced during his own management, he purchased or paid fees and options on twenty-seven plays. Not one of these, from one cause or another, could he produce. One of these made success with another man. Some never got beyond the scenario stage. In one case, though the whole purchase-money was paid in advance, the play was never delivered; it was finished—and then sold under a different title to another manager! One was prohibited—by request—by the Lord Chamberlain's department. Of this play, Robert Emmett, were some interesting memories.

II

In Ireland or by Irish people it had often been suggested to Irving that he should present Robert Emmett in a play. He bore a striking resemblance to the Irish patriot—a glance at any of the portraits would to any one familiar with Irving's identity be sufficient; and his story was full of tragic romance. From the first Irving was taken with the idea and had the character in his mind for stage use. In the first year of his management he suggested the theme to Frank A. Marshall, the dramatist; who afterwards co-operated with him in the editorship of the "Irving" Shakespeare. He was delighted with the idea, became full of it, and took the work in hand. In the shape of a scenario it was so far advanced that at the end of the second season Irving was able to announce it as one of the forthcoming plays. As we know, the extraordinary success of The Merchant of Venice postponed the work then projected for more than a year. Marshall, therefore, took his work in a more leisurely fashion,

and it was not till the autumn of 1881 that the play appeared in something like its intended shape. But by that time Romeo and Juliet was in hand and a full year elapsed before Robert Emmett could be practically considered. But when that time came the Irish question was acute. Fenianism or certain of its sequelæ became recrudescent. The government of the day considered that so marked and romantic a character as Robert Emmett, and with such political views portrayed so forcibly and so picturesquely as would be the case with Irving, might have a dangerous effect on a people seething in revolt. Accordingly a "request" came through the Lord Chamberlain's department that Mr. Irving would not proceed with the production which had been announced. Incidentally I may say that nothing was mentioned in the "request" regarding the cost incurred. Irving had already paid to Frank Marshall a sum of £450.

In the early stages of the building up of the play there was an interesting occurrence which illustrates the influence of the actor on the author, especially when the former is a good stage manager. Marshall came to supper in the room which antedated the Beefsteak Room for that purpose. The occasion was to discuss the scenario which had by then been enlarged to proportions comprehensive of detail—not merely the situations but the working of them out. Only the three of us were present. We were all familiar with the work so far as it was done; for not only used Marshall to send Irving a copy of each act and scene of the scenario as he did it, but he used very often to run in and see me and consult about it. I would then tell Irving at a convenient opportunity; and when next the author came I would go over with him Irving's comments and suggestions. This night we all felt to be a crucial one. The play had gone on well through its earlier parts; indeed it promised to be a very fine play. But at the point it had then reached it halted a little. The scene was in Dublin during a phase or wave of discontent even with the "patriotic" party as accepted in the play. Something was necessary to focus in the minds of certain of the characters the fact and cause of discontent and to emphasise it in a dramatic way. After supper

we discussed it for a long time. All at once Irving got hold of an idea. I could see it in his face; and he could see that I saw he had something. He glanced at me in a way which I knew well to be to back him up. He deftly changed the conversation and began to speak of another matter in which Marshall was interested. I knew my cue and joined in, and so we drifted away from the play. Presently Irving asked Marshall to look at a playbill which he had had framed and hung on the wall. It was one in which Macready was "starred" along with an elephant called "Rajah"—this used in later years to hang in Irving's dressing-room. Marshall stood up to look at it closely. Whilst he was doing so, with his back to us, Irving got half-a-dozen wine glasses by the stems in his right hand and hurled them at the door, making a terrific crash and a litter of falling glass. Frank Marshall, a man of the sunniest nature, was not built spiritually in a heroic mould. He gave a cry and whirled round, his face pale as ashes. He sank groaning into a chair speechless. When I had given him a mouthful of brandy he gasped out:

"What was it? I thought some one had thrown a bomb-shell in through the window!"

"That was exactly what I wanted you to think!" said Irving quietly. "That is what those in Curran's house would have felt when they recognised that the fury to which they had been listening and whose cause they did not understand was directed towards them. You are in the rare position now, my dear Marshall, of the dramatist who can write of high emotion from experience. The audience are bound to recognise the sincerity of your work. Just write your scene up to that effect. Let the audience feel even an indication of the surprise and fear that you have just felt yourself, and your play will be a success!" He said this very seriously but with a bland smile and his eyes twinkling; for through all the gravity of the issue in the shape of a good play he enjoyed the humour of the situation. Frank Marshall recovered his nerves and his buoyancy after a while, and when we broke up in the early morning he took his way home, eager to get to work afresh and full of ideas.

As Irving was for the time debarred from playing the piece, when completed he let Boucicault have it to see what he could do with it. He did not, I think, improve it. Boucicault played it himself in America, but without much success.

The following list, not by any means complete, will show something of the wide range which Irving covered in his search for suitable plays. I give it because certain writers, who do not know much of the man whom they criticise so flippantly or so superciliously, have been in the habit of saying that Irving did not encourage British dramatists. To those who were on the "inside track" their utterances often meant that he did not accept, pay for, and produce their worthless plays or those of their friends, and he did not talk about his business to chance comers. Moreover, he held that it was not good for any one to produce an inferior play. The greatest of all needs of a theatre manager is a sufficiency of plays, and it is sheer ignorant folly for any one to assert that a manager does not accept good plays out of some crass obstinacy or lack of ability on his own part.

Author. Play. W. G. Wills Rienzi „ Mephisto „ King Arthur „ Don Quixote Frank Marshall Robert Emmett Richard Voss Schuldig J. I. C. Clarke George Washington „ Don Quixote Fergus Hume The Vestal Penrhyn Stanlaws The End of the Hunting H. T. Johnson The Jester King Egerton Castle and Walter Pollock Saviolo O. Booth and J. Dixon Jekyll and Hyde (from Stevenson) J. M. Barrie The Professor's Love Story F. C. Burnand The Isle of St. Tropez „ The Count H. Guy Carleton The Balance of Comfort Ludwig Fulda The Bloody Marriage[5]

5. This was dramatised for Irving by W. L. Courtney, but the opportunity for its production had not come at the time of his last illness.

For obvious reasons I do not give what any of these authors received for play or option or advance fees; but the total was over nine thousand pounds.

Regarding one of the plays, Irving's exact reason for not playing it was that he felt it would not suit him—or rather that he would not suit it. He liked the play extremely,

and when after studying the scenario very carefully he had to come to the conclusion that it was not in his own special range of work, he obtained permission from the author to submit it to two of his friends in turn, John L. Toole and John Hare. Both these players were delighted with the work, but neither had it in his vogue. Finally another actor saw his way to it, and made with it both a hit and fortune.

The play was Barrie's The Professor's Love Story; the actor who played it E. S. Willard. This is a good instance of delayed fortune. For my own part, knowing the peculiar excellences and strength of the three players who refused it, I cannot but think that they were all right. The play is an excellent one, but wants to be exactly fitted. Irving was naturally too strong for it; Toole was a low comedian, and it is not in the vein of low comedy; Hare's incisive finesse would have militated against that unconsciousness of effect which is the "note" of the Professor.

III

In addition to the above plays on which he adventured wholly or in part Irving made efforts regarding plays by other authors, amongst whom were Mrs. Steel, K. and Hesketh Pritchard, Marion Crawford, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Henry Arthur Jones, W. L. Courtney, Miss Mary Wilkins, Robert Barr. These included the possible dramatisation of several novels.

A. W. Pinero was always regarded by Irving as a great intellectual force, and to the last he was in hopes that some day he would have the opportunity of playing in a piece by him. He often expressed his wish to Pinero; and more than once have Pinero and I talked and corresponded on the subject. Pinero, however, would not think of giving Irving a play that would not have suited him. He had for Irving a very profound regard and a deep personal affection. They were always the best of friends and Pinero was loyalty itself. I do not think that any man understood Irving's power and the excellence of his method better than he did. I fear, however, that that very affection and regard stood in the way of a play; Pinero, I think, wanted to

surpass himself on Irving's behalf.

LX MUSICIANS

I

Musicians always took a deep interest in Irving's work both as actor and manager. They seemed to understand in a peculiarly subtle way the significance of everything he did.

II BOITO

Boito came to the Lyceum on June 13, 1893, when we were playing Becket. I talked with him in his box and in the little drawing-room of the royal box. He afterwards came round on the stage to see Irving. He was wonderfully impressed with Becket. He said to me that Irving was "the greatest artist he had ever seen." Two nights later, 15th June, he came to supper in the Beefsteak Room. Irving had got some musicians and others to meet him. The following were of the party: A. C. Mackenzie, Villiers Stanford, Damrosch, Jules Claretie, Renaud, Brisson, Le Clerc, Alfred Gilbert, Toole, Hare, Sir Charles Euan Smith, Bancroft, Coquelin Cadet—an extraordinary group of names in so small a gathering.

III PADEREWSKI

Paderewski was greatly taken with Irving's playing and with the man himself. He came to supper one night in the Beefsteak Room. Irving met him several times and was an immense admirer of his work. He offered to write for Irving music for some play that he might be doing.

I remember one very peculiar incident in which Paderewski had a part. Whilst we were playing in New York, Hall Caine, who had been up in Canada trying to arrange the copyright trouble there, came to New York also. One Sunday in November 1895

he and I took a walk in the afternoon. Our destination took us down Fifth Avenue, which in those days was a great Sunday promenade. Hall Caine was soon recognised—he is, as some one said, “very like his portraits”; and as he has an enormous vogue in America certain of the crowd began to follow him at a little distance. It is of the nature of a crowd to increase, if merely because it is a crowd; and in a short time I saw, when by some chance I looked back, a whole streetful of people close behind us and the crowd momentarily swelling. We increased our pace a little, wishing to get away; but the crowd kept equal pace. Between 42nd and 40th Street we met another crowd coming up the Avenue following Paderewski who was walking with a friend. We stopped to talk, whereupon both crowds pressed in on us—it was too interesting an opportunity to be missed to see two such men, and each so remarkable in appearance, together.

It was with some difficulty, and by going into a hotel on one side and leaving it by another that we managed to escape.

IV GEORG HENSCHEL

Georg Henschel was from the very first a great admirer of Irving away back from 1879, and so he used to come to the Lyceum and sometimes stay to supper in the Beefsteak Room, or in the room we used before it. I shall never forget one night when he sang to us. There were a very few others present, all friends and all lovers of music. Two items linger in my memory unfailingly; one a lullaby of Handel and the other the “Elders’ Song” from Handel’s Susannah. We had all become great friends before he went to Boston where—I think succeeding Gerische—he took over the conductorship of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He had wished to study practically orchestral music. One forenoon—February 28, 1884—by previous arrangement Irving and I went to the Music Hall to hear his orchestra play Schumann’s Manfred. It was quite a private performance given entirely for Irving; the gentlemen of the orchestra, all fine musicians, were delighted to play for him. He

was entranced with the music and the rendering of it. When we were driving back to the Vendôme Hotel in Commonwealth Avenue where we were both staying he talked all the time about the possibilities of producing Byron's play. He had had it in his mind for a long time as a work to be undertaken; indeed the répétition which we had just heard was the outcome of his having mentioned the matter to Henschel on a previous occasion. He was nearer to making up his mind to a definite production that morning than he had ever been or ever was afterwards.

It was agreed between them that later on, if he should undertake to do Julius Cæsar, for which he had already arranged the book, Henschel was to compose the music for it.

V HANS RICHTER

Hans Richter was another great admirer of Irving. He too is a great master of his own art, and has the appreciative insight that only comes with greatness. Richter was not only a musician; he had had so much experience of stage production at Bayreuth and elsewhere that if he did not originate he at least understood all about it. I remember one day, 24th October 1900, after lunch with the Miss Gaskells in Manchester, when he talked with me about the new effect for The Flying Dutchman at the Wagner Festival on the following year. This was especially regarding lighting. They had succeeded in so arranging lights that the two ships were to approach each other, one in broad sunlight, the other bathed in moonlight.

With Hans Richter I had once the felicity of another such experience in its own way as Irving's comprehensive reading of Hamlet; truly another delightful experience of the survey of a great work at the hands of a master. It was when in the house of my friend E. W. Hennell, Hans Richter amongst a few friends sat down to the piano and gave us a résumé of Wagner's Meistersinger, singing snatches of the songs as he went on, and now and again explaining some subtle purpose in the music that he played. It was an hour of breathless delight which no money could purchase. With

my wife I attended the Wagner Cycle at Bayreuth that summer and heard the opera in all its magnificent perfection; but I never got so clear an insight to the great composer's purpose as when Richter pictured it for us.

VI THE ABBÉ FRANZ LISZT

On 14th April 1886 Abbé Liszt came to the Lyceum to see Faust and to stay to supper in the Beefsteak Room. He was then the guest of Mr. Littleton, staying at his house at Sydenham. At that time musical London made such a rush for the old man that it was absolutely necessary to guard him when he came to the theatre. All the real music lovers of the younger generation wanted to see him, for they had not had opportunity before and were not likely to have it again. He was then seventy-five years of age and had practically given up playing inasmuch as he only played to please himself or his friends. That night he was accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Littleton together with the sons and daughters-in-law of the latter, and by Stavenhagen his pupil, and Madame Muncacksy. As it was necessary to keep away all who might intrude upon him—enthusiasts, interviewers, cranks, autograph-fiends, notoriety seekers who would like to be seen in his box—we arranged a sort of fortress for him. Next to the royal box on the grand tier O.P. was another box separated only by a partition, part of which could be taken down. This box was on the outside from the proscenium. We had the door of this box screwed up so that entrance to it could only be had through the royal box. Liszt sat here with some of the others unassailable, as one of the Mr. Littletons kept the key of the other box and none could obtain entrance without permission.

There was an interesting party at supper in the Beefsteak Room, amongst them, in addition to the party at the play, the following: Ellen Terry, Professor Max Müller, Lord and Lady Wharncliffe, Sir Alexander and Lady Mackenzie, Sir Alfred Cooper, Walter Bach and Miss Bach, Sir Morell Mackenzie, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Littleton, Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Littleton, Mr. and Mrs. William Beatty Kingston, and the

Misses Casella.

Liszt sat on the right hand of Ellen Terry who faced Irving. From where I sat at the end of the table I could not but notice the quite extraordinary resemblance in the profiles of the two men. After supper Irving went round and sat next him, and the likeness became a theme of comment from all present. Irving was then forty-eight years of age; but he looked still a young man, with raven-black hair and face without a line. His neck was then without a line or mark of age. Liszt, on the other hand, looked older than his age. His stooping shoulders and long white hair made him seem of patriarchal age. Nevertheless the likeness of the two men was remarkable.

Stavenhagen played, but as it was thought by all that Liszt must be too tired after a long day no opening was made for him, much as all longed to hear him. The party did not break up till four o'clock in the morning. The note in my diary runs:

"Liszt fine face—leonine—several large pimples—prominent chin of old man—long white hair down on shoulders—all call him 'Master'—must have had great strength in youth. Very sweet and simple in manner. H. I. and he very much alike—seemed old friends as they talked animatedly though knowing but a few words of each other's language—but using much expression and gesticulation. It was most interesting."

The next day Irving and my wife and I, together with some others, lunched with the Baroness Burdett-Coutts in Stratton Street to meet Liszt. After lunch there was a considerable gathering of friends asked to meet him. Lady Burdett-Coutts very thoughtfully had the pianos removed from the drawing-rooms, lest their presence might seem as though he were expected to play. After a while he noticed the absence and said to his hostess:

"I see you have no pianos in these rooms!" She answered frankly that she had them removed so that he would not be tempted to play unless he wished to do so.

"But I would like some music!" he said, and then went on:

"I have no doubt but there is a piano in the house, and that it could be brought here easily!" It was not long before the servants brought into the great drawing-room a grand piano worthy of even his hands. Then Antoinette Sterling sang some ballads in her own delightful way. The contralto tones went straight to one's heart.

"Now I will play!" said Liszt. And he did.

It was magnificent and never to be forgotten.

VII GOUNOD

Gounod came, as far as I know, but once to the Lyceum. That was during the first week of the season—6th September, 1882–during the continuance of the run of Romeo and Juliet. He came round to Irving's dressing-room at the end of the third act and sat all the time of the wait chatting. Gounod was a man who seemed to speak fully formed thoughts. It was not in any way that there was about his speech any appearance of formality or premeditation. He seemed to speak right out of his heart; but his habit or method was such that his words had a power of exact conveyance of the thoughts. One might have stenographed every sentence he spoke, and when reproduced it would require no alteration. Form and structure and choice of words were all complete.

After chatting a while Irving was loth to let him go. When the call-boy announced the beginning of Act IV.—in which act Irving had no part—he asked Gounod to stay on with him. So also at the beginning of Act V. When he had to go on the stage for the Apothecary scene, he asked me to stay with Gounod till he came back—I had been in the dressing-room all the time. Whilst Irving was away Gounod and I chatted; several things he said have always remained with me.

He was saying something about some "great man" when he suddenly stopped and, after a slight pause, said:

"But after all there is no really 'great' man! There are men through whom great

things are spoken!”

I asked him what in his estimation were the best words to which he had composed music. He answered almost at once, without hesitation:

“‘Oh that we two were maying!’ I can never think of those words without emotion! How can one help it?” He spoke the last verse of the poem from The Saint’s Tragedy:

“Oh! that we two lay sleeping

In our nest in the churchyard sod,

With our limbs at rest on the quiet earth’s breast,

And our souls at home with God.”

As he spoke, the emotion seemed to master him more and more; at the last line the tears were running down his cheeks. He spoke with an extraordinary concentration and emphasis. It was hard to believe that he was not singing, for the effect of his speaking the words of Charles Kingsley’s song was the same. His speech seemed like—was music.

Later on I asked him who in his opinion was the best composer. “Present company, of course, excepted!” I added, whereat he smiled. After a moment’s thought he answered:

“Mendelssohn! Mendelssohn is the best!” Then after another but shorter pause: “But there is only one Mozart!”

VIII SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who was one of the oldest and closest of Irving’s friends, had much to do with him in his productions. He composed the music for Ravenswood and Coriolanus. At Irving’s burial in Westminster Abbey a part of the latter, the Marcia Funèbre, was played whilst the coffin was being borne from the choir to the grave.

In addition to these important works, Mackenzie wrote the music for Manfred, which Irving intended at one time to produce. He was also engaged on the music for Richard II., a large part of which was completed when the play was abandoned owing to Irving's serious illness in 1898.

Mackenzie in an "interview" shortly after Irving's death, told a pretty story of how the end of Ravenswood had been changed. Irving had arranged that the last scene should be the waste of quicksand, wherein Edgar was lost, seen in the cold glare of moonlight—suggestive of misery. When, however, he heard the music—of which the finale is the love motive in a triumphant burst—he seemed much struck by it. He said nothing at the time, but the next morning the composer received a letter thanking him for the hint and adding:

"And the moonlight on the sea I shall change to the rising sun."

LXI LUDWIG BARNAY

I

When in 1881 the Meiningen Company came to London to play in Drury Lane Theatre at least one German player came with them who, though for patriotic reasons he played with the Company, had not belonged to it. This was Ludwig Barnay. By a happy chance I met him very soon after his arrival and we became friends. He was then able to speak but very little English. Like all Magyars, however, he was a good linguist, and before a fortnight was over he spoke the language so well that only an occasional word or phrase spoken to or by him brought out his ignorance.

At their first meeting Irving and he became friends; they "took" to each other in a really remarkable way. Barnay had come to see the play then running, Hamlet, and between the acts came round to Irving's dressing-room. By this time he spoke

English quite well; when he lacked a word he unconsciously showed his scholarship by trying it in the Greek. Irving after a few minutes forgot that he was a foreigner and began to use his words in the argot of his own calling. For instance, talking of the difficulty of getting some actors to study their parts properly, he said:

"The worst of it is they won't take the trouble even to learn their words, and when the time comes they begin to "fluff." To "fluff" means in the language of the theatre to be uncertain, inexact, imperfect. This was too much for the poor foreigner, who up to then had understood everything perfectly. He raised his hands—palm outwards, the wrists first and then the fingers straightening—as he said in quite a piteous tone:

"Flof!—Fluoof—Fluff! Alas! I know him not!"

II

A very delightful gathering about that time—one which became remarkable in its way—was a supper given by Toole at the Adelphi Hotel on 1st July. Amongst the guests were Irving, Barnay, McCullough, Lawrence Barrett, Wilson Barrett, Leopold Teller. After supper some one—I think it was Irving—said something on the subject of State subsidy for theatres. It was an interesting theme to such a company, and, as the gathering was by its items really international, every one wanted to hear what every one else said. So the conversational torch went round the table—like the sun, or the wine. There were all sorts and varieties of opinion, for each said what was in his heart. When it came to Barnay's turn he electrified us all. He did not say much, but it was all to the point and spoken in a way which left no doubt as to his own sincerity. He finished up:

"Yes, these are all good—to some. The subsidy in France; the system of the Hof and the Stadt Theatres in Germany; the help and control in Austria which brings the chosen actors into the State service. But"—and here his eyes flashed, his nostrils quivered, and his face was lit with enthusiasm—"your English freedom is worth

them all!" Then, springing to his feet, he raised his glass and cried in a voice that rang like a trumpet:

"Freiheit!"

III

Before the production of Faust in 1885 Irving took a party, including Mr. and Mrs. Comyns Carr and Ellen Terry, to Nürnberg and Rothenburg to study the ground. On the way home they went to Berlin. There Barnay gave two special performances in his own theatre, the Berliner. The bill of the play is in its way historical; the names of the honoured guests were starred. The performances were of Julius Cæsar and The Merchant of Venice.

IV

The Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, to whose theatre the Meiningen Company belonged, sent to Irving an Order of his own Court. Later on, however, when he had seen Irving play and had met him, he said that the Order sent him was not good enough for so distinguished a man. He accordingly bestowed on him—with the consent and co-operation of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh)—the Order of the Komthur Cross of the Second Class of the Ducal Saxon Ernestine House Order—a distinction, I believe, of high local dignity, carrying with it something in the shape of knighthood. Irving wore the Collar of the Order on the night of 25th May 1897 when the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen came to supper with him in the Beefsteak Room—the only time I think when he wore the insignia of this special honour.

Irving's first meeting with the Grand Duke was preceded by an odd circumstance. This was on the evening of 28th May 1885.

I was passing across the stage between the acts when I saw a stranger—a tall, distinguished-looking old gentleman. I bowed and told him that no one was allowed

on the stage without special permission. He bowed in return, and said:

“I thought that permission would have been accorded to me!”

“The rule,” said I, “is inviolable. I fear I must ask you to come with me to the auditorium. This will put us right; and then I can take any message you wish to Mr. Irving.”

“May I tell you who I am?” he asked.

“I am sorry,” I said, “but I fear I cannot ask you till we are outside. You see, I am the person responsible for carrying out the rules of the theatre. And no matter who it may be I have to do the duty which I have undertaken.”

“You are quite right!... I shall come with pleasure!” he said with very grave and sweet politeness. When we had passed through the iron door—which had chanced to be open, and so he had found his way in—I said as nicely as I could, for his fine manner and his diction and his willingness to obey orders charmed me:

“I trust you will pardon me, sir, in case my request to leave the stage may have seemed too imperative or in any way wanting in courtesy. But duty is duty. Now will you kindly give me your name and I will go at once and ask Mr. Irving’s permission to bring you on the stage, and to see him if you will!”

“I thank you, sir!” he said; “I am the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. I am very pleased with your courtesy; and to see that you carry out orders so firmly and so urbanely. You are quite right! It is what I like to see. I wish my people would always do the same!”

LXII CONSTANT COQUELIN (AINÉ)

Irving and Coquelin first met on the night of April 19, 1888. The occasion was a supper given for the purpose by M. L. Mayer, the impresario of French artists in London, at his house in Berners Street. Previous to this there had been a certain

amount of friction between the two men. Coquelin had written an article in Harper's Magazine for May 1897 on "Acting and Actors." In his article he made certain comments on Irving which were—using the word in its etymological meaning—not impertinent, but were most decidedly wanting in delicacy of feeling towards a fellow artist.

Irving replied to the article in an "Actor's Note" in the Nineteenth Century for June of the same year. His article was rather a caustic one, and in it he did not spare the player, turned critic of his fellow players.

To the "not impertinent" comments on his own method he merely alluded in a phrase of deprecation of such comments being made by one player on another. But of the theory advanced by Coquelin, in which he supported the views of Diderot, he offered a direct negative, commenting freely himself on such old-fashioned heresies.

It is but right to mention that when, some two years later, Coquelin re-published his article, with some changes and embellishments, in the Revue Illustrée, December 1889, under the title, "L'Art du Comédien," he left out entirely the part relating to Irving.

When the two men met at Mayer's they at once became friends. The very fact of having crossed swords brought to each a measure of respect to the other. At first the conversation was distinctly on the militant side, the batteries being masked. The others who were present, including Toole, Coquelin fils, and Sir Squire (then Mr.) Bancroft, had each a word to say at times. Irving, secure in his intellectual position with regard to the theory of acting, was most hearty in his manner and used his rapier with sweet dexterity. Toole, who had his own grievance: that Coquelin, an artist of first-class position, late a Sociétaire of the Comédie-Française, should accept fee or emolument for private performances—a thing not usual to high-grade players of the British stage—limited himself to asking Coquelin in extremely bad French if it was possible that this was true. At that time Coquelin did not speak

much English, though he attained quite a proficiency in it before long.

In a very short time the supper party at Mayer's subsided into gentle and complete harmony. The actors began to understand each other, and from that moment became friends. Coquelin gave imitations of certain French actors, amongst them Frédéric Le Maître and Mounet-Sully. The performance was a strange comment on his own theory that an actor in portraying a character must in the so doing divest himself of his own identity, and quite justified Irving's remark in his "note":

"Indeed it is strange to find an actor, with an individuality so marked as that of M. Coquelin, taking it for granted that his identity can be entirely lost."

To us whilst his imitations were remarkably clever, there was no possibility of forgetting for an instant that the exponent was Coquelin. Why should we? If an actor entirely loses his own identity the larger measure of his possible charm is gone!

I find this note in my diary regarding Coquelin on that night of Mayer's supper:

"He is a fine actor; essentially a Comedian!"

LXIII SARAH BERNHARDT

When Irving and Sarah Bernhardt met there already was that predisposition towards friendship which true artists must feel towards those who work greatly in their own craft. When the Comédie-Française came to London in 1879 and played at the Gaiety Theatre, Irving went to one of the matinées and was immensely struck by Sarah Bernhardt's genius. He was taken round on the stage and introduced to the various members of the Company; but he did not have in that short season any opportunities of furthering friendships. That was a busy season for every one, both the London players and the foreigners. We were playing répertoire and changing the bill every few nights; the rehearsals were endless. So too with the strangers; they had a great list of plays to get through, and they also were rehearsing all day. When they could the various members of the French Company came to the Lyceum, where

they were always made welcome. Indeed, all through his management Irving made it an imperative rule that his fellow artists should when possible be made welcome at his theatre. Little people as well as great people, all were welcome. In those early days the same rule of hospitality did not hold with the Comédie-Française; actors had to go like any one else—on a "specie basis." Even Irving who had thrown his own theatre open to his French fellow artists had to pay for his own box at the Gaiety. When, however, Jules Claretie became Director of the Théâtre Français he changed all that, absolutely.

The next year, 1880, Sarah Bernhardt was playing for a short time in London—this time her own venture—again at the Gaiety. Irving took a box for her benefit, a matinée on 16th June. Loveday and I went with him. The bill was Jean Marie, the fourth act of La Rome vaincue, and the fifth act of Hernani. Irving was charmed with her playing in Jean Marie, which is a one-act piece with the same note of sentiment in it as that of the song "Auld Robin Gray." He was also struck with her extraordinary tragic force in La Rome vaincue.

On Saturday night, 3rd July of that year, 1880, Sarah Bernhardt came to supper in the Beefsteak Room. The two other guests were both friends of hers, Bastien Lepage the painter, and Libbotton the violoncellist. This was a night of extraordinary interest. Irving and Sarah Bernhardt were both at their best and spoke quite freely on all subjects concerning their art which came on the tapis. Irving was eager to know the opinion of one so familiar with the working of the French stage and yet so daring and original in her own life and artistic method. When they touched on the subject of the value of subsidy she grew excited and spoke of the value of freedom and independence:

"What use," she said, "subsidy when a French actress cannot live on the salary, at even the Comédie-Française!"

On the subject of tradition in art her manner was more pronounced. She railed

against tradition on the stage—as distinguished from the guiding memory and record of great effective work. Her face lit up and her eyes blazed; she smote her clenched hand heavily on the table, as, after a fierce diatribe against the cramping tendency of an artificial method relentlessly enforced, she hurled out:

"A bas la tradition!"

Then the change to her softer moods was remarkable. She was a being of incarnate grace, with a soft undertone of voice as wooing as the cooing of pigeons. As I looked at her—this was my first opportunity of seeing her close at hand—all the wondrous charm which Bastien Lepage had embodied in his picture of her seemed at full tide. This picture of Bastien Lepage—that wherein she is seated holding a distaff—was exhibited in a silver frame at the first exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery and met with universal admiration. With the original before one and the memory of her wonderful playing ever fresh in one's mind it was not possible not to be struck with her serpentine grace. I said to Bastien Lepage in such French as I could manage:

"In that great picture you seemed to get the true Sarah. You have painted her as a serpent with all a serpent's grace!" He seemed much interested and asked me how I made that out. Again, as well as I could I explained that all the lines of the picture were curved—there was not a single straight line in the drawing or shading. He seemed more than pleased and asked me to go on. I said that it had seemed to me that he had painted all the shadows in a scheme of yellow, shading them to represent in a subtle way the scales of the serpent skin.

He suddenly took me by both hands and shook them hard—I thought for a moment that he was going to kiss me. Then he patted me on the shoulder, and suddenly shot out the big wide cuff then in vogue in Parisian dress, and taking a pencil from his pocket drew the picture in little, showing every line as serpentine, and suggesting the shadows with little curved and shaded lines. Then he shook hands again.

I have regretted ever since that I did not ask him to cut off that cuff and give it to me! It was an artistic treasure!

In some of the discussions on art that evening he too got excited. I remember once the violent way in which he spoke of his own dominant note:

"Je suis un ré-a-liste!" As he spoke his voice rose and quivered with that "brool" that marks strong emotion. The short hair of his bulled head actually seemed to bristle like the hair of an excited cat. He rose and brought down his raised clenched fist on the table with a mighty thump. One could realise him at that moment as a possible leader of an émeute. One seemed to see him amid a whirl of drifting powder-smoke waving a red flag over the top of a barricade.

Another thing which Bastien Lepage said that night has always remained in my memory. It is so comprehensive that its meaning may be widely applied:

"In an original artist the faults are brothers to the qualities!"

We sat late that night. It was five o'clock when we broke up, and the high sun was streaming into our eyes as we left the building. Many a night after that, Sarah Bernhardt spent pleasant hours at the Lyceum—pleasant to all concerned. She grew to love the acting of Irving and of Ellen Terry, and whenever she had an opportunity she would hurry in by the stage door and take a seat in the wings. Several times when she arrived in London from Paris she would hurry straight from the station to the theatre and see all that was possible of the play. It was a delight and a pride to both Irving and Miss Terry when she came; and whenever she could do so she would stop to supper. Those nights were delightful. Sometimes some of her comrades would come with her. Marius, Garnier, Darmont or Damala. The last time the latter—to whom she was then married—came he looked like a dead man. I sat next him at supper, and the idea that he was dead was strong on me. I think he had taken some mighty dose of opium, for he moved and spoke like a man in a dream. His eyes, staring out of his white, waxen face, seemed hardly the eyes of the living.

Sarah Bernhardt was always charming and fresh and natural. Every good and fine instinct of her nature seemed to be at the full when she was amongst artistic comrades whom she liked and admired. She inspired every one else and seemed to shed a sort of intellectual sunshine around her.

LXIV GENEVIÈVE WARD

I

On the evening of Thursday, 20th November 1873, I strolled into the Theatre Royal, Dublin, to see what was on. I had been then for two years a dramatic critic, and was fairly well used to the routine of things. There was a very poor house indeed; in that huge theatre the few hundreds scattered about were like the plums in a fo'c'sle duff. The play was Legouve's Adrienne Lecouvreur, a somewhat machine-made play of the old school. The lady who played Adrienne interested me at once; she was like a triton amongst minnows. She was very handsome; of a rich dark beauty, with clear-cut classical features, black hair, and great eyes that now and again flashed fire. I sat in growing admiration of her powers. Though there was a trace here and there of something which I thought amateurish she was so masterful, so dominating in other ways that I could not understand it. At the end of the second act I went into the lobby to ask the attendants if they could tell me anything about her as the name on the bill was entirely new to me. None of them, however, could enlighten me on any point except that she had appeared on Monday in Lucrezia Borgia; and that the business was very bad.

When the grand scene of the play came—that between the actress and her rival, the Princesse de Bouillon—the audience was all afire. Their enthusiasm and the sound of it recalled the description of Edmund Kean's appearance at Drury Lane. I went round on the stage and saw John Harris the manager. I asked him who was the woman who was playing and where did she come from.

“She has no right to be playing to an audience like that!” I said pointing at the curtain which lay between us and the auditorium.

“I quite agree with you!” he answered. “She is fine; isn’t she? I saw her play in Manchester and at once offered her the date here which was vacant.” Just then she came upon the stage and he introduced me to her. When the play was over I went home and wrote my criticism, which duly appeared in the Irish Echo next evening.

That engagement of nine days was a series of débuts. In addition to Adrienne Lecouvreur she appeared in Medea, Lucrezia Borgia, The Actress of Padua, the “sleep-walking” scene of Macbeth, The Honeymoon. In one and all she showed great power and greater promise. It is a satisfactory memory to me to find, after her career has been made and her retirement—all too soon—effected after more than thirty years of stage success, in my diary of 29th November 1873—the last night of her engagement—

(“Mem. will be a great actress”).

I was reintroduced to her—this time by a personal friend—and there and then began a close friendship which has never faltered, which has been one of the delights of my life and which will I trust remain as warm as it is now till the death of either of us shall cut it short.

II

Geneviève Ward, both in the choice of her plays and in her manner of playing, followed at that time the “old” school. I had a good opportunity of judging the excellence of her method, for that very year, 1873, after an absence of fifteen years, Madame Ristori had visited Dublin. She was then in her very prime; an actress of amazing power and finish. She had played Medea, Mary Stuart, Queen Elizabeth and Marie Antoinette. Her method was of course the “Italian,” of which she was the finest living exponent—probably the finest that ever had been. Her speech was a

series of cadences; the voice rose and fell in waves—sometimes ripples, sometimes billows—but always modified with such exquisite precision as not to attract special attention to the rhythmic quality. Its effect was entirely unconscious. Indeed it was a method which in time could, and did, become of itself mechanical—like breathing—so that it did not in the least degree interfere even with the volcanic expression of passion. The study was of youth and at the beginning of art; but when the method was once formed nature could express herself in it as unfettered as in any other medium. Years afterwards Miss Ward showed me one of Ristori's promptbooks; and I could not but be struck with the accentuation. Indeed the marking above the syllables ran in such unbroken line as to look like musical scoring.

Miss Ward was a friend of the great Italian and had learned most of her art from her. She was a fine linguist, speaking French, Italian and Spanish as easily as her own tongue. At that time Ristori, who was in private life La Comtessa Campramican del Grillo, lived in her husband's ancestral home in Rome, and Miss Ward often stayed with her. Miss Ward in her private life was also a Countess, having whilst a very young girl married a Russian, Count de Gerbel of Nicolaeiff. The marriage was a romance as marked as anything that could appear on the stage. In 1855 at Nice Count de Gerbel had met and fallen in love with her and proposed marriage. She was willing and they were duly married at the Consulate at Nice, the marriage in the Russian church was to follow in Paris. But the Count was not of chivalrous nature. In time his fancy veered round to some other quarter, and he declared that by a trick of Russian law which does not acknowledge the marriage of a Russian until the ceremony in the Russian church has been performed, the marriage which had taken place was not legal. His wife and her father and mother, however, were not those to pass such a despicable act. With her mother she appealed to the Czar, who having heard the story was furiously indignant. Being an autocrat, he took his own course. He summoned his vassal Count de Gerbel to go to Warsaw, where he was to carry

out the orders which would be declared to him. There in due time he appeared. The altar was set for marriage and before it stood the injured lady, her father, Colonel Ward, and her mother. Her father was armed, for the occasion was to them one of grim import. De Gerbel yielded to the mandate of his Czar, and the marriage—with all needful safeguards this time—was duly effected. Then the injured Countess bowed to him and moved away with her own kin. At the church door husband and wife parted, never to meet again.

III

In her first youth Miss Ward was a singer and had great success in Grand Opera. But overwork in Cuba strained her voice. It was thought that this might militate against great and final success; so, bowing to the inevitable, she with her usual courage forsook the lyric for the dramatic stage. It was when she had prepared herself for the latter and was ready to make her new venture that I first saw her.

IV

During the holiday season of 1879, whilst Irving was yachting in the Mediterranean, Miss Ward rented the Lyceum for a short season commencing 2nd August. By the contract Irving had agreed to find, in addition to the theatre, the heads of departments, box-office and the usual working staff at an inclusive rent, as he wished to keep all his people together. So I had to remain in London to look after these matters. Miss Ward asked me to be manager for her also; but I said I could not do so as a matter of business as it might be possible that her interests and Irving's might clash; but that I would do all I could.

She opened in a play called Zillah written by her friend Palgrave Simpson and another. It was put in preparation some time before and was carefully rehearsed. My own work kept me so busy that I did not have any time to see the rehearsals till the night before the performance when the dress rehearsal was held. That rehearsal was

one which I shall never forget. It was too late to say anything—there was no time then to make any radical change; and so I held my peace.

The play was of the oldest-fashioned and worst type of "Adelphi" drama! It was machine-made and heartless and tiresome to the last degree, and in addition the language was turgid beyond belief. It was an absolute failure, and was taken off after a few nights. Lucrezia Borgia was put up whilst a new play should be got ready. She had not made arrangements for a second new play, so we all undertook to do what we could to find a suitable play, a new one. Miss Ward gave me a great parcel of plays sent to her at various times. I came on one play which at once arrested my attention. As I shortly afterwards learned, it was one which had been hawked about unsuccessfully. So soon as I had read it I sent word to Miss Ward that I thought, with a little alteration in the first act, it would make a great success. Miss Ward's judgment agreed with my own. She knew the author, Hermann Merivale, and wrote to him to see her. He came to the Lyceum that night. He came in a hurry, passing through London; she saw him a few minutes after and the agreement was verbally made.

The play was produced on August 21—within a fortnight of the time of its discovery. It was an enormous success, and ran the whole time of her tenancy—indeed a week longer than had been decided on as Irving was loth to disturb the successful run.

The play was Forget me not, by Hermann Merivale and F. C. Grove. Miss Ward played it continuously for ten years and made a fortune with it.

V

Miss Geneviève Ward played in four of Irving's great productions, of course always as a special engagement. The first was Becket, in which she "created" the part of Queen Eleanor—by old custom, to "create" a stage part is to play it first in London; the second was Morgan Le Fay in King Arthur; the third the Queen in Cymbeline;

and the fourth Queen Margaret in Richard III. In all these parts she was exceedingly good.

With regard to the last-named play, there was one of the few instances in which Irving was open to correction with regard to emphasis of a word. In Act IV. scene 3, of his acting version—Act IV. scene 4, of the original play—the last two lines of Queen Margaret's speech to Queen Elizabeth before her exit:

"Bettering thy loss makes the bad-causer worse;

Revolving this will teach thee how to curse!"

When Miss Ward spoke the last line she emphasised the word this—"Revolving this will teach thee how to curse!" Irving said the emphasised word should be teach—"Revolving this will teach thee how to curse!"

They each stuck to their own opinion; but at the last rehearsal he came to her and said:

"You are quite right, Miss Ward, your reading is quite correct." I daresay he had not considered the reading when arranging the play. As a matter of fact in his original arrangement of the play, at his first production of it under Mrs. Bateman in 1877, Queen Margaret was not in the scene at all. In the new version he had restored her to the scene as he wished to "fatten" Miss Ward's part and so add to the strength of the play. Miss Ward was always a particularly strong actress, good at invective, and as the play had no part for Ellen Terry he wished to give it all the other help he could.

VI

Miss Ward has one great stage gift which is not given to many: her eyes can blaze. I can only recall two other actresses who had the same quality in good degree: Mdlle. Schneider, who forty years ago played the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein in Offenbach's Opera; and Christine Nilsson. The latter I saw in London in 1867, and from where I sat—high up in the seat just in front of the gallery—I could note the

starry splendour of her blue eyes. Ten years later, in Lohengrin at Her Majesty's Opera House, I noticed the same—this time from the stalls. And yet once again when I sat opposite her at supper on the night of her retirement, June 20, 1888. The supper party was a small one, given by Mr. and Mrs. Brydges-Willyams at 9 Upper Brook Street. Irving was there and Ellen Terry, Lord Burnham and Miss Matilda Levy—brother and sister of our hostess—Count Miranda, to whom Nilsson was afterwards married, and his daughter, my wife and myself.

Nilsson came in from her triumph at the Albert Hall, blazing with jewels. She wore that night only those that had been given to her by Kings and Queens—and other varieties of monarchs.

LXV JOHN LAWRENCE TOOLE

I

The friendship between Henry Irving and John Lawrence Toole began in Edinburgh in 1857. Toole was the elder and had already won for himself the position of a local semi-star. The chances of distinction come to the "Low" comedian quicker than to the exponent of Tragedy or "High" Comedy, and Toole had commenced his stage experience at almost as early an age as Irving—eighteen. On 20th June 1894, during a Benefit at the Lyceum for the Southwark Eye Hospital, at which he did the wonderfully droll character sketch, "Trying a Magistrate," he told me that forty-five years before, Charles Dickens had heard him do the sketch and advised him to go on the stage. Wisely he had taken the advice; from the very start he had an exceptionally prosperous career.

He, the kindliest and most genial soul on earth, became a fast friend with the proud, shy, ambitious young beginner, eight years his junior. From the first he seemed to believe in Irving, and predicted for him a great career. To this end he contributed all

through his life. When he toured on his own account he took Irving with him, giving him a star place in his bill, and an opportunity of exhibiting his own special tragic power in a recital of The Dream of Eugene Aram.

To the last day of Irving's life the friendship of the two men each for the other never flagged or faltered. Such a thing as jealousy of the other never entered into the heart of either. Toole simply venerated his friend and enjoyed his triumph more than he did his own. He would not hear without protest any one speak of Irving except in a becoming way; and there was nothing which Toole possessed which he would not have shared with Irving. When one entertained, there was always a place for the other; whoever had the good fortune to become a friend of either found his friendship doubled at once. The two men seemed to supplement each other's natures. Each had, in his own way and of its own kind, a great sense of humour. Toole's genial, ebullient, pronounced; Irving's saturnine, keen, and suggestive. Both had—each again in his own way—a very remarkable seriousness. Those who only saw Toole in his inimitable pranks knew little how keenly the man felt emotion; how unwavering he was in his sense of duty; how earnest in his work. With Irving the humour was a fixed quantity, which all through his life kept its relative proportion to his seriousness; but Toole, being a low comedian, and perhaps because of it, seemed at times vastly different in his hours of work and relaxation. For it is a strange thing that the conditions of emotion are such that what is work in one case is rest in another, and vice versa; the serious man finds ease in relaxation, the humorous man seeks in quietude his rest from the stress of laughter. In their younger days and up to middle life the two men had indulged in harmless pranks. They both loved a joke and would take any pains to compass it. The tricks they played together would fill a volume. Of course from their protean powers of expressing themselves and in merging their identities actors have rare opportunities of consummating jokes. Moreover they are in the habit of working together, and two or three men who understand each other's methods can go far to sway the unwary how they will.

II

One of the practical jokes of Toole and Irving is almost classical. One Sunday when they both happened to be playing at Liverpool at the same time they went to dine at an old inn at Wavertree celebrated for the excellence of its hospitality. They had a good dinner and a good bottle of port and sat late. When most of the guests in the hotel had gone to bed and when the time necessary for their own departure was drawing nigh, they rang and told the waiter to get the bill. When he had gone for it they took all the silver off the table—they had fine old silver in the inn—and placed it in the garden on which the room opened. Then they turned out the gas and got under the table. Hearing no answer to his repeated knocking the waiter opened the door. When he saw the lights out, the window opened, and the guests—and the silver—gone he cried out:

"Done! They have bolted with the silver." Then he ran down the passage crying out: "Thieves, thieves!"

The instant he was gone the two men came from under the table, closed the door, lit the gas, and took in the silver which they replaced on the table. Presently a wild rush of persons came down the passage and burst into the room: the landlord and his family, servants of the house, guests en deshabille—most of them carrying pokers and other impromptu weapons. They found the two gentlemen sitting quietly smoking their cigars. As they stood amazed Irving said in his quiet, well-bred voice:

"Do you always come in like this when gentlemen are having their dinner here?"

Toole would even play pranks on Irving, these generally taking the form of some sort of gift. For instance, he once sent Irving on his birthday what he called in his letter "a miniature which he had picked up!" It came in a furniture van, an enormous portrait of an actor, painted nearly a hundred years before; it was so large that it would not fit in any room of the theatre and had to be put in a high passage. Again, when he was in Australia he sent to Irving, timed so that it would arrive at

Christmas, a present of two frozen sheep and a live kangaroo. These arrived at Irving's rooms in Grafton Street. He had them housed at the Lyceum for the night, and next day sent the sheep to gladden the hearts—and anatomies—of the Costermongers' Club at Chicksand Street, Mile End, New Town. The kangaroo was sent with a donation to the Zoological Society as a contribution from "J. L. Toole and Henry Irving." A brass plate was fixed over the cage by the Society.

Toole loved to make beautiful presents to Irving. Amongst them was a splendid gilt silver claret jug; several silver cups and bowls, the trophy designed by Flaxman which was presented to Macready in 1818—a magnificent piece of jeweller's work; a "grangerised" edition of Forster's Life of Charles Dickens—unique in its richness of material and its fine workmanship—which he had bought in Paris for £500.

III

When Toole and Irving were separated they were in constant communication by letter, telegram or cable. No birthday of the other passed without a visit if near enough, or a letter or telegram if apart, and there was always a basket of flowers each to each. For a dozen years before Irving's death Toole had been in bad health, growing worse and worse as the years went on. He grew very feeble and very, very sad. But without fail Irving used to go to see him whenever he had an opportunity. At his house in Maida Vale, at Margate, or at Brighton, in which latter place he mainly lived for years past, Irving would go to him and spend all the hours he could command. Even though the width of the world separated them, the two men seemed to have, day by day, exact cognisance of the whereabouts and doings of the other, and not a week but the cables were flashing between them.

Poor Toole had one by one lost all his immediate family—son, wife, daughter; and his tie to life was in great part the love to and from his friend. He used to think of him unceasingly. Wherever he was, Toole's wire would come unfailingly making for good luck and remembrance. He would keep the flowers that Irving sent to him

till they faded and dropped away; even then the baskets and bare stalks were kept in his room.

No one appreciated more than Toole the finest of Irving's work. For instance, when he saw him play King Lear he was touched to his heart's core, and his artistic admiration was boundless. I supped with him that night after the play, and he said to me:

"King Lear is the finest thing of Irving's life—or of any one else's."

When Toole was going to Australia there were many farewell gatherings to wish him God-speed. Some of them were great and elaborate affairs, but the last of all was reserved for Irving, when Toole, with some old friends, supped in the Beefsteak Room. When Irving proposed his old friend's health—a rare function indeed in that room—he never spoke more beautifully in his life. His little speech was packed with pathos, and so great was his own emotion that at moments he was obliged to pause to pull himself together.

IV

Toole and I were very close friends ever since I knew him first in the early seventies. I shared with him many delightful hours. And when sorrow came to him I was able to give him sympathy and such comfort as could be from my presence. I was with him at the funeral of his son and then of his wife. When his daughter died in Edinburgh, where he was then playing, I went up to him and stayed with him. We brought her body back to London and I went with him to her grave. With me he was always affectionate, always sympathetic, always merry when there was no cause for gloom, always grave and earnest when such were becoming. I have been with him on endless occasions when his merriment and geniality simply bubbled over. Unless some sorrow sat heavily on him he was always full of merriment which evidenced itself in the quaintest and most unexpected ways.

THE CAST OF “DEARER THAN LIFE,” 1868

One evening, for instance, we were walking together along the western end of Pall Mall. When we came near Marlborough House, where on either side of the gateway stood a Guardsman on sentry, he winked at me and took from his pocket a letter which he had ready for post. Then when we came up close to the nearest soldier he moved cautiously in a semi-blind manner and peering out tried to put the letter in the breast of the scarlet tunic as though mistaking the soldier for a postal pillar-box. The soldier remained upright and stolid, and did not move a muscle. Toole was equally surprised and pleased when from the Guardsman’s moveless lips came the words:

“It’s all right, Mr. Toole! I hope you’re well, sir?”

Another time I was staying with him at the Granville at Ramsgate, and on the Sunday afternoon we drove out to Kingsgate. Lionel Brough was another of the party. As we passed a coastguard station we stopped opposite a very handsome, spruce, and dandified coastguard. The two men greeted him, but his manner was somewhat haughty. Whereupon the two actors without leaving their seats proceeded to dance a hornpipe. That is they seemed, from the waist up, to be dancing that lively measure. Their arms and hands took motion as though in a real dance and their bodies swayed with appropriate movement. The little holiday crowd looked on delighted, and even the haughty sailor found it too much. He unbent and, smiling, danced also in very graceful fashion.

V

Again at another time we found ourselves in Canterbury, where Toole amused himself for a whole afternoon by spreading a report that the Government were going to move the Cathedral from Canterbury to Margate, giving as a reason that the latter place was so much larger. Strange to say that there were some who believed it. Toole worked systematically. He went into barbers’ shops—three of them in turn, and in each got shaved. As I wore a beard I had to be content with having my hair

cut; it came out pretty short in the end. As he underwent the shaving operation he brought conversation round to the subject of the moving of the Cathedral. Then we went into shops without end where he bought all sorts of things—collars, braces, socks, caps, fruits and spice for making puddings, children's toys, arrowroot, ginger wine, little shawls, sewing cotton, emery paper, hair oil, goloshes, corn plasters—there was no end to the variety of his purchases, each of which was an opening for some fresh variant of the coming change.

At one other visit to Canterbury we came across in the ancient Cathedral an insolent verger. Toole, who was, for all his fun, a man of reverent nature, was as usual with him grave and composed in the church. The verger, taking him for some stranger of the bourgeois class, thought him a fit subject to impress. When Toole spoke of the new Dean who had been lately appointed the man said in a flippant way:

"We don't care much for him. We don't think we'll keep him!"

This was enough for Toole. He looked over at me in a way I understood and forthwith began to ask questions:

"Did you, may I ask, sir, preach this morning?"

"No. Not this morning. I don't preach this week." We knew then that that verger was to be "had on toast." Toole went on:

"Do you preach on next Sunday, sir? I should like to hear you."

"Well, no! I don't think I'll preach on Sunday."

"Will you preach the Sunday after?"

"Perhaps."

"May I ask, sir, are you the Dean?"

"No. I am not the Dean!" His manner implied that he was something more.

"Are you the Sub-Dean?"

"Not the Sub-Dean." His answers were getting short.

“Are you what they call a Canon?”

“No, I should not exactly call myself a Canon.”

“Are you a minor Canon?”

“No!”

“Are you a precentor?”

“Not exactly that.”

“Are you in the choir?”

“No.”

“May I ask you what you are then, sir?”—this was said with great deference. The man, cornered at last, thought it best to speak the truth, so he answered:

“I am what they call a ‘verger!’”

“Quite so!” said Toole gravely; “I thought you were only a servant by the insolent way you spoke of your superiors!”

The remainder of that personal conduction was made in silence.

VI

On one occasion when Toole was taking the waters at Homburg, King Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, was there. He had a breakfast party to which he had asked Toole and also Sir George Lewis and Sir Squire Bancroft. In the course of conversation his Royal Highness asked Bancroft where he was going after Homburg. The answer was that he was going to Maloya in Switzerland. Then turning to Toole he asked him:

“Are you going to Maloya also, Mr. Toole?” In reply Toole said, as he bowed and pointed to the great solicitor:

“No, sir, Ma-loya (my lawyer) is here!”

I remember one Derby day, 1893, when we were both in the party to which Mr.

Knox D'Arcy extended the hospitality of his own stand next to that of the Jockey Club—a hospitality which I may say was boundless and complete. When I arrived the racing was just beginning, and the course was crowded by the moving mass seeking outlets before the cordon of police with their rope. As I got close to the stand I heard a voice that I knew coming from the wicket-gate, which was surrounded with a seething mass of humanity of all kinds pushing and struggling to get close.

"Walk this way, ladies and gentlemen! Walk this way! get tickets here. Only one shilling, including lunch. Walk this way!"

A somewhat similar joke on his part was on board a steamer on Lake Lucerne, when he was there with Irving. He went quietly to one end of the steamer and cried out in a loud voice: "Cook's tourists, this way. Sandwich and glass of sherry provided free!" Then, slipping over to the other end of the boat as the crowd began to rush for the free lunch, he again made proclamation: "Gaze's party, this way. Brandy and soda, hard-boiled eggs, and butterscotch provided free!" Again he disappeared before the crowd could assemble.

A favourite joke of his when playing Paul Pry was to find out what friends of his were in the house and then to have their names put upon the blackboard at the inn with scores against them of gigantic amount. This was a never-stale source of surprise and delight to the children of his friends. He loved all children, and next to his own, the children of his friends. For each of such there was always a box of chocolates. He kept a supply in his dressing-room, and I never knew the child of a friend to go away empty-handed. With such a love in his heart was it strange that in his own bad time, when his sadness was just beginning to take hold on his very heart's core, he loved to think much of those old friends who had loved his own children who had gone?

VII

Somehow his mirth never lessened his pathos. His acting—his whole life—has been a sort of proof that the two can coexist. His Caleb Plummer was never a whit less moving because his audience laughed through their tears. It may be his art became typified in his life.

When Irving died I telegraphed the same night to Frank Arlton, Toole's nephew, who during all his long illness had given him the most tender care. I feared that if I did not send such warning some well-intentioned blunderer might give him a terrible shock. Arlton acted most prudently, and broke the sad news himself at a favourable opportunity the next day. When poor Toole heard it his remark was one of infinite pathos:

"Then let me die too!"

Such a wish is in itself an epitaph of lasting honour.

VIII

Toole's belief and sympathy and help were of infinite service to the friend whom he loved. Comfort and confidence and assistance all in one. And it is hardly too much to say that Irving could never have done what he did, and in the way he did it, without the countenance and help of his old friend. Irving always, ever since I knew him, liked to associate Toole with himself in everything; and to me who know all that was between them it is but just—as well as the carrying out of my dear friend's wishes—that in this book their names shall be associated as closely as I can achieve by the Dedication. Shortly before his last illness I went down to Brighton to see him and to ask formally his permission to this end. He seemed greatly moved by it. Later on I sent the proof of the page containing it, asking Arlton to show it to him if he thought it advisable. Toole had then partially recovered from the attack and occasionally saw friends and was interested in what went on. Arlton's letter to me described the effect:

“I gave him your message last night, and I fear I did unwisely, as nurse says he has been talking all night about Sir Henry and books.”

That visit to Brighton was the last time I saw Toole. He was then very low in health and spirits. He could hardly move or see; his voice was very feeble and one had to speak close and clearly that he might hear well. But his intellect was as clear as ever, and he spoke of many old friends. I spent the day with him; after lunch I walked by his bath-chair to the end of the Madeira Walk. There we stayed a while, and when my time for leaving came, I told him—but not before. In his late years Toole could not bear the idea of any one whom he loved leaving him, even for a time. We used therefore to say no word of parting till the moment came. When he held out his poor, thin, trembling hand to me he said with an infinite pathos whose memory moves me still:

“Bram, we have often parted—but this time is the last. I shall never see you again! Won’t you let me kiss you, dear!”

LXVI ELLEN TERRY

I

The first time I saw Ellen Terry was on the forenoon of Monday, December 23, 1878. The place was the passage-way which led from the stage of the Lyceum to the office, a somewhat dark passage under the staircase leading to the two “star” dressing-rooms up the stage on the O.P. side. But not even the darkness of that December day could shut out the radiant beauty of the woman to whom Irving, who was walking with her, introduced me. Her face was full of colour and animation, either of which would have made her beautiful. In addition was the fine form, the easy rhythmic swing, the large, graceful, goddess-like way in which she moved. I knew of her of course—all the world did then though not so well as afterwards; and

she knew of me already, so that we met as friends. I had for some years known Charles Wardell, the actor playing under the name of Charles Kelly, to whom she had not long before been married. Kelly had in his professional visits to Dublin been several times in my lodgings, and as I had reason to believe that he had a high opinion of me I felt from Ellen Terry's gracious and warm manner of recognition that she accepted me as a friend. That belief has been fully justified by a close friendship, unshaken to the extent of a hair's breadth through all the work and worry—the triumphs and gloom—the sunshine and showers—storm and trial and stress of twenty-seven years of the comradeship of work together.

Irving had engaged her entirely on the strength of the reputation which she had already made in Olivia and the other plays which had gone before it. He had not seen her play since the days of the Queen's Theatre, Long Acre, 1867–8, when they had played together in The Taming of the Shrew, she being the Katherine to his Petruchio. He had not thought very much of her playing in those days. Long after she had made many great successes at the Lyceum, in speaking of the early days he said to me:

"She was always bright and lively, and full of fun. She had a distinct charm; but as an artist was rather on the hoydenish side!"

From the moment, however, that she began to rehearse at the Lyceum his admiration for her became unbounded. Many and many a time have I heard him descant on her power. It was a favourite theme of his. He said that her pathos was "nature helped by genius," and that she had a "gift of pathos." He knew well the value of her playing both to himself and the public, and for the early years of his management plays were put on in which she would have suitable parts. Iolanthe was put on for her, likewise The Cup, The Belle's Stratagem, Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night and Olivia. Synorix was not a part for the sake of which Irving would have produced The Cup; neither Romeo nor Benedick is a part such as he would

have chosen for himself. Neither Malvolio nor Dr. Primrose was seemingly a great rôle for a man who had been accustomed for years to “carry the play on his back.”

II

I think that Ellen Terry fascinated every one who ever met her—men, women and children, it was all the same. I have heard the evidences of this fascination in many ways from all sorts of persons in all sorts of places. One of them in especial lingers in my mind: perhaps this is because I belong to a nationality to whose children “blarney” is supposed to be a heritage.

On the afternoon of Sunday, November 25, 1883, we had travelled from New York to Philadelphia, paying our first visit to the Quaker City. Irving and I were staying at the Belle Vue Hotel; there, too, Ellen Terry took up her quarters. I dined with Irving, and we were smoking after dinner when a card and a message came up. The card was that of the Hon. Benjamin H. Brewster, then Attorney-General of the United States. The message was to the effect that he had broken his journey for a few hours on his way to Washington for the purpose of meeting Mr. Irving, and begging that he would waive ceremony and see him. Of course, Irving was very pleased, and the Attorney-General came up. He was a clever-looking, powerfully built man, but his face was badly scarred. In his boyhood he had, I believe, fallen into the fire. Until one knew him and came under the magic of his voice, and tongue, his appearance was apt to concern one over-much. He was quaint in his dress, wearing frills on shirt-front and cuffs. He was of an Irish family which had sent very prominent men to the Bar; a namesake of his was a leading counsel in my own youth. Irving and I were delighted with him. After an hour or so he asked if it were possible that he might see Miss Terry. Irving thought she would be very pleased. In compliance with the Attorney-General’s request she came down to Irving’s room and was most sweet and gracious to the stranger. After a while she went away; he prepared to go also, for his train was nearly due. When Ellen Terry had left the room he turned to us and

said, with all that conviction of truth which makes “blarney” so effective:

“What a creature! what a Queen! She smote me with the sword of her beauty, and I arose her Knight!”

III

Ellen Terry had no sooner come into the Lyceum than all in the place were her devoted servants. Irving was only too glad to let her genius and her art have full swing; and it was a pleasure to all to carry out her wishes. As a member of a company she was always simply ideal. She encouraged the young, helped every one, and was not only a “fair” but a “generous” actor. These terms imply much on the stage, where it is possible, without breaking any rule, to gain all the advantage to the detriment of other players. To Ellen Terry such a thing was impossible; she not only gave to every one acting with her all the opportunities that their parts afforded, but made opportunities for them. For instance, it is always an advantage for an actor to stand in or near the centre of the stage and well down to the footlights. In old days such a place was the right of the most important actor; a right which was always claimed. But Ellen Terry would when occasion served stand up stage or down as might be suitable to the person speaking. And when her own words had been spoken she would devote her whole powers to helping the work of her comrades on the stage. These seemingly little things count for much in the summing up of years, and it is no wonder that Ellen Terry as an artist is, and always has been, loved. From the first, to her as an artist always has been given the supreme respect which she had justly won. No one ever cavilled, no one ever challenged, no one ever found fault. All sought her companionship, her advice, her assistance. She moved through the world of the theatre like embodied sunshine. Her personal triumphs were a source of joy to all; of envy to none.

She seems to have the happy faculty of spinning gaiety out of the very air; and adds always to the sum of human happiness.

IV

Her performance of Ophelia alone would have insured her a record for greatness; Irving never ceased expatiating on it. I well remember one night in 1879—it was after a third performance of Hamlet—when he took supper with my wife and me. He talked all the time of Ellen Terry's wonderful performance. One thing which he said fixed itself in my mind:

"How Shakespeare must have dreamed when he was able to write a part like Ophelia, knowing that it would have to be played by a boy! Conceive his delight and gratitude if he could but have seen Ellen Terry in it!"

Indeed it was a delight to any one even to see her. No one who had seen it can forget the picture that she made in the Fourth Act when she came in holding a great bunch—an armful—of flowers; lilies and other gracious flowers and all those that are given in the text. For my own part, every Ophelia whom I have seen since then has suffered by the comparison.

Ellen Terry loves flowers, and in her playing likes to have them on the stage with her when suitable. Irving was always most particular with regard to her having exactly what she wanted. The Property Master had strict orders to have the necessary flowers, no matter what the cost. Other players could, and had to, put up with clever imitations; but Ellen Terry always had real flowers. I have known when the rule was carried through under extreme difficulties. This was during the week after the blizzard at New York in March 1888 when such luxuries were at famine price. She had as Margaret her bunch of roses every night. I bought them one day myself for the purpose when the blooms were five dollars each.

V

Ellen Terry's art is wonderfully true. She has not only the instinct of truth but the ability to reproduce it in the different perspective of the stage. There must always be

some grand artistic qualities, quite apart from personal charm, to render any actress worthy of universal recognition. To those who have seen Ellen Terry no explanation is needed. She is artist to her finger-tips. The rules which Taine applies to Art in general, and to plastic art in particular, apply in especial degree to an artist of the Stage. That which he calls “selective” power, a natural force, is ever a ruling factor in the creation of character.

The finer and more evanescent evidences of individuality must to a large extent be momentary. No true artist ever plays the same part alike on different repetitions. The occasion; the variation of temperament, even of temperature; the emotional characteristic of the audience; the quickening or dulling of the ruling sentiment of the day or hour—each and all of these insensibly, if not consciously, can regulate the pressure in the temperamental barometer. When to the gift of logical power of understanding causes and effects there is added that of instinctively thinking and doing the right thing, then the great artist is revealed. It is, perhaps, this instinctive power which is the basis of creative art; the power of the poet as distinguished from that of the workman. Then comes a nicely balanced judgment of the selective faculty. There are always many ways of doing the same thing. One, of course, must be best; though others may come very close to it in merit.

Ellen Terry has the faculty of reaching the best. When one sees any other actress essay a part in which she has won applause, the actuality seems but dull beside the memory. As the object of stage work is “seeming” not “being,” the effort to appear real transcends reality—with the art of stage perspective added.

VI

When Ellen Terry has taken hold of a character it becomes, whilst her thoughts are on it, a part of her own nature. In fact, her own nature

“is subdued

To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

Her intuition—which in a woman is quicker than a man's reason—not only avoids error from the very inception of her work, but brings her unerringly by the quickest road to the best end. In the studying of her own parts and the arranging of her own business of them she had always had a free hand with Irving. At the Lyceum she was consulted about everything; and the dispositions of other persons and things were made to fit into her arrangements. I can only recall one instance when her wishes were not exactly carried out. This was at the end of the church scene of Much Ado About Nothing which in the Lyceum version finished the Fourth Act—the scene of the Prison which in Shakespeare ends the act having been transferred to the beginning of the last act. Here Beatrice has pledged Benedick to kill Claudio. Her newly accepted lover finishes the scene: "Go, comfort your cousin; I must say, she is dead; and so, farewell." Irving thought that the last words should be a little more operative with regard to the coming portion of the play; and so insisted in putting in the "gag" which was often in use:

Beatrice. "Benedick, kill Claudio!"

Benedick. "As sure as I'm alive I will!"

Against this Ellen Terry protested, almost to tears. She thought that every word of Shakespeare was sacred; to add to them was wrong. Still Irving was obdurate; and she finally yielded to his wishes.

To my own mind Irving was right. He too held every word of Shakespeare in reverence; but modern conditions, which require the shortening of plays, necessitate now and again the concentration of ideas—the emphasis of purposes. The words of the "tag" which he and Ellen Terry spoke, and the extraordinary forceful way they spoke them, heightened the effect. By carrying on the idea of the audience to an immediate and definite purpose they increased the "tug" of the play.

It may be interesting to note that this introduction was not, so far as I remember,

commented on by any of the critics. It was not printed in the acting version, but the words were spoken—and there was no possibility of their not being heard—on every performance of the run of two hundred nights. Where there are so many Shakespeareans looking keenly for errors of text, it was odd such an addition should have passed without comment!

VII

The sincerity of Ellen Terry's nature finds expression in her art. In all my long experience of her I never knew her to strike a wrong note. Doubtless she has her faults. She is a woman; and perfection must not be expected even in the finishing work of Creation.

But whatever faults she may have are altogether those of the individual human being, not of the artist. As the latter she had achieved perfection even when I first saw her in 1878.

The mind which balances truly each item, each evidence of character submitted to it by nature, experience or the dramatist, is the true source of art. Without it perfection must be a hazard; when there are many roads to choose from, the traveller may chance to blunder into the right one, but the doing so is the work of luck not art. But when day after day, week after week, year after year one always takes the right road, chance or fortune cannot be regarded as the dominating cause. The sincerity of art has many means of expression; but even of these some are more subtle than others. Such exposition demands mind, and the exercise of mind; we may, I think, take it that intention requires intellectual effort both for its conception and execution—the wish and the attempt to turn desire into force. The carrying out of intention requires fresh mental effort. And such must be primarily based on a knowledge of the powers and facts at command. Thus it is that the actor must understand himself; the task is even more difficult when the actor is a woman whose nature, therefore, in its manifestations is continually changing. But this very changeableness has in it the

elements of force and charm. Out of the kaleidoscope come glimpses of new things which have only to be recorded and remembered in order to become knowledge. In the variety of emotions is a pauseless attractiveness which does not admit of weariness. Nature was good to Ellen Terry in the equipment for her work. Her personality, enriched by the gifts showered upon her, is a very treasure-house of art. No other woman of her time has shown such abounding and abiding charm; such matchless mirthfulness; pathos so deep.

VIII

As to the stage characters which she has made her own it would be impossible to say enough. Any one of them is worthy of an exhaustive study. In the early days of her acting, which began when her years were but few, stage art was in a poor way. The old style of acting, eminently suitable to the age in which it had been evolved, was still in vogue, though the conditions of the great world without were changing. “The Drama’s laws the Drama’s patrons give” is a truth told with poetic comprehensiveness; what the public wants, the actors must in reason supply. But that age—when railways were still new, when telegraphs were hoped for; when such knowledge as that of the influence of worms on the outer layer of the structure of the world was being investigated, and when the existence of bacteria was becoming a conclusion rather than a guess—did not mean to be satisfied with an old-world, unnatural expression of human feeling seemingly based on a belief that passions were single and crude and that they swept aside the manifold complications of life. Ellen Terry belongs to the age of investigation. She is of those who brought in the new school of natural acting. It is true that she had learned and benefited by the teaching and experience of the old school. The lessons which Mrs. Charles Kean had so patiently taught her gave her boldness and breadth, and made for the realisation of poetic atmosphere and that perspective of the stage which is so much stronger than that of real life. But the work which she did in the new school came from

herself. Here it was that her manifold gifts and charms found means of expression—of working out her purpose in relation to the characters which she undertook. If I had myself to put into a phrase the contribution to art-progress which Ellen Terry's work has been, I should say that it was the recognition of freedom of effort. She enlarged the bounds of art from those of convention to those of nature; and in doing so gave fuller scope to natural power. Since she set the way many another actress has arrived at the full success possible to the range of her gifts who otherwise would have been early strangled in the meshes of convention. The general effect of this has been to raise the art as well as widening it. The natural style does not allow of falsity or grossness; in the light which is common to all who understand, either by instinct or education, these stand out as faults or excrescences. In this "natural" method also individual force counts for its worth and the characteristic notes of sex are marked. For instance, I have heard—for unfortunately I never saw the piece—that when long ago she played The Wandering Heir her charm of sex was paramount; she played a girl masquerading as a boy so delightfully because she was so complete a woman. In her, womanhood is paramount. She has to the full in her nature whatever quality it is that corresponds to what we call "virility" in a man.

Her influence on her art has been so marked that one can see in the younger generation of women players how in their efforts to understand her methods they have unconsciously held her identity as their objective. In a number of them this appears as a sort of mild imitation. It was the same thing with the school of Irving. Trying to follow in his footsteps they have achieved something of his identity; generally those little personal traits or habits catching to the eye, which some call faults, others idiosyncrasies.

The advantages which both Irving and Ellen Terry gave to dramatic art will be even more marked in the future than it is at the present; though the credit to them of its doing will be less conspicuous than it is now. Already the thoughtful work has been

done; the principles have been tested and accepted, and the teaching has reached its synthetic stage.

IX

Naturally the years that went to the doing of this fine art work threw the two players together in a remarkable way, and made for an artistic comradeship which, so far as I know, has had no equal in their own branch of art. It began with Irving's management at the end of 1878 and lasted as a working reality for twenty-four years. At the Prince's Theatre, Bristol, on the last night of the Provincial Tour of 1902, December 13, she played for the last time under his management. Some months later, July 14, 1903, they played again in the same piece The Merchant of Venice at Drury Lane for the benefit of the Actors' Association. This occasion has become a memorable one; it was the last time when they played together.

Their cause of separation was in no wise any form of disagreement. It was simply effluxion of time. To the last hour of Irving's life the brotherly affection between them remained undimmed. Naturally when these two great powers who had worked together in the public eye for nearly a quarter of a century separated Curiosity began to search for causes, and her handmaid Gossip proclaimed what she alleged to be them. Let me tell the simple truth and so set the matter right:

In the course of their long artistic co-operation Irving had produced twenty-seven plays in which they had acted together. In nineteen of these Ellen Terry had played young parts, which naturally in the course of so many years became unsuitable. Indeed the first person to find fault with them was Ellen Terry herself, who, with her keen uncompromising critical faculty always awake to the purposes of her work, realised the wisdom of abandonment long before the public had ever such a thought. There remained, therefore, for their mutual use but eight plays of the répertoire—the finished work of so many years. Of these, two, Macbeth and Henry VIII., had been destroyed by fire, and the expense of reproducing them adequately for only

occasional presentation was prohibitive. Two others, Coriolanus and Peter the Great, were not popular. Robespierre had had its day, a long run to the full extent of its excellence. There remained, therefore, but three: Charles I., The Merchant of Venice and Madame Sans-Gêne. The last of these had not proved a very great success in England; in America it had been done to death. For Charles I., by its very sadness and its dramatic scope, the audience could only be drawn from a limited class. So that there remained for practical purposes of continuous playing only The Merchant of Venice. There was one other play in which, though her part was a young one, Ellen Terry could always play, Much Ado About Nothing. But then Irving had grown too old for Benedick, and so for his purposes the play was past.

Ellen Terry did not care—and rightly enough—to play only once or twice a week as Portia—or in Nance Oldfield, given with The Bells—whilst there was so much excellent work, in all ways suitable to her personality and her years, to be done. Ordinarily one would not allude to these matters; ladies have by right no date. But when a lady's Jubilee on the Stage has been a completed fact, to whose paramount success the whole world has rung, there is no need for misleading reticence.

The mere fact of their ceasing to play together did not bring to a close the long artistic comradeship of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. To the very last the kindly interest in each other's work and the affection between them never ceased or even slackened. Whatever one did the other followed with eager anxiety. Right up to the hour of his death Irving was interested in all that she did. On that last sad evening, even whilst anxiety for the coming changes in his own work was looming over him, he spoke to me in his dressing-room about her health and her work. He spoke feelingly and sympathetically, and with confidence and affection; just as he had always done during the long period of their working together. He had written to her himself in the same vein. In his letter he had told her what a delight it would be to him to hear her Lecture on "The Letters in Shakespeare's Plays."

X

For my own part I have no words at command adequate to tell the kindly feeling which I have always had for the delightful creature—to express my reverence and regard and love for her enchanting personality. From the very first she took me into the inner heart of her friendship; unconsciously I was given the rôle of "big brother." Nay, she found a name for me which was all her own and which one would think to be the least appropriate to a man of my inches. When I would ask her about some social duty which it was necessary for her to attend to—some important person to receive, some special entertainment to attend—she would make what nurses call a "wry face"; then she would ask:

"Bram, is this earnest?"

"Yes!" I would reply. "Honest injun!" She would smile and pout together as she would reply:

"All right, mama!" Then I knew that she was going to play that part as nicely as it could be played by any human being. Indeed it was hardly "playing a part" for she was genuinely glad to meet cordiality with equal feeling. It was only the beginning and the publicity that she disliked.

It is hard to believe that half a century has elapsed since Ellen Terry went timidly through her first part on the stage. The slim child dragging the odd-looking go-cart, which the early daguerreotype recorded as Mamilius in Charles Kean's production of A Winter's Tale, has been so long a force of womanly charm and radiant beauty—an actress of such incomparable excellence that in her art as in our memories she almost stands alone—great amongst the great.

Ellen Terry is a great actress, the greatest of her time; and she will have her niche in history. She is loved by every one who ever knew her. Her presence is a charm, her friendship a delight; her memory will be a national as well as a personal possession.

LXVII FRESH HONOURS IN DUBLIN

When we visited Dublin in the tour of 1894 there were some memorable experiences. Ever since 1876 my native city had a warm place in Irving's heart. And very justly so, for it had showered upon him love and honour. This time there were two occasions which should not be forgotten.

The first was a public Reception at the Mansion House given by the then Lord Mayor, Valentine Dillon, a friend of my own boyhood. This took place on Thursday, November 29, and was in truth an affair of national importance. At that time the long-continued feuds between Conservatives and Liberals, Home Rulers and Unionists, Catholics and Protestants, which had marked with extra virulence—for they had been long existent—the past decades, were still operative. Still, improvement was in the air; only opportunity was wanting to give it expression.

The beneficent occasion came in that Reception. Irving and Ellen Terry were delightfully popular personalities. They had no politics, and what religion either professed was not even considered; their artistic excellence shadowed all else. Lord Mayor Dillon was a man with broad views of life and of the dignity of the position which he held for, I think, the third time. He cast very wide the net of his hospitable intent. He asked every one who was of account in any way; and all came. Some three thousand persons had been bidden and there was a full tally of guests. When once they had actually met in a common cause, one and all seemed to take the opportunity of showing that the hatchet had been buried. Men who had not spoken for years—who had not looked at each other save with the eyes of animosity, seemed glad to mingle on something of the old terms—to renew old friendships and long-severed acquaintanceship.

Irving and Ellen Terry, with some of us lesser lights supporting them, stood on the daïs beside the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress; and I can bear witness that not one who passed went without a handshake from both. It was a serious physical

effort. To shake hands with some thousands of persons would tax the strongest. Irving went through it with all the direct simplicity of his nature. Ellen Terry, having to supplement nature with art, rested at times her right hand and shook with the left with such cunning dexterity that no one was a whit the wiser. One and all went away from that hospitable and friendly gathering in a happy frame of mind. Dublin was a gainer by that wave of beneficent sympathy.

Two days later, on the last night of the engagement, Saturday, December 1, there was another and even more remarkable function. This was the presentation of a Public Address on the stage after the play. This Address was no ordinary one. It was signed by all the great public officials, both of the city and of the country:

The Lord Mayor, the High Sheriff, the Lord Chancellor, the Commander of the Forces, the Lord Chief Justice, all the Judges, all the City Members of Parliament, the Provost of Dublin University, the President of the College of Surgeons, the President of the College of Physicians, all the Public Officials, and by a host of Leading Citizens.

When the curtain drew up the great body of the Committee, numbering about sixty, stood behind the Lord Mayor on one side of the stage. On the other Irving, with close behind him Ellen Terry, whom I had the honour of escorting, and all the other members of the Company. The Lord Mayor read the Address, which was conceived in love and honour and born in noble and touching words. In replying for himself and Miss Terry, Irving was much touched, and had to make an effort to speak at all. There was a lofty look in his eyes which spoke for the sincerity of the words which he used in his reply:

“Now when your great University has accepted me to the brotherhood of her sons, and when your city and nation have taken me to your hearts, I feel that the cup of a player’s honour is full to the brim.”

I have not often seen him moved so much as he was that night. His speech and

movement were only controlled by his strong will and the habit of self-repression.

Within and without the theatre was a scene of wild enthusiasm not to be forgotten. I have been witness of many scenes of wild generosity but none to surpass that night.

Irving was always anxious that others should rejoice in some form with his own rejoicing. Before leaving Dublin he placed in the hands of the Lord Mayor a cheque for a hundred guineas for his disposal to the use of the poor.

LXVIII PERFORMANCES AT SANDRINGHAM AND WINDSOR

I SANDRINGHAM, 1889.

In April 1889 the Prince of Wales had the honour of entertaining the Queen at Sandringham. He wished that she should see Irving and Ellen Terry, neither of whom she had seen play. Accordingly it was arranged that on April 26 the Lyceum would be closed for the evening and that a performance should be given in Sandringham in a little theatre specially built in the great drawing-room. For this theatre Irving had got Walter Hann to paint an act drop; scenery of a suitable size was prepared by Hawes Craven—an exceedingly fine piece of miniature stage work. The Bill fixed was: The Bells, and the Trial Scene from The Merchant of Venice, the combination of which pieces would, the Prince thought, show both the players at their best.

The drawing-room looked very beautiful, the white walls showing up the many stands of magnificent weapons and armour; greenery and flowers were everywhere. There was a large gathering in the drawing-room of not only the house guests but local personages; the big music gallery at the back was full of tenants and servants. The Queen had kindly expressed her wish that the audience should do just as they wished as to applauding, and I must say that I have never seen or heard a more

enthusiastic audience within the bounds of decorum.

The Queen sat in the centre in front with the Prince of Wales on her right and the Princess on her left, and the others of the family beside them. Next came the guests in their degrees. The doorway was crowded with the servants—the Queen's all in black and the Prince's in Royal scarlet liveries. Her Majesty seemed greatly pleased. It had been arranged that Irving and Ellen Terry were to join the Prince and Princess at supper. The Queen would not wait up, but was to retire at once. However, just as the players were removing their war-paint, Her Majesty sent word by Sir Henry Ponsonby that she would like to speak to Mr. Irving and Miss Terry. Irving was in the act of removing his "make-up" as Shylock, which was a job requiring some little time. He was extraordinarily quick both as to dressing and undressing; but the "priming" of earth on which stage paint is laid, grease, paint, and lampblack and spirit-gum take some little time to remove, even before the stage of soap-and-water is reached. Portia, however, is a part which does not soil, and as to mere dressing, Ellen Terry can simply fly. She knew that Irving would be at least a few minutes, and it is not good form to keep a Queen waiting. Within a minute she was tearing down the passage, with her dresser running close behind her and fastening up the back of her frock as she went. At the doorway she threw over her shoulders the scarf which was a part of her dress and sailed into the room with a grand courtesy. Within a very few minutes Irving in immaculate evening dress followed.

Irving and Ellen Terry supped with the Royal guests. For the rest of the Company supper was prepared in the Conservatory. The heads of departments and workmen were entertained in the Housekeeper's room or the Servants' Hall according to their degrees. Irving had with his usual wish to save trouble arranged for supper for all the party on the train home. But the Prince of Wales would not hear of such a thing. He said that the players were his guests and that they must eat in his house. It had been understood that there was to be no suggestion of payment of even expenses. Irving was only too proud and happy to serve his Queen and future King in all ways of his

own art to the best of his power. This arrangement was held to on every occasion on which he had the honour to give a special performance before Royalty.

At half-past two o'clock the whole Company and workmen were driven to Wolferton station where the special train was waiting. It arrived at St. Pancras a few minutes past six in the morning.

II WINDSOR, 1893.

The performance at Windsor was in its way quite a remarkable thing. In the earlier years of her reign Queen Victoria was accustomed to have from time to time theatrical performances at Windsor Castle. These were generally held in the Waterloo Chamber, where a movable stage was erected on each occasion. In old days this stage was so low that once Mr. Henry Howe, who had to come up through a trap according to the action of the piece, had to crawl on his stomach under the stage to get to the appointed place. Howe was nearly eighty years of age when he told me this incident, but the memory was so strong on him that he laughed like a boy. When the Prince Consort died in 1861 all such gaieties were stopped, and for thirty-two years no play was given at Windsor. But after 1889 when the Queen did begin to resume something like the old life at Court her first effort in that direction was to command a performance by those players of the later day whom she had seen at Sandringham, whose merit was widely recognised and who had already won official recognition of another kind—the previous year the University of Dublin had given Irving a degree Honoris Causa. Moreover, the Queen wanted to see Becket, the work of her own Poet Laureate, which had created so much interest and thought.

Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, came from Windsor to see Irving at Her Majesty's wish. Irving was, of course, delighted to hold himself at the Queen's will. The only stipulation which he made was that he was to be allowed to bear the expenses of all kinds and was not to be offered fee or pay of any kind, even though such was a usual formality. For this he had a special reason; not to set

himself up as an individual against the custom of the Court, but to avoid the possibility of such a bêtise as had in earlier years stopped the Windsor theatrical performances for a time. The way of it was this: At the commencement of the system of having such performances the Queen had left the matter in the hands of Charles Kean, then the manager of the Princess's Theatre, and acknowledged head of the theatrical calling. He and his assistants made all the necessary arrangements, taking care that the gift of the Court patronage was, as fairly as was possible, divided amongst actors both in London and throughout the provinces. This worked excellently; and there were few, if any, jealousies. Kean made all the financial arrangements and paid salaries on the scale fixed on his suggestion by the Privy Purse. Matters went along smoothly so long as Kean had control. Later on, however, this was handed over to Mr. Mitchell of Bond Street, the agent who acted for the Queen with regard to her visits to London theatres and other places of amusement. At last came trouble. The scale of salary fixed was, I believe—for I can only speak from hearsay—at the rate of twice the actor's earnings in the previous year. On one occasion an actor of some repute was through some incredible stupidity paid at this rate, strictly applied though the case was exceptional. He had been for years receiving a large salary, but during nearly the whole of the previous year had been ill and of course "out of work." His total earnings therefore when divided by fifty-two amounted to but a meagre weekly wage. At a nightly standard it was ridiculous. Kean would of course, as an actor, have understood this and have carried out the spirit of Her Majesty's wishes. But the man of business went "by the card," and when the comedian received the dole sent to him he was highly indignant, and determined to taste some form of satisfaction, if only of revenge for his injured feelings. Of course the Queen knew nothing of all this, and be sure she was incensed when she heard of it. The actor's form of revenge was to send the amount of salary paid to him to the police court poor-box as a contribution from himself and Queen Victoria.

I may be wrong in details of the story, for it is one of fifty years ago, but in the main it is correct. I had it from Irving and I have often heard it spoken about by old actors of the time. With such a catastrophe in his memory Irving naturally wished to be careful. He had to consider not only himself but his whole Company, hundreds of persons of all degrees. Some of them might look on the affair as an Eldorado whence should come wealth beyond the dreams of avarice and be "disgruntled" at any failure to that end. When he was himself the paymaster and shared as an individual the conditions attaching to his comrades, there could be no complaint. Henry Irving was a most loyal subject; he wished at all times to render love and honour to the Monarch, and as he was in his own way a conspicuous individual it was necessary to be careful lest his good intentions should stray.

Sir Henry Ponsonby quite understood Irving's feelings and wishes, and acceded to them. Train arrangements were to be at the expense of the Queen, who was particular that this should be the rule with all her guests. Of course Irving acquiesced. When the day—March 18, which the Queen wished—had been arranged the matter of accomplishment was left entirely in his hands. Forthwith the work of preparation began.

New scenery, exactly the same as that in use but on a smaller scale and better suited to its mechanism to the limited space, was painted; and with it a beautiful proscenium for the miniature theatre built up in the Waterloo Chamber. The first contingent which went to Windsor on the morning of the day of the performance numbered one hundred and seventy-eight persons.

At nine o'clock the Queen arrived, walking slowly through the long corridor. She sat, of course, in the centre of the daïs, with the Empress Frederick of Germany on her right and the Prince of Wales on her left. The room was exquisitely decorated with plants and flowers, and as it was filled with ladies and gentlemen in court dress and uniform, the effect was very fine. The play went well. The Queen had with

graceful and kindly forethought given orders that all present might applaud as they would—it not having been etiquette to applaud on such occasions without Royal permission. Another piece of thoughtful kindness of Her Majesty was to have amongst the guests staying for the week-end at Windsor Lord and Lady Tennyson. The adaptation of the play to the lesser space than the Lyceum was so judiciously done that one did not notice any difference.

At the close of the performance the Queen sent for Irving and Ellen Terry and complimented them on the perfection and beauty of their playing. To Irving she said:

"It is a very noble play! What a pity that old Tennyson did not live to see it. It would have delighted him as it has delighted Us!"

She also received Geneviève Ward and William Terriss.

The Queen always wished that her guests of all degrees should be made welcome, and Sir Henry Ponsonby said that she had arranged that all the company, players and workmen of all kinds, should dine and take supper in the Castle. The dinner was less formal, but the supper was in its way a function. Four different rooms were arranged for the purpose. In the first were the acting company and higher officials to the number of about fifty. The gentlemen of the orchestra and the heads of departments in the second and third; the workmen, &c., in the fourth. At the end all drank the Queen's health loyally.

There was an immense amount of public interest in this performance. So high it ran that all the great newspapers asked permission to be represented. This request could not be acceded to as it was a purely private affair; the utmost that could by usage be allowed was that press representatives should during the afternoon be allowed to see the Waterloo Chamber prepared for the performance in the evening.

Late in the afternoon I received a request from a lot of the chief papers that I should myself ask permission to send a short despatch, say some five hundred words, at the

close of the performance. I took the message to Sir Henry Ponsonby, who seemed very much struck with it, as though the public importance of the event had suddenly dawned on him. He said:

"I must take this to the Queen at once and learn her wishes respecting it. The matter seems to be of much more importance than I had thought!" He came back shortly, seemingly very pleased, and said to me, speaking as he approached:

"The Queen says that she is very pleased to give permission. Mr. Bram Stoker may write whatever he pleases about the event. But he must say nothing till after the performance is all over." Then he added, "The Queen also told me to explain that she was sending orders to have the telegraph office in the Castle kept open for your convenience till you have quite done with it. I had better explain that the telegraph office here is a private one and that the Queen pays for all telegrams. This she insists on."

Altogether the performance was a very memorable one. It marked an epoch in the life of the great Queen—that in which she broke the long gloom of more than thirty years and began the restoration to something like the old happy life of the earlier years of her reign.

III SANDRINGHAM, 1902

The second visit to Sandringham came thirteen years after the first, being in 1902, after the King's accession. The occasion was that of the Kaiser's visit. The King wished to have a surprise for him; and at the time he had his "Command" conveyed to Irving his wish was intimated that the matter should be kept absolutely secret till the event came off. This we could see was to be a difficult task; but the promise was given and kept. At the date fixed—November 14—we would be playing in Belfast, so that the task to get there and return with the loss of only one night to the audience was really a stupendous one. It would involve special arrangements with at least one shipping company and several railways. This would necessitate the fact of the

journey being known to so many people that really secrecy seemed impossible of achievement. However the matter was undertaken and had to be done. Not a soul other than the actively engaged knew of the affair beforehand. Even Ellen Terry was purposely kept in the dark. As the only play to be given by Irving was Waterloo the cast was small, there being only four people in it. These with three others would comprise the party. One man had been sent to London to bring down the scene specially painted for the occasion and to see to arrangements. Mr. Ben Webster, who was to play his original part of Colonel Midwinter, was to come from London, where he was then playing. Let me say here that not the slightest whisper went forth on our side; and we were surprised to see an account of what was to be done, which evidently came from another branch of the entertainment being made ready for the King's Imperial guest.

When we began to consider the practicability of the journey my heart sank. There seemed no way by which the out and return journeys could be done. I was for a time seriously considering the advisability of asking for a torpedo boat to run us over from Belfast, to Stranraer, Barrow, Fleetwood, or Liverpool. After a good deal of consideration, however, a journey was arranged which could only have been done by placing the whole resources of shipping and railway companies at our disposal. The Magic, the fastest boat of the Belfast line, was to be taken off her regular service two days before; loaded up with the best Welsh coal, and held ready at the wharf with full steam up on the evening of the journey. The railroading would be arranged from Euston.

Faust was played in Belfast on the night of November 13. As the members of the little party finished on the stage they got dressed and were driven down to the wharf. The moment the last call was given at the end of the play Irving hurried into his travelling clothes, and he and I were whirled off to the Magic. The instant we passed on deck the gangway plank was drawn and the ship started off full speed. Such was contrary to law, as ships should only go part speed in the Loch. But no one made

objections; we were on the King's service.

We got to Liverpool at eight in the morning and found alongside the dock the special carriage, one of the Royal saloons used on the London and North-Western Railway; got on board and were whirled off to Crewe, where we caught the fast express to Rugby. There we took on a dining-car and went on to Peterborough. Here our carriage was handed over to the Great Eastern Company, which took us on the fast train to Lynn, and thence on a special to Wolferton.

At ten o'clock precisely, Sandringham time—which is half an hour ahead of standard time—the Kaiser and the Queen moved into the great drawing-room where the stage was fixed. Then followed the King and family, and guests. There were altogether some three hundred and fifty in the room.

As the movement to the theatre began there was—to us—an amusing episode. After our arrival, when things were being put in order for the performance, it had been discovered that kettle-drums were missing. Either they had not been sent at all or they had gone astray. At first we took it for granted that in such a scene of pomp and splendour as was around us drums and drummers would be easy to find. But it was not so. Drums were obtainable but no drummer, and there was not time to get one from the nearest town. Now the military music is necessary for the performance of Waterloo; the quicksteps are not only required for the Prelude but are in the structure of the piece. For the occasion of the Imperial visit, there had been brought from Vienna a celebrated string band, the conductor of high status in his art and all the components of the band fine players. But there was no drummer; and there could be even no proper rehearsal of the incidental music of the play without the drums. We were beginning to despair, when the head constable of the county who was present said that there was one man in the police of the division who was the drummer of the Police Band of the district, and undertook to try and find him. After much telegraphing and telephoning it was found that he was out on his beat about the

farthest point of his district. However, when he was located a trap with a fresh horse was sent for him. He arrived tired and foodless just before the time fixed for beginning. He was a fine performer fortunately, a master of his work, and with the score before him needed no preparation.

When the signal was given of the movement of the Royalties the Conductor took his baton, but when he looked at the score of the Prelude, which is continually changing time with the medley of the various regimental quicksteps, he said:

“I cannot play it.”

“Go on, man! Go on!” said Belmore, who was acting as stage manager.

“I cannot!” he answered; “I cannot!” and stood unmoving. Things were serious, for already the procession was formed and the Kaiser and the Queen were entering the room. It had been arranged that the Prelude was to play them to their seats. “Give me the stick!” said Belmore suddenly, and took the fiddle bow with which he conducted from the unresisting hand of the stranger. Of course all this was behind the scenes and amongst ourselves only. Then he began to conduct. He had never done so, but he had some knowledge of music. But the gentlemen of the band did not hesitate. They were all fine musicians and well accustomed to playing together. Probably they were not averse from showing that they could play perfectly without a conductor at all! They certainly did seem to play with especial verve. Belmore was a sight to behold. He seemed to know all the tricks of leadership, modifying or increasing tone with one hand whilst he beat time with the other; pausing dramatically with uplifted baton or beating with sudden forcefulness; screwing round with his left hand as though to twist the music into a continued unity. Anyhow it—or something—told. The music went excellently and without a hitch.

At one o’clock—half-past one Sandringham time—we drove to Wolferton; and at a quarter to seven in the morning we got to the dock at Liverpool and went aboard the Magic which stood ready with steam up. The tide was low, but as there was much

fog in the river Mr. McDowell arranged that the dock-gates should be opened before the usual hour. We actually stirred up the mud with the screw as we passed out into the Mersey. The river was dark with thick fog and we had to find our way, inch by inch, to beyond New Brighton. We were beginning to despair of arriving at Belfast in time when we cleared the belt of fog. We came out seemingly all at once into bright sunshine which lasted all the way home. It was a delightful day and a delightful run. The sun was bright, the air fresh and bracing and the water of sapphire blue so calm that passing to the south'ard of the Isle of Man we ran between the Calf and the Hen and Chickens—the dangerous cluster of rocks lying just outside it.

We ran full tilt up Belfast Lough and arrived at the wharf at five o'clock in good time for a wash and dress for the theatre.

When Irving stepped on the stage that night he got a right hearty cheer.

That journey was in many ways a record.

LXIX PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

I

Henry Irving had the honour of calling four Presidents of the United States by the name of friend.

The first was General Chester A. Arthur, who was in his high office in 1884 when Irving first visited Washington. The President sent to him a most kindly invitation to a Reception through Clayton McMichael, then Marshal of the district of Columbia. This was on the night of Saturday, 8th March. After the Reception he asked Irving to remain with a very few intimate friends after the rest had gone. They sat till a late—or rather an early hour.

II

Irving's first meeting with Mr. Grover Cleveland was when the latter was President-Elect. The occasion was the matinée for the benefit of the Actor's Fund at the Academy of Music in New York, December 4, 1884. Mr. Cleveland was in a box, and when Irving had with Ellen Terry played the fourth act of The Merchant of Venice he sent to ask if he would come to see him in his box. The occasion seemed rather peculiar as Irving thus described it to me that evening:

"When I came into the box Mr. Cleveland turned round and, seeing me, stood up and greeted me warmly. As I was thus facing the stage I could not help noticing that a man dressed exactly as I dressed Shylock, and with a wig and make-up counterparts of my own, was playing some droll antics with a pump and milk cans. The President-Elect saw, I suppose, the surprise on my face, for he turned to the stage for a moment and then, turning back to me again, said in a grave way:

"'That doesn't seem very good taste, does it!' Then leaning against the side of the box with his face to me and his back to the stage, he went on speaking about Shylock."

III

Major McKinley was a friend before he was nominated for President. The first meeting was at New York on November 16, 1893. He came to the play with Melville Stone, a great friend of Irving's—who introduced the Player to him. The following week we all met again at supper with John Sergeant Wise. This time Joseph Jefferson was of the party. Afterwards in Cleveland Mark Hanna brought him round to see Irving in his dressing-room.

In 1899, during our visit to Washington, Irving and I called at the White House to pay our respects to the President, then in his second term of office. The officials of course recognised Sir Henry, and said that they knew the President would wish to

see him. A Cabinet meeting was on, but when word was sent the President graciously sent a message asking Irving to wait as the Cabinet was nearly over and he wished to see him. We waited in the "War Room," with which Irving was immensely struck. He said it was the most wonderful piece of organisation he had ever known.

Presently word was brought that the Cabinet Council was over and would we go in. It was really an impressive sight—all the more as there was no pomp or parade of any sort. In the middle of the great room with its row of arched windows stood the President, the baldness of his domed forehead making more apparent than ever his likeness to Napoleon. Grouped round him were various chiefs of State departments, amongst them John Hay, Secretary of State; Elihu Root, Secretary for War; Charles Emory Smith, Postmaster-General, all of whom were by that time old friends. We had known them intimately since 1883–4. The President was sweetly gracious. We thought that he did not seem well in health; there was a waxen hue in his face which we did not like. The terrible labour of the Presidency—increased in his time by two wars—was undoubtedly telling on his strength. We were with him quite half an hour, a long while for such a place and time, and then came away.

At that visit to the White House we saw President McKinley for the last time. His assassination was attempted on 6th September 1901; he died on 14th.

On the 18th September Irving gave his Reading of Becket at Winchester for the King Alfred Millenary. He was called on to speak, and after speaking of King Alfred and what he had done for the making of England, he said:

"All that race which looks on King Alfred's memory as a common heritage is in bitter grief for one whom to-morrow a mourning nation is to lay to rest. President McKinley, like his predecessor of a thousand years ago, worked for all the world; and his memory shall be green for ever in the hearts of a loyal and expansive race—in the hearts of all English-speaking people."

IV

Irving's first meeting with Theodore Roosevelt was on 27th November 1895. The occasion was a luncheon party given by Seth Low, ex-Mayor of Brooklyn and then President of Columbia College. At that time Mr. Roosevelt was Commissioner of Police for the City of New York, with absolute power over the whole force. He and Irving had a chat together before lunch and again after it. For myself he was a person of extraordinary interest. After I had been introduced we had a chat. Before he left he came to me and said:

"I am holding a sort of Court of justice the day after to-morrow—a trial of the charges made against policemen during the last fortnight. Would you like to come with me; you seem to be interested in the subject?"

I went with him to an immense hall where were gathered all the complainants and all the police, with their respective witnesses. Everything was done in perfect order. The Commissioner had the list of cases before him, and when one was over, a lusty officer with a stentorian voice called out the next. Those interested in each case had been already grouped, so that when the case was announced the whole body thus segregated moved up in front of the table. The method was simple. The case was stated as briefly as possible—the Commissioner saw to that; the witnesses for the prosecution gave their evidence and were now and again asked a question from the Bench. Then the defendant had his say and produced his witnesses, if any; again came an occasional searching question from the Commissioner, who when he had satisfied himself as to the justice of the case would smite the table with his hand and order on the next case. While the little crowd was changing places he would write a few words on the paper before him—judgment and perhaps sentence in one. The Commissioner was incarnate justice, and his judgments were given with a direct simplicity and brevity which were very remarkable. Each one would take only a few minutes; sometimes as few as two or three, never more than about twelve or fifteen.

As there were very many cases brevity was a necessity.

Now and then in a case very difficult of conclusion Mr. Roosevelt, when he had written his decision, would turn to me and say:

“What do you think of that?” I would answer to the best of my own opinion. Then he would turn up the paper, lying face down, and show me what had been his own decision. As in every such case it was exactly what I had said, I thought—naturally—that he was very just.

I came away from the Court with a very profound belief in Mr. Roosevelt. I wrote afterwards in my diary:

“Must be President some day. A man you can’t cajole, can’t frighten, can’t buy.”

On December 28, 1903, Irving commenced a week’s engagement at Washington. On the morning of Friday, January 1, 1904, he received a letter from the President saying that he was that day holding his New Year’s Reception and that he would be very pleased if he would come. Sir Henry would be expected to come by the private entrance with the Ambassadors. It was such a letter as to make its recipient feel proud—so courteous, so full of fine feeling and genuine hospitality—so significant of his liking and respect.

We went in by the private entrance at the back, and were brought up at once. At his Reception the President stood a little inside the doorway on the right and shook hands with every one who came—no light task in itself as there were on the queue for the reception a good many thousands of persons, male and female. The long line four deep extended far into the neighbouring streets, winding round the corners like a huge black snake, and disappearing in the distance. The serpentine appearance was increased by the slow movement as the crowd advanced inch by inch.

Beside the President stood Mrs. Roosevelt and beyond him all the Ministers of his Cabinet with their wives in line—all the ladies were in full dress. The room was in form of a segment of a circle and the crowd passed between red cords stretched

across the base of the arc, the President's party being behind either cord. The President gave Irving a really cordial greeting and held him for a minute or two speaking—a long time with such a crowd waiting. He did not know that I was with Irving, but when he saw me he addressed me by name. He certainly has a royal memory! He asked us to go behind the ropes and join his family and friends. This we did. We remained there a full hour, and Irving was made much of by all.

LXX KNIGHTHOOD

I

Late in the afternoon of Friday, May 24, 1895, I got from Irving the following telegram:

"Could you look in at quarter to six. Something important."

When I saw him he showed me two letters which he had received. One was from the Prime Minister, the Earl of Rosebery, telling him that the Queen had conferred on him the honour of knighthood in personal recognition and for his services to art.

The other was from the Prince of Wales congratulating him on the event.

The announcement had evidently given the Actor very much pleasure; even when I saw him he was much moved.

The next day was the Queen's Birthday on which the "Honour List" was promulgated, and when it was known that Irving was so honoured the telegrams, letters and cables began to pour in from all parts of the world. For it was in its way a remarkable event. It was the first time that in any country an actor had been, quâ actor, honoured by the State.

It really seemed as if the whole world rejoiced at the honour to Irving. The letters and telegrams kept coming literally in hundreds during the next two days, and cables constantly arrived from America, Australia, Canada, India, and from nearly all the

nations in Europe. They were bewildering. Late in the afternoon of Saturday Irving sat at his desk in the Lyceum before piles of them opened by one of the clerks. Presently he turned to me with his hand to his head and said:

"I really can't read any more of these at present. I must leave them to you, old chap. They make my head swim." Of course he did in time read them all; and sent answers too. For three days several men were at work copying out the answers as he sorted them out into heaps, each heap having a similar wording. It was quite impossible to send a distinctly different answer to each—and it was not necessary.

The actual knighting took place at Windsor Castle on July 18. The account of it was told by Arthur Arnold, who was knighted in the same batch, and who came very soon after Irving. He said that the Queen, who usually did not make any remark to the recipient of the honour as she laid the sword on his shoulder, said on this occasion:

"I am very, very pleased!"

II

The corollary of the honour came the next day when on the Lyceum stage a presentation was made to Irving by his fellow players. This was unique of its kind. It was an Address of Congratulation signed by every actor in the kingdom. The Address was read by Sir (then Mr.) Squire Bancroft. Irving was greatly touched by it; few things were so essentially dear to him as the approval of his fellows. The unanimity was in itself a wonder. The Address was in the shape of a volume and was contained in a beautiful casket of gold and crystal designed by Johnston Forbes-Robertson—a painter as well as a player.

III

The idea of knighthood for Irving was not new to that year, 1895. I mention this now because after his death a statement was made that he had by a lecture at the Royal

Institution compelled the Government to give him knighthood. The statement was, of course, more than ridiculous. Here is what happened to my own knowledge:

In 1883, before Irving's visit to America, I was consulted, I understood on behalf of a very exalted person, by the late Sir James Mackenzie, as to whether the conferring of knighthood would be pleasing to Mr. Irving. It has never been usual to confer the honour on an unwilling recipient—any more than it has been to allow any "forcing" to be effective. I asked for a day to find out. Then I conveyed the result of my veiled inquiry into the matter. At that time Irving thought it was better that an actor, whilst actively pursuing his calling, should not be so singled out from his fellows. On my showing, the matter was not proceeded with at that time. From the very beginning of his management of the Lyceum he had been scrupulously particular that all the names given on the cast of the play should be printed in the same type. That rule was never altered, even after his knighthood. But as he was no longer "Mr." and would not be called by his title he thenceforth appeared as "Henry Irving." Advertisement was, of course, different as to type, but he did not use the title.

IV

But in the twelve years that had elapsed since 1883 many things had changed. Other Arts had benefited by the large measures of official recognition extended to them; and the very fact of the Art of Acting not having any official recognition was being used as an argument that it was not an art at all. Indeed his lecture at the Royal Institution, whilst it was in no way intended to "force" recognition or had no power of so doing, was taken as a manifest proof that the conferring of the honour would be regarded in a favourable light. Thus it was that in 1895 no "judicious" opinion was asked; none was necessary. The Prime Minister was assured that there could not be any contretemps, and even the Prince of Wales felt secure in his most gracious letter of congratulation.

I feel it too bad that one who in his days tried to live up to the ideal of discretion,

and has regarded reticence as a duty rather than a motive, should have to speak openly, even after a lapse of years, on so private a matter; and I can only trust that I may be forgiven should any one with the power of forgiveness see the need of it. But such statements as those to which I have alluded are calculated to destroy all the claim of gracious courtesy—of the spontaneous kindness from which high favour springs; and it is, I think, better that I should be deemed to err than that such a misconception should be allowed to pass.

V

The King was always a most gracious and generous friend to Irving. Throughout the whole management of the Lyceum and to the time of Irving's death, King Edward, both as Prince and King, extended to him the largest measure of his approval. He gave him a position by his very courtesy and by the hospitalities which he graciously gave and accepted. When players dined with him the post of honour on his right hand was always given to Irving. He showed his own immediate surroundings in private as well as the world in public that he respected Irving as well as liked and admired him. He showed that he considered the Player in his own way to have brought some measure of honour to the great nation that he rules and whose countless hearts he sways.

He often honoured the Player by being his guest in the theatre. At the marriage of the present Prince of Wales he was given a place in St. James's Palace; at the Queen's funeral he was bidden to a seat in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. At the King's coronation he was amongst the guests invited to Westminster Abbey.

And, whether as Prince or King, his Most Gracious Majesty Edward VII. R. et I. had no more loyal, no more respectful, no more believing, no more loving subject than Henry Irving.

LXXI HENRY IRVING AND UNIVERSITIES

I DUBLIN

The first University to recognise Irving's great position was that of Dublin. In 1876 it gave him an informal Address. In 1892 it conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Literature—"Litt.D." As this was the first occasion on which a University degree was given Honoris Causa to an actor, quâ actor, it may be allowable to say something of it.

It had for a long time been the intention of the Senate to confer on him a suitable degree. The occasion came in the celebration of the Tercentenary of the University, which was founded by Queen Elizabeth.

In order to be present Irving had to go out of the bill at the Lyceum, where we were then playing Henry VIII. He and I travelled to Dublin by the mail of Tuesday, 5th July. We had heard that the Dublin folk and the Irish generally were very pleased that he was to receive the honour, but the first evidence we saw of it was the attitude of the chief steward on the mail boat. He could not make enough of Irving, and in his excitement confused his honours and invented new ones. He was at a loss what to call him. He tried "Docthor," but it did not seem to satisfy him. Then he tried "Sir Henry"—this was three years before he was knighted; but this also seemed inadequate. Then he tried "Docthor Sir Henry"; this seemed to meet his ideas and to it he stuck.

The function of the conferring of degrees was a most interesting one; the mere pageant of it was fine. There were representatives of nearly all the Universities of the world, each in its proper robes. As Irving passed to his place in the Examination Hall he was loudly cheered. I was, of course, not close to him; I sat with the Senate, of which I am a member. He looked noble and distinguished, and the robes seemed to suit him. His height and bearing and lean figure carried off the peculiarly strong mass of colour. The robes of the Dublin Doctor of Literature are scarlet robes with broad facing of deep blue, and scarlet hood with blue lining. The cap is the usual

Academic “mortar-board” with long tassel. When Irving was present at the formal opening of the Royal College of Music, where all who were entitled to do so wore Academic dress, his robes stood out in startling prominence.

Of course, each recipient of a degree received an ovation, but there was none so marked as that to Irving. He went up with the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Frederic (afterwards Lord) Leighton and Mr. (now Sir) Lawrence Alma-Tadema, R.A., these three being bracketed in the agenda of the function. When the conferring of degrees was over and the assembly in the Examination Hall poured out into the quadrangle, Irving was seized by a great body of some hundreds of students and carried to the steps of the dining-hall opposite, where he was compelled to make a speech.

At the banquet that night there was something of a faux pas, which was later much commented on. In the toast list was one: Science, Literature and Art.

This was proposed by the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, and was responded to for Science by Lord Kelvin; for Literature by the Bishop of Derry; and for Art by Sir Frederic Leighton. The latter was, of course, quite correct, for the President of the Royal Academy is naturally the official mouthpiece for the voice of Art in this country. The mistake was that, in speaking for Art, Sir Frederic limited himself to Painting. He spoke in reality for himself and Alma-Tadema, but ignored completely the sister Art of Acting, the chief exponent of which was a fellow recipient of the honour which he himself had received that day and who was present as a guest at the banquet. The comments of the press on the omission were marked, and the authorities of the University did not like the mistake. Leighton evidently heard of some comment on it, for a few days afterwards he wrote to Irving to explain that he did not think he was intended to reply, except for his own Art.

It was this circumstance that made up Irving’s mind to put forward on some suitable occasion the claims of his own Art to a place in the general category. The

opportunity came a little more than two years afterwards at the Royal Institution. On that occasion he selected for his subject, “Acting: an Art”—the truth of which he proved logically and conclusively. I mention the circumstance here as his silence has been misconstrued.

II CAMBRIDGE

The second University to honour the Player was Cambridge. The occasion was this:

He was asked by the Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Hill, to give the “Rede” Lecture for 1898. This request is, from the antiquity and record of the function, in itself an honour.

The Rede Lecture was delivered at noon in the Senate House of the University on Wednesday, 15th June, 1898, for the night of which day he had closed the Lyceum. Irving had chosen as his subject, “The Theatre in its relation to the State.” Throughout his life he always selected some subject connected with his work. His art with him was the Alpha and Omega of his endeavour. In this case he showed that, though some might regard the theatre as a mere pleasure-house, it had in truth a much more important use as a place of education.

“I claim for the theatre that it may be, and is, a potent means of teaching great truths and furthering the spread or education of the higher kind—the knowledge of the scope and working of human character.”

The lecture was beautifully and earnestly delivered and was received with very great enthusiasm. Very picturesque the lecturer looked in the rostrum in his Dublin robes. These he exchanged later in the day, when he received his Cambridge degree, D.Litt. This dress, all scarlet and red with velvet hat, looked even more picturesque than that of Dublin University.

That was an exhausting day. A journey from St. Pancras at 8.15 A.M. A visit to the Vice-Chancellor at Downing Lodge, Cambridge. The Public Lecture. Luncheon with the Vice-Chancellor in Downing Hall, with speech. The Conferring of Degree. A

Garden Party at King's College. A Dinner Party in Hall given by the Master and Fellows of Trinity College to the Recipients of degrees. A Reception in the house of the Master of Trinity. And finishing up with a quiet smoke among a few friends at the rooms of Dr. Jackson.

The next morning there was a delightful breakfast in the house of Frederick Myers—Mrs. Myers, formerly Miss Tennant, was an old friend of Irving. Lord Dufferin was the youngest of the party, despite his seventy-two years. I think the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava had the most winning manner of any man I ever met. There was a natural sweetness of the heart and an infinite humour from the head whose combination was simply irresistible. His humour was of enormous and wide-embracing range, and touched with illumination whatever subject he talked of. He and Irving had much to say to each other. The rest who were present wished to hear them both; and so there was silence when either spoke. Irving seemed quite charmed with Lord Dufferin and gave way to him altogether. The picture rises before me of the scene in the study of Frederick Myers after breakfast, well shown by the wide window opening out on the beautiful garden behind the house. Seated on the high fender with padded top, with his back to the fireplace, sat Lord Dufferin, and round him in a close circle—the young girls being the closest and looking with admiring eyes—the whole of the rest of the party. His clear, sweet, exquisitely modulated voice seemed to suit the sunshine and the universal brightness of the place. Lord Dufferin's voice seemed to rise and fall, to quicken or come slowly by a sort of selective instinct. It struck me as being naturally one of the most expressive voices I had ever heard.

That night Irving played The Medicine Man at the Lyceum, and I thought I detected here and there a trace of the influence of Lord Dufferin in the more winning passages of the play.

III GLASGOW

Irving now held University degrees from Ireland and England. The Scottish degree came in another year. For a long time Professor Herbert Story, D.D., LL.D., the Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow, had a very high opinion of Henry Irving and of the good work which he had done for education and humanity. I remember well a talk which Dr. Story had with me in his study after I had lunched with him on 26th June 1896. Incidentally he mentioned that he thought his University should give Irving a degree. Two years after, 22nd October 1898, he told me that it was in contemplation to carry this out in the following year. In that year Professor Story was presented by the Queen to the Principalship of the University on the resignation of Dr. Caird from that high position. On the 20th July 1899, the honour was actually completed when Irving was invested with his degree of LL.D.

That was, I think, the only honourable occasion of Irving's life since 1878 at which I was not present. But it was quite impossible; I was then in bed with a bad attack of pneumonia. I had been looking forward to the occasion, for Principal Story and his wife and daughters were friends of mine as well as of Irving. I read, however, of the heartiness of his reception, both in the Bute Hall, where the degrees were conferred, and by the great mass of students without.

IV OXFORD

On Sunday, 7th March 1886, Irving and I went to Oxford to stay with W. L. Courtney, then a Don of New College. For some years the two men had been close friends and Courtney, whenever he was in London, would come to supper in the Beefsteak Room. This Oxford visit was arranged for some time, for Courtney was anxious to have Irving meet some of the Heads of Colleges. The dinner was naturally a formal one, for in Oxford a very strict order of precedence rules. The Vice-Chancellor of the University—Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol College—was there; also the Master of University, the President of Magdalen, and the Warden of

Merton, the last three with their wives. Professor Max Müller was also a guest, his wife and daughter completed the party of fourteen. Jowett was in great form that evening. He was always a good and original talker, but he seemed on that evening to be on his mettle. During dinner one of the ladies sounded to Irving the praises of the Ober-Ammergau play, its fine effects, its deep moral teaching, and so forth. Irving listened attentively, and presently said quietly:

"If it is so good they ought to bring it to the Crystal Palace." The lady was quite shocked, and turning to the Vice-Chancellor said:

"Oh, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, do you hear what Mr. Irving says: 'That the Ober-Ammergau play should be brought to the Crystal Palace!'" The pause round the table was marked. All wanted eagerly to hear what the Vice-Chancellor, who in those days ruled Oxford, would say to such a startling proposition. His answer startled them afresh when it came:

"Why not!"

The result of the rapprochement which Courtney had so kindly effected was that Irving was asked to give an Address at the University. He, of course, assented to the honourable request, and the date was fixed for Saturday, 26th June. The subject which he chose for the discourse was "English Actors: their Characteristics and their Methods."

On arriving at Oxford on the day he and I went at once with W. L. Courtney, who had met us at the station, to the New Examination Hall, where the Address was to be given. Irving always liked to see beforehand the place in which he was to act or speak. From there we drove to Balliol, where we were staying with the Master. At half-past nine o'clock we went to the hall with him. The great hall was crowded to suffocation with an immense audience, and the reception was warm in the extreme. The discourse was received with rapt attention pointed with applause; and the conclusion was followed by a salvo of cheers. Then came the presentation of an

Address, made by the Vice-Chancellor in a delightful, carefully-worded speech. Amongst other things Dr. Jowett said:

“I express ... our admiration of him for the great services which he has rendered to the world and to society by improving and elevating the stage....”

Then after explaining the views of Plato on whose work he was so supreme an authority, regarding the rhapsodist, and of Socrates on the same subject, and following up the views of the latter with regard to the good company he kept, he went on:

“The drama is the only form of literature which is not dead, but alive, and is always being brought to life again and again by the genius of the actor.... The indirect influence of the theatre is very great, and tends to permeate all classes of society, so that the condition of the stage is not a bad index or test of a nation’s character. And those who, regardless of their own pecuniary loss or gain, have brought back Shakespeare to the English stage, who have restored his plays to their original form, who have quickened in the English people the love of his writings and the feelings of his greatness may be truly considered national benefactors.”

Surely a noble tribute this from a man of such personal and official distinction to the worth of the drama, the stage, and the great actor to whom his praise was given.

Breakfast next morning was another pleasant function, at which all the house-party were present. The “Master,” as Dr. Jowett was called, was in great form. I remember his quoting a remark of Tennyson’s:

“I would rather get six months than put two S’S together in verse!”

V VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

In 1894 Manchester had no University exclusively its own. Its College, Owens College, was chartered by the Queen in 1880 and it was afterwards grouped with the Colleges of Liverpool and Leeds in the Victoria University. It was not till 1904 that

it became a University by itself.

Before the time of visiting Manchester, on his tour of 1894, Irving was asked to give a lecture to the Owens College Literary Society. To this he acceded, and chose as his subject “The Character of Macbeth.”

His reason for the choice was that he had wished to make, under important conditions, a reply to some of the criticisms with which he had been assailed on his reproduction of Shakespeare’s play in 1888, but a suitable opportunity had not up to then appeared. Some of these criticisms had been ridiculous, some puerile, some even infantile. I remember Irving telling me that one ingenuous gentleman had gone so far as to suggest that the Messenger who in Act. I. scene 5 announces to Lady Macbeth the coming of the King, should have a bad cold. His contention having been that Lady Macbeth says in her soliloquy:

“The raven himself is hoarse

That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

Under my battlements.”

The delay in his answer to the various feeble or foolish things spoken of his work did not detract from its power. His reasoning on the character from the text and from a study of the authorities which Shakespeare had evidently had before him when he wrote, was absolutely masterly. I venture to say that no student of the play can form any kind of correct estimate of Macbeth’s character without reading it.

The lecture was given on the afternoon of Tuesday, 11th December, in the Chemical Theatre, the largest hall then appertaining to the College and holding some eight hundred persons. That the student element manifested itself in no uncertain way is shown by the note in my diary:

“H. I. got enormous reception. Cheers were startling! On leaving, students wanted to take out horses and draw carriage, but wiser counsels prevailed.”

VI HARVARD

a

Irving gave addresses at Harvard on two separate occasions.

The first was on 30th March 1885, on which occasion he took as his subject “The Art of Acting.”

We were then playing in New York, but as Irving had promised to come to Boston for the occasion, we left on Sunday afternoon. Several friends came with us, amongst whom was William Winter, of the New York Tribune. The train, on which we had a special carriage, was met at Worcester by a deputation of Harvard students, who travelled back with us to Boston. The address was given on the Monday evening, 30th, in the Sanders Theatre, a beautifully proportioned hall of octagon shape, which though looking not large yet held on that occasion over two thousand people. The crowd was so great at the doors both inside and outside that when we arrived at half-past seven we could not get in. Finally we had to be taken in through the trap-door to the coal cellar, from which by devious ways we were escorted to the platform. The Address was received enthusiastically. My note says:

“Went well. H.I. looked very distinguished.”

That was in reality a mild putting of the fact. Distinguished was hardly an adequate adjective. Even from that sea of fine intellectual heads his noble face shone out like a star.

We were all to sup with the President of the College, Mr. Elliot; but when the time of departure came we could not find Winter. We searched for him high and low, but without avail. As a large party was waiting at the President’s house we had to make up our minds to go without him. I had, however, one more last look and found him. He was in the coal cellar, which was about the only quiet place in the building. He sat on a heap of coal; on the ground beside him was a lighted candle stuck in the neck of a bottle which he had somehow requisitioned. When I came upon him he

was writing furiously—if so rude a word may be applied to an art so gentle. He glanced up, when I spoke, with an appealing look and, with raised hand, said with passionate entreaty:

"Bram, for God's sake!"—I understood, and left him, having secured from a local fireman the promise of unfaltering obedience to my instructions to wait and take him to the carriage which we left for him. I also left a telegraph messenger on guard, for I saw that he was writing on telegraph "flimsy."

Any one who will take the trouble to look up the file of the New York Tribune of the following day—March 31, 1885—will read as fine a piece of descriptive criticism as can well be. I hope that such an one when he finishes the article will spare time for a glance, from the eye of imagination, at the silent figure phrasing it in the gloom of the coal cellar.

b

Irving's second address at Harvard was nine years later. On that occasion his subject was: "The Value of Individuality," and the address was given in the afternoon—the place being the same, the Sanders Theatre. There was again a great audience and a repetition of the old enthusiasm.

That night the Tremont Theatre in Boston, where we were playing, saw an occasion unique to the place, though not to the actor. The University had proclaimed a "Harvard Night," and the house was packed with College men, from President to jib. At the end of the performance—Nance Oldfield and The Bells—the students presented to Irving a gold medal commemorative of the occasion.

I may perhaps, before leaving the subject of Harvard University, mention a somewhat startling circumstance. It had become a custom during our visit to Boston for a lot of Harvard students to act as "supers" in our plays. There seemed to be a brisk demand for opportunities and the local super-master grew rich on options. When we played King Arthur in 1895 there were many of these gentlemen who

wore armour—the beautiful armour designed by Burne-Jones. The biggest of the men available were chosen for this service, and there were certainly some splendidly stalwart young men amongst them. A few of them got "sky-larking" amongst themselves on the stage before the curtain went up. Sky-larking in full armour is a hazardous thing both to oneself and to others, and a blow struck in fun with the unaccustomed weight of plate armour behind it had an unexpected result, for the stricken man was knocked head over heels senseless just as Irving had come on the stage to see that all was correct for the coming scene—"The Great Hall of Camelot." He reprimanded the super shortly and told him that if he undertook duties he should respect them, and himself, in performing them gravely. Imagine his surprise when in the morning he received a bellicose cartel from the offended young man challenging him to mortal combat. Irving, who took all things as they were meant, understood that the man was a gentleman who considered himself wronged and wrote him a pleasant letter in which he explained the necessity of taking gravely the work which others considered grave. The young man was a gentleman, and wrote a handsome apology for his misconduct on the stage and explained that he had had no intention of either breaking rules or hurting any one else.

And so on that occasion no blood was shed.

VII COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Owens College, Manchester, blossoming into Manchester University, had a parallel in the growth of Columbia University, New York. In 1895 when, at the request of its President, Seth Low, Irving delivered the address on "Macbeth," which he had delivered in Manchester, it was still merely a College though the matter of its coming development was then at hand. Before our next visit to America in 1899 the whole new University of Columbia had been built and equipped.

Irving's address was given in the Library, the largest hall in the old building, which had been somewhat dismantled for the purpose. It held some fifteen hundred

persons. The occasion was Irving's first experience of the New York College cry, which has a startling effect when enunciated in unison by a thousand lusty throats. When he entered the Library with the President, the cheering began and soon formulated itself into this special concourse of sounds. At the close of the address, which went extremely well, the enthusiastic cheering was repeated.

VIII CHICAGO UNIVERSITY

Irving addressed the University of Chicago twice.

The first was on 17th March 1896, when he repeated his lecture on "Macbeth." The second on April 25, 1900, when he repeated the lecture which he had given in 1895 at the Royal Institution: "Acting: an Art." Both addresses were given in the Kent Hall, which was on each occasion crowded to excess.

The University of Chicago might well be taken as an illustration of the rapid growth possible in America. In the fall of 1893 the ground on which it stands was a section of the World's Fair, what was called "The Midway Pleasaunce." In the spring of 1896, less than two years and a half, the University was built, organised and furnished with students to its full capacity.

IX PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

The last address which Irving gave in America was at Princeton University, where on March 19, 1902, he read a paper on the subject of "Shakespeare and Bacon," an eloquent and logical defence of Shakespeare against his detractors.

X LEARNED BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS

The following is a list of various addresses given by Irving at Institutions and before learned Bodies other than Universities:

"The Stage." Perry Bar Institute, near Birmingham, 6th March 1878.

"The Stage as it is." Philosophical Institute, Edinburgh, 8th November 1881.

"Shakespeare and Goethe." Goethe Society, New York, 15th March 1888. (Given at Madison Square Theatre.)

"Hamlet." Literary and Scientific Institute, Wolverhampton, 18th February 1890. (This was given at the Agricultural Hall.)

"The Art of Acting." Philosophical Institute, Edinburgh, 9th November 1891. (This was given in the Music Hall.)

"Shakespeare as a Playwright." Twentieth Century Club, Chicago, 2nd November 1893. (Given in the private theatre in the house of Mr. George Pullman.)

"Municipal Theatres." Literary Institute, Walsall, 26th September, 1894. (Given in the Grand Theatre.)

"Acting: an Art." Royal Institution, London, 1st February 1895.

"Macbeth." Contemporary Club, Philadelphia, 17th April 1886. (Given at the New Art Gallery.) Also at the Catholic Social Union, London, 17th May 1898. (Given at the house of Cardinal Vaughan.)

"Actors and Acting." Liberal Club, Buffalo, 4th February 1902.

LXXII ADVENTURES

I OVER A MINE-BED

On 9th August 1880 Irving and I went for a short holiday together. The heat in London was very great. We began at Southsea, where we stopped at the Pier Hotel; that evening after dinner in the afternoon we got a sail-boat and went over to Ryde, returning by moonlight. The next day we walked on the Esplanade. Southsea was very full, and along the sea front a vast crowd of people moved in endless procession. Every one seemed to know my companion, and he became surrounded with a crowd which, though the composing individuals changed, never left him. At last he got tired of shaking hands and answering endless commonplace questions. In

a momentary pause he said to me:

“I can’t stand any more of this. Let’s get a boat and have a sail. We can get quiet that way anyhow!”

We went down on the beach and picked out a likely looking boat that was ready launched. The boatman was very deaf, but as he seemed also dumb we regarded him as a find. He hoisted his sail and we began to steal away from shore. Behind us was a lot of shouting, and many people ran down on the beach gesticulating and calling out. We could not distinguish what they said; but we were both so accustomed to hear people shouting at Irving that we took it that the present was but another instance of clamorous goodwill.

We had got away from the shore about half a mile when suddenly there was a terrific sound close to us, and the boat was thrown about just as a rat is shaken by a dog. A column of water rose some thirty yards from us and for quite half a minute the sea round us seemed to boil. The old boatman seemed very much frightened and found his voice to the extent of ejaculations of a prayerful kind, mingled with blasphemy. There seemed some excuse for him, for it was certainly very terrifying. To us, who did not understand, it seemed like an earthquake or a volcanic eruption of some kind. Irving, however, was quite calm; he did not seem put out at all. The only motion he made was to put on his pince-nez which had been shaken off. I am not as a rule very timorous myself.

As the sea began to resume its normal calm it presented a strange appearance. All around us were strewn floating fish, mostly belly up, the white catching the eye everywhere. There were scores—hundreds of them, all seemingly dead. We lifted a lot of them into the boat. A few did not move at all, but after a while most of them began to wriggle and flop about. These had only been stunned.

We had after the first surprise taken it for granted that the shock had been from some submarine explosion; but we were content to await developments. When the

boatman began to get over his agitation, he enlightened us:

"'Tis they torpedoes; they've fired 'em by wire from Fort Monckton. 'Tis silly I am not to have thought on 'em an' kept out of the way!" Then he explained that the event of the day was to be an attack on Fort Monckton—the low-lying fort which guards the mouth of the harbour at Portsmouth—by the Glatton, then the most up-to-date of our scientifically equipped ships. We appeared to have come right over the mine-bed. The prudent fisherman had by this time put his boat's head against such wind as there was and began to gather up the unforeseen harvest of the sea. He was intent on this, though his hands shook and he kept looking around him apprehensively. We drifted with the tide. Presently, a little distance in front of us, another mine went off, and our friend got agitated afresh. He implored us to come away, and began to slack the sheet which he had drawn tight. Irving had lit a cigar and was calmly smoking. He had evidently taken a common-sense view of the situation.

"Why should we come away? We are, I take it, in about as safe a place as can be. The mines here have been fired and we don't know where the others are. If we go on, no matter in what direction, we shall probably come across another explosion. Let us stay where we are—and enjoy ourselves!" And stay we did and enjoyed—to a certain extent—the thunder of the cannon which later on, when the attack developed, rolled over the water and was brought to our ears, we being so close to the surface, in a way to make us feel as if each fresh explosion was close at hand.

I think, however, that we both enjoyed the attack more that night when the actual sham battle was fought. In those days search-lights were new and rare. Both the Glatton and Fort Monckton were well equipped with them, and during the attack the whole sea and sky and shore were perpetually swept with the powerful rays. It was in its way a noble fight, and as then most people were ignorant of the practical working of the new scientific appliances of war, it was instructive as well as

fascinating. We, who had been out in the middle of it during the day, could perhaps appreciate its possibilities better than ordinary civil folk unused to the forces and horrors of war!

II FIRES

a

The first fire of which Irving and I were spectators together was in November 1881. We were playing at Edinburgh and stayed in the old Edinburgh Hotel opposite the Scott Memorial. The house was pulled down long since. The hotel was made up of several houses thrown into one, and was of the ramshackle order. It would have been easily set on fire; and had it got well alight nothing could have saved it.

Loveday and I supped with Irving in his sitting-room on the second storey, and after supper were enjoying our smoke. It was then late for Edinburgh, nearly one o'clock. As we sat we heard a queer kind of roaring and crackling sound in the passage outside.

"That sounds like a fire!" I said, and ran out to see if I could help. In the passage a curious scene presented itself. A sort of housemaid's closet in the back wall was well alight; the flames were roaring. The night porter, when collecting the boots, had seen it and was now trying to put it out. He was in a really dangerous position, and was behaving very bravely. I ran up to my room just overhead and brought down two great jugs of water which were on my wash-hand stand. When I got down a tall man was standing near the closet and talking very angrily to the porter. He was attired in a long white night-shirt under which his bare feet and legs displayed themselves. He was not making the least effort to help, but kept on abusing the man who was working, Considering that the chances were that in a few minutes the whole hotel would be on fire, with what awful result none could foresee, it was strange conduct. In the midst of the hurry, for by this time we were all doing what we could, I had to laugh at the absurd situation and his out-of-place blaming:

"This is a pretty nice sort of thing for a gentleman staying in your damned hotel to have to endure! Do you always do this sort of thing, sir? Nice thing indeed! A gentleman to be waked up out of his bed by your infernal stupidity in setting the house on fire. Are we all to be burned in our beds? Nice sort of conduct indeed! Edinburgh should be ashamed of itself!" We were all hard at work but were doing little good. The porter who knew the place was trying to get at the water-tap within. He succeeded at last, and when a jet of water could be used in that narrow space the fire was soon held in check. We stood for a while to admire the angry stranger, still "jawing" away at the porter, who took not the least notice of him. By this time the other guests were alarmed and came running out of their rooms in various stages of night gear and partial dressing, till the passage was thronged with frightened women and men full of inquiries.

When we went back to the room to finish our smoke we left them all there. The unclad stranger was in the midst, still in a sublime state of indifference to decorum, haranguing—at what or whom he did not seem to know, for the porter had gone. In the room Irving said, as he cut the end of a fresh cigar:

"I wish I had that fellow's self-conceit—or even a bit of it. With it I could do anything!"

b

The next fire we were at was on 6th December 1882. We had supped together in the Lyceum after the play and were leaving tolerably early. We were going out by the private door in Burleigh Street, when there came a sudden red glare in front of us a little to the right, or north, just as Irving was crossing the sidewalk to the cab. In those days he always used a four-wheeler; he did not have a brougham till twelve or thirteen years later—and then it was a hired one.

"Hullo!" said Irving, "there is a fire! It seems pretty close too. I suppose you're off!" It was a standing joke with him against me that whenever there was a fire within

range I was off to it hot-foot. I was just putting on heavy shoes when a vehicle stopped hurriedly at the door and there was a loud rapping. I ran out—Irving was back.

"Come quick," he said, "don't wait to change. It's the Alhambra." We jumped into the cab and the man drove for all he was worth. We got into Leicester Square just as the police were clearing the place and forming a cordon. All the Bow Street men knew us both and they hurried us into a doorway just where the Empire Music Hall is now. From there we had a splendid view, the place all to ourselves.

The fire had made quick headway and as we got to our place the whole theatre seemed alight within, and the flames burst out of the windows. The Fire Brigade got to work quick; but when a building of that size and with so large an interior gets alight there is no checking it. Within a time which seemed incredibly short the roof began to send up sparks and flames, and then all at once it seemed to be lifted and to send up a fiery column of flames and sparks and smoke and burning ashes, which a few seconds later began to fall round us like rain. There was a terrific crash, and more leaping and towering flames. And then the roof fell in.

After the fall of the roof, the rest was detail. We waited an hour or so and then came away.

c

At the next fire we were not together. Irving was on the stage of the Star Theatre, New York, and I happened to be standing at the back of the parquet near the aisle which in all American theatres runs straight back from the orchestra rail. The occasion was the first night of Irving's playing Hamlet in New York, and the house was crowded to excess in every part. The play went well, incidentally I may say that it was an enormous success. All went well till the "play scene." The light for the mimic stage was supposed to be given from the attendants ranged on each side carrying torches. These torches were of spirit, as such give leaping flames which are

picturesque and appear to give good light, though in truth their illuminating quality is small. Early in the scene one of these torches got overheated, and the flaming spirit running over set fire to one of the stage draperies. The super-master, Marion, who was "on" in the scene, at once ran over and tore down the curtain and trampled it out.

Through it all Irving never hesitated or faltered for an instant. He went on with his speech; no one could take it from movement, expression or intonation that there was any cause for concern.

Still a fire in a theatre has very dreadful possibilities; and at the first sign of flame a number of people rose hurriedly in their seats as if preparatory to rushing out. There was all over the house a quick, quiet whisper:

"Sit down!" As if in obedience, the standers sat.

There was but one exception. A lanky, tallow-faced, herring-shouldered, young man, with fear in his white face, dashed up the aisle. It is such persons who cause death in such circumstances. There is a moment when panic can be averted; but once it starts nothing can stop it. The idea of "Sauve qui peut!" comes from the most selfish as well as the most weak of human instincts. I feared that this man might cause a panic, and as he dashed up I stepped out and caught him by the throat and hurled him back on the ground. At such a time one must not think of consequences—except one, which is to prevent a holocaust. The rude, elementary method was effective. No one else stirred. I caught the fallen man and dragged him to his feet.

"Go back to your seat, sir!" I said sternly. "It is cowards like you who cause death to helpless women!" He was so stunned or frightened that he did not make the least remonstrance, but went sheepishly back to his seat.

On the way he had to pass a man who stood a little in front of me—a tall, powerful, black-bearded, masterful-looking man. As the other was passing he put out his hand,

and with finger and thumb caught the lappet of the young man's coat and drew him close. Then he said in a low voice, full of personal indignation as at a wrong to himself:

"Do you know that you rushed past me like a flash of lightning!" Then he suddenly released him and turned his eyes to the stage. I think it was the most contemptuous action I ever saw. The rest of those present moved no more.

d

Two years after we had at the Lyceum a somewhat similar experience of a stage fire. This was during Faust. A curtain caught fire, and was promptly put out by the nearest person. Another such fire occurred in 1891 in The Corsican Brothers.

e

There was one other fire which had a bearing on Irving's interests though he was not in it or near it. This was the burning of the Union Square Theatre, New York, on the 28th February 1888. This theatre backed on to the side of the Star Theatre where we were playing. The Morton House beside it, at the corner of Broadway and Union Square, caught fire. The theatre was quite burned out. When I saw it, which was quite by chance, it was well alight. There was a great crowd held back by the cordon of police. I managed to pass the guard, as I was concerned in the Star Theatre, and inside saw the Fire Chief of that section—the Thirteenth Street. He and I had become great friends in the process of years. The American firemen are born to their work and they are all splendid fellows. If they like you they drop the "Mr." at once; and when they call you by your Christian name that is, in their own way, the highest honour they can pay you. I was "Bram" to Chief Bresnin and his men. He said to me:

"Would you like to come into the theatre? It may be of use to you some day to know what a theatre is like inside when it is burning!" I acquiesced eagerly, and we hurried to the stage entrance. A policeman stood there, and when I went to pass in

barred the way. The Fire Chief was surprised. “He is with me!” he said. The other answered gruffly:

“You can go in, of course; but I won’t let him! It’s murder to let him go in there!” The chief was speechless with indignation. From his point of view it was a gross affront to question any direction of his. By New York rules the Fire Chief takes absolute command, and the police have to obey his orders. Bresnin threw back the lappel of his uniform coat and showed his badge as Fire Chief.

“Do you see that?” he asked. The other answered surlily:

“I see it!”

“Then if you say one word—even to apologise for your insolence—I shall have you broke! Stand back! Come on, Bram!”

I wanted to go on. But even if I had wished to hang back, I could not do so then. In we went.

The place was a veritable hell. It seemed to be alight in every part; the roaring of the flames was terrific. The streams of water from some twenty fire-engines seemed to be having no effect at all, they did not make even steam, but seemed to simply dry up. The heat was of course very great, but as the draught was coming behind us we did not feel it much. It seemed to be all overhead. I was made aware of it by my silk hat collapsing over my eyes, like a big tam-o’-shanter. The whole place seemed moving and tumbling about; great beams were falling, and brickwork rattled down like gigantic hail. We stood on the stage. Here my own special knowledge of the safest place supplemented the fireman’s general experience. It was by no means safe. Within a minute a huge beam, all ablaze, came thundering down not far from us and drove end on right through the stage, like a bullet through a sheet of paper. We kept an eye on the door close to us, and when things got perilous we came away.

I went back to the Brunswick Hotel where Irving and I were both staying. I sent for his man, Walter, to tell him if the “Governor” had been alarmed he had better go

into his room where he was having his regular afternoon nap and tell him that as yet the Star Theatre was all right, and would probably escape as the ruins of the other theatre were falling and the firemen would be able to deal with them. I had just come from it. He answered me:

"It's all right, sir! The Governor knows about the fire. Some one here went up and woke him and told him that the Star was on fire! So he sent for me."

"What did he say?" I asked. He grinned as he replied:

"He said: 'Is Fussy safe, Walter?' So when I told him the dog had been with me all the time, he said 'All right!' and went to sleep again!"

III FLOODS

a

On Saturday night, 1st February 1896, we played in New Orleans, and as we were to play in Memphis on Monday, arranged that our "special" should leave as soon as possible after the play. We had all ready for a quick start, and so far as our part was concerned had loaded up and were ready to start at the time fixed, one o'clock. We did not start, however; something was wrong on the line. It was two o'clock when we heard that we should have to go by a different route, the Valley section, as there had been a "wash-out" on the course destined for us. In New Orleans the heat had been intense, almost unendurable, and higher up the Mississippi valley there had been terrific rain-storms. It was three o'clock before we started. All went well till the forenoon of next day when we came to a creek called Bayou Pierre. This was a wide valley seemingly miles across—it was really between one and two miles. Here the line was carried on a long trestle-bridge. But the flood was out and the whole great valley was a turgid river whose yellow, muddy water rushing past swirled in places like little whirlpools. It had risen some four feet over the top of the bridge, so that no one could say whether the track remained or had been swept away. There was a

short and hurried conference between our train master and the local engineer and they determined to “take the chances.” And so we started.

It was necessary to go very slowly, for in that alluvial soil the running water weakens any support; the motion and vibration of a heavy train might shake down the structure. Moreover, the water level was almost up to the level of the floor of the carriages. Any wave, however little, might drown out the fires. It was a most remarkable journey; the whole broad surface of the stream was starred with wreckage of all sorts: hayricks, logs, fences, trees with parts of the roots sticking up in the air; now and again, the roof of a barn or wooden shanty of some kind. Several times the floating masses carried snakes!

Our own little group took the experience calmly. Indeed we enjoyed its novelty. Of course things might have turned out very badly. It was on the cards that any moment we might find that the bridge had been swept away—there could be no possible indication to warn us; or the passage of our long train might cause a collapse. In either case our engine would dive head foremost, and the shock of its blowing up would throw the rest of the train into the flooded bayou. Irving sat quietly smoking all the time and looking out of the windows on either side as some interesting matter “swam into his ken.”

In the other cars the same calm did not reign. There were a good many of the company who were quite filled with fear. So fearful were they that, as I was told later, they got reckless and in their panic confessed their sins. I never heard the details of these confessions, and I did not want to. But from the light manner in which they were held by the more sturdy members I take it that either the calendar of their sins was of attenuated or mean proportions; or else that the expression of them was curtailed by a proper sense of prudence or decorum. Anyhow, we never heard of any serious breach or unhappiness resulting from them.

We crossed Bayou Pierre at last in safety, and kept on our way. Ours by the way was

the last train that crossed the bayou till the flood was over. We heard next day that one section of the bridge close to the bank had gone down ten minutes after we had crossed. It had been an anxious time for the officials of the line. We could see them from both banks perpetually signalling to our driver, who was signalling in reply. It made the wide waste of water seem wider and more dangerous still. The only really bad result to us was that we arrived in Memphis too late to get anything to eat.

In those days the rules governing hours in the South-Western Hotels were very fixed, especially on Sundays. Up to nine o'clock you could get what you wanted. But after nine the kitchen was closed and money would not induce them to open it. Irving and Ellen Terry had of course ordered each their own dinner, and these, cold, waited them in their rooms; but the rest of us were hungry and wanted food of some kind. So I tried strategy with the "boy" who attended me, a huge, burly nigger with a good-humoured face and a twelve-inch smile. I said:

"What is your name?"

"George, sah! George Washington."

"George!" I said, as I handed him half a dollar—"George, you are an uncommonly good-looking fellow!"

"Yah! Yah! Yah!" pealed George's homeric laughter. Then he said:

"What can I do for you, sah!"

"George, your cook is a very stout lady, is she not?"

"Yes, sah, almighty stout, wide as a barrel. Yah! Yah! Yah!"

"Exactly, George. Now I want you to go right up to her, put your arms around her—tight, and give her a kiss—a big one!"

"'Fore Gad, sah, if I did, she'd open my head wid de cleaver!"

"Not so, George! Not with a good-looking fellow like you."

"An' what then, sah?"

“Then, George, you tell her that there is a stranger here who is perishing for some food. He is sorry to disturb so pretty a woman, who he is told is the belle of Memphis; but necessitas non habet leges. Explain that to her, won’t you, like a good fellow? Make me out tall and thin and aristocratic-looking, with a white thin face and a hectic spot on each cheek-bone, a black, melting and yearning eye, and a large black moustache—don’t forget the moustache. Ask her if she will of her gracious kindness break the iron rule of discipline that governs the house, and send me some food, anything that is least troublesome. A slice of cold meat, some bread and a pitcher of milk, and if she has any cold vegetables of any sort, and the cruet, I can make a salad!”

George laughed wildly and hurried out. I could hear his cachinnation dying away down the long passage. Presently I heard it swelling up again as he drew near. The heavy footfall drew closer, and the door was kicked in after the manner of negro waiters—in hotels there is an iron or brass plate at the base of the dining-room door for the purpose. George Washington bore an enormous tray, resting on an open palm spread back over his shoulder. When he laid it down its weight made the table shake.

That episode was worth a whole silver dollar to George. It was divided, I presume, with the adipose cook; for there was no external appearance of his head having been “opened wid de cleaver.” For the remaining days of our stay he followed me when opportunity served like a shadow. A very substantial shadow; quite a Demogorgon of a shadow!

b

We had had a somewhat similar experience of a flood some years before, though of nothing like so dangerous a nature. This was on 3rd February 1884, on our journey from Cincinnati to Columbus. The thaw had come on suddenly on the southern watershed of the northern hills when the ground through a long rigorous winter was

frozen to a depth of several feet. Of course, the water, unable to sink into the ground, ran into the streams, and the Ohio River was flooded. As we left we could see that it was up to the top of the levée. Later on it rose some forty feet higher. It was a record flood. We went by the Panhandle route of the Pennsylvania Railway. As we went, whole tracts of country were flooded; in places we ran where the roads were under water, and a mighty splash our engine sent ahead of her. We went very fast, "rushing" all the bridges, especially the small ones of which there were many. In a stopping time I had a chat with the driver—one whom the depôt-master of Cincinnati had told me he had put on specially because he was a bold driver who did not mind taking a risk. I asked him why he went so fast over the bridges, as I had heard it was much safer to go slow.

"Not in a flood like this!" he answered. "You see, the water has been out some time and the brickwork is all sapped and sodden with wet. Mayhap we may shake a bridge down now and then, but I like them to fall behind me, and not whilst we're crossing. The depôt-master told me I was to get you folks in; and, by the Almighty, I mean to do it if I shake down all the bridges in the Panhandle. Anyhow, this is the last train that will run over the section till the floods are over."

IV TRAIN ACCIDENTS

a

At a rough computation the railroad journeys of Irving's tours ran over fifty thousand miles—more than twice round the Equator. The journeys were nearly always taken in special trains running at all sorts of hours, and almost invariably in the bad seasons of the year. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that we had a certain percentage of accidents. That some of these accidents did not entail loss of life is the source of wonder. Several times we have had the train on fire; once so badly that the danger was very great. It was only by the chance of it being discovered just as we were coming into a station that the whole train was not lost.

As it was, the Insurance Company had to liquidate damages to our goods to the extent of £500.

Three times the bolt-head of the engine has been blown out, once entailing a delay of six hours, until not only another engine but another driver who knew the road as well as the engine, could be found.

b

Once in February 1900 when on our way from Indianapolis to Louisville some accident or explosion took place which seemed to shatter the whole engine into scrap-iron. But no one was hurt.

c

On 17th January 1904 we went from Pittsburg to Buffalo. The cold was intense. There were ten feet of snow lying on the hills, and down the serpentine valley our driving-wheel got “frosted” and flew to pieces. Fortunately we were on a stretch of level ground. Down the valley are here and there the remains of train wrecks on the bank of the river. Our engine was a very powerful one, a great Pennsylvania fast hauler; the great wheel was so thick that I could not lift a seemingly small fragment of it from the ground.

d

The very next week, Sunday, 24th January, when going from Albany to Montreal, we met with another accident. I had been most careful about a good engine, and the agent of the New York Central had given us the spare engine used in case of need for the New York and Chicago “Flyer.” The cold was again intense and the snow thicker than ever. Up high amongst the Adirondack Mountains, where the wind roared over hill and through valley, the snowdrifts piled up in places to great heights. That was an exceptionally severe winter and railroading was hard. We climbed all right to the top of a pass amongst the hills and were going along steadily when there was a sharp explosion. Then in a few seconds the train drew up with a

jerk. Our saloon was at the end of the train, so it took me some little time to reach the engine, as I had gone outside instead of passing through the train. The road just there was running on an embankment, and the snow-plough had swept the track, only leaving the snow piled at the sides so that to pass the carriages was difficult leg-deep in the snow. On the sloping embankment the snow lay many feet deep; and as the whole place was intersected with storm rivulets there were great holes like caverns in the snowdrift. The other men had also tumbled out of their carriages in much concern. We came across the train crew working in frantic haste. They told us that both the driver and the fireman were missing, and they feared that they had been blown off into one of the watercourse cavities. In such case either or both might die before we could find them, for these cavities were secret—they were honeycombed out beneath the blanket of snow. Very shortly we found the fireman. He had been on the outside of the engine when the explosion had occurred and was blown into the snowdrift head down. He was nearly choked when he was taken out.

But there was no sign of the driver, and the search went on. Immediately after the accident the brakesman had run back on the track to flag “Danger” lest any other train should come down upon us. This is the imperative rule in such cases. When he had done this duty he was to run along the track to the last station we had passed about a mile back, and bring help.

I was back on the line about a quarter of a mile when an engine piled with men came up at a furious pace. As it drew near the men began to call.

“Has he been found?” I shook my head.

Close to our train they stopped and the men leaping from the engine spread themselves along the slopes of the embankment beginning a systematic search. Presently one of the crew of our train came along leaping through the deep snow calling out that the driver was found and was on the engine. We rushed back and found him there smearing his burns, which were pretty bad, with oil. The explosion

had set his clothes on fire, but he had not lost his head. He had waited to turn the steam off, and then had taken a header into the deep snow wherein he had rolled himself till he had put the fire out. When he had managed to crawl out of his burrow the others of the crew, seeing the engine empty, had gone back to make search for him. He, not knowing that he was missed, had climbed quietly back into his cab.

When Irving heard of the man's gallantry in stopping whilst all on fire to turn off steam before thinking of himself he said it was a thing that should be rewarded in a marked way. He was quite willing to give the reward himself, but he thought that the company would like to, and ought to, join in it. So we got up a subscription which he headed. We handed to the injured men a little purse of sixty-one dollars. They declared that they would like to take their injuries over again any time for half the money or a quarter of the kindness.

e

The occasions when we were delayed by minor accidents to the train—hot boxes, breaking steam-pipes, freezing steam-brakes, snows-up, washes-out, broken bridges—were never ending. Many of them were not matters for much concern, but they were all causes of delay; and in touring, delay is often disastrous.

V STORMS AT SEA

a

Irving was across the Atlantic eighteen times, of which one, in 1886, was for a summer holiday trip. Of course there were many times when there was bad weather; but on one crossing in 1899 we encountered a terrific storm. The waves were greater by far than any I had ever seen, even when I crossed in the Germanic in the February of the same year during the week of the worst weather ever recorded. On this occasion we were on board the Atlantic transport ss. Marquette. The weather had been nice for three days from our leaving London. But in the afternoon of the fourth

day, 18th October, we ran into the track of a hurricane. As we went on, the seas got bigger and bigger till at last they were mountainous. When we were down in the trough the waves seemed to stand up higher than our masts. The wind was blowing furiously, something like a hundred miles an hour, but there was no rain. The moon came out early, a splendid bright moon still in its second quarter, so that when night fell the scene was sublimely grand. We forged on as long as we could, but the screw raced so furiously as the waves swept past us that we had perforce to lie by for six hours; it was not safe to go on as we might lose our screw-head. The tossing in that frightful sea was awful. Most of those on board were dreadfully frightened. Irving came out for a while and stood on the bridge holding on like grim death, for the shaking was like an earthquake. He seemed to really enjoy it. He stayed as long as he could and only went in when he began to feel the chill. Ellen Terry came out with me and was so enraptured with the scene that she stayed there for hours. I had to hold her against the rail, for at times we rolled so that our feet shot off the deck. I showed her how to look into the wind without feeling it: to hold the eyes just above the bulwark—or the "dodger" if you are on the bridge—and a few inches away from it. The wind strikes below you and makes a clear section of a circle right over and round your head, you remaining in the calm. To test the force of the wind I asked her to put out her hand, palm out so as to make a fair resistance; but she could not hold it for an instant. Neither could I; my hand was driven back as though struck with a hammer.

In the companion-way of the Marquette several trunks too large for the adjacent cabin had been placed. They had been carefully lashed to the hand-rail, but in that wild sea they strained at their lashings rising right off the ground the way a chained dog does when he raises himself on his hind legs. One of the trunks belonging to Irving, a great leather one, full of books and papers, was lashed by its own straps. In the companion-way had gathered nearly all the passengers, huddled together for comfort—especially the women, who were mostly in a panic. In such cases the only

real comfort a poor woman can have is to hold on to a man. I happen to be a big one, and therefore of extra desirability in such cases of stress. I was sitting on a trunk on the other side of the companion-way from Irving's trunk, surrounded by as many of the womenkind as could catch hold of me, when in a roll of extra magnitude the leather straps gave way and the trunk seemed to hurl itself at us. I shoved the women away right and left, but missed clearing its course myself by the fraction of a second. The corner of it caught me on the calf sideways, fortunately just clearing the bone. Another half-inch and I should certainly have lost my leg. I was lifted into the music saloon, which was close at hand, and my trouser leg cut open. We had three American footballers on board and these at once began to rub and knead the injured muscle; quite the best thing to do. Then it seemed as if every soul on board, man, woman, and child, had each a separate bottle of embrocation or liniment. These were all produced at once—and used.

Before a minute was over the skin of the wounded spot and for inches around it was completely rubbed off! The pain was excruciating—like an acre of toothache; but I suppose it did me good. In the morning my foot was quite black, but by degrees this passed away. I limped for a week or two and then got all right.

The women had a sore time of it that night. They nearly all refused absolutely to go to their cabins, and, producing rugs and pillows, camped in the music saloon which was on deck.

One young man, who spent most of his time leaning on the counter of the bar, gained instant notoriety by christening the saloon: "the Geeser's Doss-house!"

b

On Saturday, 5th October 1901, we left the Thames for New York on the Atlantic transport ss. Minnehaha. In the river the wind began to blow, and by the time we rounded the South Foreland a whole gale was on. Our boat was a large one, so that we on board did not mind; but it was a bad time for the pilot whom we had to shed

at Dover. The row-boat to take him off had come out to us in the comparative shelter of the Goodwins and had trailed beside us on the starboard quarter, nearly swamped in the rough sea. When we slowed down off Dover the sea seemed to get worse than ever. To look at it in the darkness of the night, each black slope crested with white as the lighthouse lit up its savage power, one could not believe that a little boat could live in it. It took the men on board all their time to keep her baled. A number of us men had gone down on the afterdeck to see the pilot depart. He was a huge man; tall as he was, the breadth of his shoulders seemed prodigious. When he descended the rope ladder and debarked, which was a deed requiring skill and nerve, he seemed to overweight the little boat, he so towered over the two men in it. When a few strokes took them out of the shelter of our good ship, the boat, as she caught the gale, lurched sideways so much that it looked as though she were heeling over. My own heart was in my mouth. I heard a sudden loud laugh behind me, and turning round saw one of the passengers, a stranger to me. I cried out with angry indignation:

“What the devil are you laughing at? Is it to see splendid fellows like that in danger of their lives? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. The men could actually hear you!” For a few seconds he continued laughing wildly; then turning to me said quite heartily:

“Sorry! It’s a shame I know; but I could not help laughing!” Despite myself and my indignation I could not help smiling.

“What at?” I said again. “There’s nothing to laugh at there?”

“Well, my dear fellow,” he gasped out, “I was laughing just to think that I’m not a pilot!” And once again his wild laughter pealed out.

VI FALLING SCENERY

In the great mass of scenery in a theatre and its many appliances, some of

considerable weight, resting overhead there are certain elements of danger to those on the stage. Things have to be shifted so often and so hastily that there is always room for accident, no matter what care may be exercised. For instance, in Abbey's theatre in New York—afterwards "The Knickerbocker"—on the first night of Irving's playing Macbeth, one of the limelight men, who was perched on a high platform behind the proscenium O.P., fell on the stage together with the heavy gas cylinder beside him. The play was then over and Irving was making a speech in front of the curtain. Happily the cylinder did not explode. The man did not seem at the moment to be much injured, but he died on his way to hospital. Had any one been waiting underneath in the wing, as is nearly always the case all through a play, that falling weight must have brought certain death.

I have myself seen Irving lifted from the stage by the Act drop catching his clothing. I have seen him thrown into the "cut" in the stage with the possibility of a fall to the mezzanine floor below. On another occasion something went wrong with the bracing up of the framed cloths and the whole scene fell about the stage. This happened between the acts whilst Irving was showing the stage to some American friends. Happily no one was hurt. Such accidents, veritable bolts from the blue, are, however, both disconcerting and alarming. During Faust the great platforms which made the sloping stage on which some hundreds of people danced wildly at the Witches' Sabbath on the Brocken had to be suspended over the acting portion of the stage. The slightest thing going wrong would have meant death to all underneath. In such cases there must always be great apprehension.

VII

I have mentioned all these matters under the heading of "Adventures"—torpedoes, fires, floods, train accidents, storms at sea, mishaps of the stage—for a special reason. Not once in the twenty-seven years of our working together did I ever see a sign of fear on Henry Irving. Whether danger came in an instant unexpectedly, or

slowly to expecting eyes, it never disturbed him. Danger of any kind, so far as I ever had the opportunity of judging, always found him ready.

When he was lying ill at Wolverhampton in the spring of 1905 Ellen Terry ran down from London, where she was then playing, to see him. She had known from me and others how dangerously ill he had been and was concerned as to how fear of death might act on his strength. She had asked him if he had such fear; her description of the occasion as she gave it to me after his death left the matter settled:

"He looked at me steadily for a minute, and then putting his third finger against his thumb—like that—held his hand fixedly for a few seconds. Then with a quick movement he snapped his fingers and let his hand fall. How could I not understand!"

As the great actress spoke, her face through some mysterious power grew like Irving's. The raised hand, with the fingers interlaced, was rigid till with a sudden movement the fingers snapped, the hand going down as if propelled from the wrist! It conveyed in a wonderful way the absence of a sense of fear, even on such a subject as Death. Even at second hand it was not possible not to understand. It said as plainly as if in words: "Not that!" There was no room for doubt!

LXXIII BURNING OF THE LYCEUM STORAGE

At ten minutes past five on the morning of Friday, 18th February 1898, I was wakened by a continuous knock at a door somewhere near my house in Chelsea. I soon discovered that it was at my own house. I went downstairs and opened the door, when a muffled-up cab-driver gave me a letter. It was from the police station at Bow Street telling me that the Lyceum Storage, Bear Lane, Southwark, was on fire. The four-wheeler was waiting, and I was soon on the way there as fast as the horse could go. It was a dim, dark morning, bitterly cold. I found Bear Lane a chaos. The narrow way was blocked with fire-engines panting and thumping away for dear life. The heat was terrific. There was so much stuff in the storage that nothing could

possibly be done till the fire had burnt itself out; all that the firemen could do was to prevent the fire spreading.

These premises deserve some special mention, for they played an important part in many ways, as shall be seen.

One of the really great difficulties in the management of a London theatre is that of storage. A "going" theatre has to be always producing new plays and occasionally repeating the old. In fact, to a theatrical manager his productions form the major part of his stock-in-trade. Now, no one outside theatrical management—and very few who are inside—can have any idea of the bulk of a lot of plays. In Irving's case it was really vast; the bulk was almost as big as the whole Lyceum theatre. To get housing for such is a very serious matter. Scenery is long, difficult stuff to handle. That of the Lyceum was forty-two feet long when the cloths were rolled up round their battens; the framed cloths were thirty feet high and six feet wide in the folding plaques. We were always on the look-out for a really fine storage; and at last we heard of one. This consisted of two great, high railway arches under the Chatham and Dover Railway, then leased to the South-Eastern. It was a part of Southwark where the ground lies low and the railway line very high, so that there was full height for our scenes. In the front was a large yard. We took the premises on a good long lease and set to work to make them complete for our purpose. The backs of the arches were bricked up. Great scaffold-poles were firmly fixed for the piling of scenery against them. It is hard to believe what lateral pressure a great pack of scenery can exercise. Before we had occupied this storage a year, one of the poles gave way and the scenery sinking against the new wall at the back of the arch carried it entirely away. We had to pay expenses of restoration to the injured neighbour and to compensate him. We had the entire yard in front roofed over, brought in gas, which was carefully protected, and water, and made the storage the best of its kind that was known. The experience of a good many years went to the making of it.

We had had to put in a clause when making the agreement to take the lease for a reason not devoid of humour to any one not a sufferer by it. When I went to look at the arches I found them full almost to the top with mud—old mud that had been put in wet and had dried in time to something like the consistency of that to be found at Herculaneum. The manager of the estate office of the railway told me the history of it.

Some years before, the arches were placarded as to let, and in due course came an applicant. He said he was satisfied with the rent and took out his lease. The railway people were pleased to get such a big place off their hands and took no more trouble about it till the half-year's rental became due. They applied to the lessee, but could get no reply. So they sent to the premises to make inquiries. There was no one there; and they could not hear any tidings of the lessee. They did find, however, that the arches were filled with mud, and discovered on inquiry that the lessee had taken a contract for the removal of road sweepings. This is a serious item in municipal accounts, for the conveyance of such out of London is costly, whether by road or barge or rail. Into the arches he had for half a year dumped all the stuff; thousands and thousands of loads of it. He had drawn his money as earned from the municipal authorities. Rent day drew near, and as he feared discovery he had bolted, leaving every one, including the contractors for carting, unpaid.

It took the railway company months of continuous work with a large staff of men and carts and horses to remove the accumulation.

As the premises were secure in every way we could devise we looked upon them as comparatively immune from fire risk. No one lived in them. They were all brick, stone, and slate—as the insurance policies put it. They were completely isolated front and back; at the sides were blocks of solid brickwork like bastions. I had at first, with Irving's consent, insured the contents for £10,000, but only that year when the policies were to be renewed he said it was wasting money as the place was so

secure, and would not let me put on more than £6000.

In these premises were the scenes for the following plays, forty-four in all, of which in only ten Irving himself did not play. Twenty-two were great productions:

Hamlet.

The Merchant of Venice.

Othello.

Much Ado About Nothing.

Twelfth Night.

Macbeth.

Henry VIII.

King Lear.

Cymbeline.

Richard III.

The Corsican Brothers.

The Cup.

The Belle’s Stratagem.

Two Roses.

Olivia.

Faust.

Werner.

The Dead Heart.

Ravenswood.

Becket.

King Arthur.

Richelieu.

The Lady of Lyons.

Eugene Aram.

Jingle.

Louis XI.

Charles I.

The Lyons Mail.

The Bells.

The Iron Chest.

Iolanthe.

The Amber Heart.

Robert Macaire.

Don Quixote.

Raising the Wind.

Daisy’s Escape.

Bygones.

High Life Below Stairs.

The Boarding School.

The King and the Miller.

The Captain of the Watch.

The Balance of Comfort.

Book III. Chapter V.

Cool as a Cucumber.

For the plays there were over two hundred and sixty scenes, many of them of great

elaboration. In fact, each scene, even if only a single cloth at back with wings and borders, took up quite a space. There were in all more than two thousand pieces of scenery, and bulky properties without end. And the prime cost of the property destroyed was over thirty thousand pounds sterling.

But the cost price was the least part of the loss. Nothing could repay the time and labour and artistic experience spent on them. All the scene-painters in England working for a whole year could not have restored the scenery alone.

As to Irving, it was checkmate to the répertoire side of his management. Given a theatre equipped with such productions, the plays to which they belong being already studied and rehearsed, it is easy to put on any of them for a few nights. There is only the cost of carting and hanging the scenes and generally getting ready—small matters in the vast enterprise of putting on a big play. They had had their long runs, and though they were good for occasional repetitions, few of them could be relied on for great business over any considerable period. Several of them were held over for a second run, of which good things might have been fairly expected. For instance, Macbeth was good for another season. It was taken off because of the summer vacation when it was still doing enormous business. Ravenswood, too, had only gone a part of its course when the Baring failure, as I have shown, necessitated its temporary withdrawal. Henry VIII. and King Arthur and Becket and Faust were certain draws. When for répertoire purposes in later years several were required, Louis XI., Charles I., The Bells, The Lyons Mail, Olivia, Faust, Becket were all reproduced at an aggregate cost of over eleven thousand pounds.

The effect of the fire on Irving was not only this great cost, but the deprivation of all that he had built up. Had it not occurred he could have gone on playing his répertoire for many years, and would never have had to produce a new play.

The fire was so fierce that it actually burned the building of the railway arches three

bricks deep and calcined the coping-stones to powder. The Railway Company, therefore, not only made a rule that in no case was theatrical scenery ever to be stored on their premises, but actually refused to allow us to reinstate or to have use for the term of their lease. They were prepared to fight an action over it, but the scenery having all been burned, we had no more present use for so large a storage, and we compromised the matter.

LXXIV FINANCE

I

So much that is erroneous regarding Irving's financial matters has been said at any time from the beginning of his success on to the day of his death—and after—that I think it well to speak frankly of the matter now. Indeed there is no reason that I know of why it should not be made public. During his lifetime, ever since his business affairs were conducted on a big scale, we observed for purely protective reasons a very strict reticence. It must be remembered that a theatre, and especially a popular one, is a centre of great curiosity. Every one wants to know all about it, and curiosity-mongers if they cannot discover facts invent them. The only possible safeguard that I know of is strict reticence at headquarters, and the formulation of such a system of accounts as makes it impossible for lesser officials to know any more than their own branch of work entails. To this end all our books at the Lyceum were designed and kept. Not one official of the theatre outside myself knew the whole of the incomings and the outgoings. Some knew part of one, some knew part of the other; not even that official who was designated "treasurer" knew anything of the high finance of the undertaking. The box-office keeper made entry of daily receipts and checked over the nightly booking-sheet so as to secure accuracy in his own work; but he had no knowledge whatever of the cash receipts at pit or gallery, where all is ready money. The treasurer made to the bank such lodgments as I gave

him; he paid treasury to the actors and staff on each Friday according to the list which I gave him, and on every Tuesday he paid such accounts as were settled in cash and such of my own cheques as I gave to his keeping for the purpose to be paid according to my list. But he did not pay all the salaries—did not know them. Certain of them I myself paid, and these were not of the smaller amounts. He did not pay all the trade accounts; not the larger of them in any case. The weekly accounts of the heads of departments-carpenters, property, wardrobe, gas, electric, supers, chorus, orchestra, &c.—having been thoroughly checked in the office and vouched for by the stage manager, were paid in bulk to the heads of the departments, who distributed the amounts, and returned to me the receipted accounts with vouchers. In fact, the minor books kept by the various departments of both receipts and expenditure had practically only one side. Such officials either received money for handing in to me or paid out money given to them for the purpose. None of them did both. Thus it was that we kept our business to ourselves. Even in such a matter as free admissions none except those in the "office" knew of them. They did not go through the box-office at all, but were sent out under my own instruction in each individual case. Even the "bill orders"—the equivalent given in kind to those small traders who exhibit in their windows bills of the play of "double crown" or "folio" size—were not distributed in the usual way through the "bill inspector," but sent out in properly directed envelopes by the clerical staff. The account-books of the theatre were kept by myself and rigidly preserved in a great safe of which I alone had the key. The safe stood in the room which Irving and I and Loveday used in common, so that the books were always available for Irving's purposes when he required them. The accounts were very carefully audited by chartered accountants whose clerks made monthly check of details. Then at the end of each season the audit was completed by the accountants themselves, who made return to Irving direct in sealed envelopes.

Thus I can say that all through Irving's management from the time of my joining

him in 1878 till the time of my handing over such matters as were in my care to the executors—by their own desire, after his will had been found, and before his funeral—no one, except Irving himself, myself, and the chartered accountants (who made audit and whose profession is one sworn to individual secrecy) knew Irving's affairs. I am thus particular because the very reticence which we adopted as a policy and pursued as a system was a wise protection, with of course such attendant possibilities as belong to a custom of strict reticence. Not once, in all our long connection of friendship and business, have I given to any one without Irving's special permission a single detail of his business. It was not until 1904, when I was writing an article by request of the Editor of the Manchester Guardian, apropos of his return to Sunderland after an absence of nearly fifty years, that we made known even approximately the vast total of his takings during his management. I quoted figures in that article—which in modern form the paper designated as "an appreciation"—with Irving's consent, and ran up to London from Derby, where we were then playing, to verify them. When we were arranging the matter I reminded him that I had never in all the years given a figure unless he had asked me to. Whereupon he said:

"But you are always free to use what figures and anything else of mine you will. You know, my dear fellow, what confidence I have in your discretion. You are quite free in the matter, now and always!"

With this permission I feel at ease in now dealing publicly with matters regarding which I have been silent for so many years. I deal with them now because I regard them as good for Irving—for that memory which he valued more than life.

When Irving took over the Lyceum from Mrs. Bateman he had then accumulated no fortune. He received only a salary up to the time of Colonel Bateman's death. He then had salary—an extraordinarily mild one considering all things—and a prospective share of profits, which under the circumstances did not amount to much.

Practically such little as he had in the autumn of 1878 was rather in the nature of a treasury balance than of capital. Of course, in his tour he was earning good money, and this came in a "ready" form; but the expenses which he was incurring in the reorganising and beautifying the Lyceum were vastly in excess of his present earning. When I came to London and took over his financial matters his bankers, the London and County Bank, had already arranged with him a large overdraft, some £12,000, for which he had given bills. This debt and all others incurred in preparation of his long campaign at the Lyceum were duly paid. Throughout his whole managerial life his payment was twenty shillings in the pound, with added interest whenever such was due or possible.

When he was undertaking the provincial tour in the autumn of 1878—the first under his own management, his friend, Mrs. Hannah Brown, the life-long friend and companion of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, pressed on him a loan of fifteen hundred pounds. She had wished him to accept a larger sum, but he limited the amount to this. Indeed he took it at all to please her; such a sum went but a small way in the vast enterprise on which he had entered. Unhappily she died before he began to play in his own theatre. The sum which she had lent was repaid to her executor in due season.

When he first knew her, Mrs. Brown was a very old lady. She had been immensely struck with his power, and had recognised before most others the probable destiny that lay before him. When she was almost if not entirely blind he used to often go to see her and the Baroness, in the house in Stratton Street or elsewhere as they resided. Of course, all this I only know from being told it, for Mrs. Brown had died just before I came to live in London. Lady Burdett-Coutts told me of the great affection which Mrs. Brown had for the clever man whose genius she so much admired, and whose friendship was such a delight in her old age. Not long after Irving's death, when I was dining with her and Mr. Burdett-Coutts, she said:

"I don't think he ever passed the house in her later years without coming in to see her, if only for a moment!" Others, too, of the old friends have spoken to me of Mrs. Brown without stint; and of her Irving often spoke to me himself. She used to go to the Lyceum time after time. During the long run of Hamlet she went some thirty times. For her pleasure the Baroness rented from the management a box at the Lyceum. This was not in itself unique, for she had already a box at Drury Lane Theatre and another at Her Majesty's Opera House. I was told that when the old lady was dying—she was then I believe about or over eighty—she spoke of Irving and his future, mentioning him as: "My poor brave boy!" Irving was then forty, but he was still a "boy" to a woman of her great age.

Mrs. Brown had very considerable means of her own, and a bequest paid by her executor to Irving was five thousand pounds. This was handed to him at the final settlement of her affairs in, strange to say, bank-notes. That evening he told me of it when he arrived at the theatre. When he did so I opened the door of the safe thinking that he intended to place it there in safety until the next morning, when it could be lodged in bank. I was mightily surprised when he told me that he had not got it with him. He smiled at me as he said:

"I was afraid to carry it with me. I never in my life had so much money close to me!"

"What have you done with it?" I asked.

"I left it in my room at home!"

"Is it put by safely?" I asked again.

"Oh yes!" he added quickly, as though justifying himself. I had an idea that it was not quite safe and went on with my queries:

"Where is it?" He smiled, I thought superiorly, as he answered:

"In my hat-box!"

"You locked it, I hope?" Again the smile:

"What would be the use of that? If I had locked away anything it would only have called attention to it. The hat-box is simply lying there as usual with the lid half off. No one would dream of suspecting it—not in a thousand years!"

This illustrates, I think, in a remarkable way the subtlety of his own character, and the method by which he judged others. He had passed the possibilities "through his mind," and was so content with his knowledge that he backed it with a fortune. Later on there was a boy who did take things from his rooms. He was, however, found out and the property recovered, all except Edwin Forrest's watch of which a part had been probably melted down.

That legacy of five thousand pounds was, so far as I know, and had there been other I should certainly have known, the only money which Irving received for which he did not work, through all the long course of his years of much toil. I mention it now specifically because one of the unkindly, presuming that his ignorance of fact was the ignorance of others also, made after the actor's death a statement that he had been "subsidised." It ought not to be necessary to contradict such reckless statements—they ought never to have been made; but having been made it is best to let the exact facts be known. The best of all bucklers, for the living or the dead, is simple, honest truth.

The needs of the theatre were very great; at the beginning almost overwhelming. On my first taking over the responsibility of business affairs I acquired a wide experience of what is known as "pulling the devil by the tail." When Irving took the Lyceum its entire holding capacity was £228. Sometimes under extraordinary pressure, when every inch of standing room was occupied, we got in a little more; but only once in the first two seasons did we cover £250. That was on Irving's "Benefit," as it was then called.

The autumn of 1881 was devoted to enlarging and improving the house. At a cost of

over £12,000 it was made to hold another £100. Thence on, various improvements and certain dispositions of the seating were effected, which brought up the holding power to a maximum of about £420, though on very special occasions we managed to squeeze in a little more. Some idea may be formed of the vast expense of working such a theatre as the Lyceum, and in the way which Irving worked it, when I say that on that theatre he spent in what we called "Expenses on the House" a sum of £60,000. During my time the "Production account" amounted to nearly £200,000.

The takings for his own playing between the time of beginning management, 30th December 1878, and the day of his death, 13th October 1905, amounted to the amazing total of over two million pounds sterling.

II

Only those who have experience of the working of a great theatre can have any idea of the vast expenditure necessary to hold success. A play may be a success or a failure, and its life must have a natural termination; but a theatre has to go on at almost equal pressure and expense through bad times and good alike. It is necessary for the management to have a large reserve of strength ready to be used if need arises. This implies ceaseless expenditure; a portion of which never can be repaid because the plays which involve it have to be abandoned. It is really too much work for one man to have to think of the policy of the future, and of carrying it into effect, whilst at the same time he has to work as an artist in the running play. No monetary reward would atone for such labour; only ambition can give the spur. Things, therefore, are so constituted in the theatrical world that the ambitious artist must be his own manager. And only those strong enough to be both artist and man of business can win through. The strain of ceaseless debt must always be the portion of any one who endeavours to uphold serious drama in a country where subsidy is not a custom. In the future, the State or the Municipality may find it a duty to support such effort, on the ground of public good. Otherwise the artist must pay with shortened

life the price of his high endeavour. Light performances may and generally do succeed, but good plays seriously undertaken must always be at great risk to the venturer. For more than twenty-five years Irving did for England that which in other nations is furthered by the State; and his theatre was known and respected all over the world. This entailed not only hospitality in all forms to foreign artists, but to many, many strangers attracted by the fame of his undertaking, and anxious to meet so famous a man in person. This duty Irving never shirked; he had ever a ready hand for any stranger, and in the long career of his ministration of the duties of hospitality he actually aided, so far as one man could do, the popularity of his own country amongst the nations of the world. Such men are the true Ambassadors of Peace, as well as National benefactors. Reputation for hospitality and charity is a factor in the enlargement of the demands made on these. When duty called, Irving was never found wanting, in this or any other form.

But still through all it must be remembered that the more he had to spend the harder he had to work to earn the wherewithal to do it. When I came to him first, six performances each week in heavy plays was deemed sufficient work for the strongest; but as time went on a matinée was added. And for some twenty years seven performances a week was the working rule. In light, amusing, or unemotional plays this is not too much; for when a run is on, the ordinary work of rehearsal is suspended. But for heavy plays it is too much. Still what is one to do who is playing for the big stakes of life? Brain and body, nerve and soul have to be ground up in the effort to hold the place already won. Irving was determined from the very first to strain every nerve for the honour of his art; for the perfecting of stage work; for his own fame. To these ends he gave himself, his work, his fortune. He forwent very many of the ordinary pleasures of life, and laboured unceasingly and without swerving from his undertaken course. He gave freely in its cause all the fortune that came to him as quickly as it accrued. It was only when through shocks of misfortune and the stress of coming age he was unable to put by the large sums necessary for

further developments that he had to forestall the future temporarily. Bankers are of necessity stern folk and unless one can give quid pro quo in some shape they are pretty obdurate as to advances. Therefore it was that now and again, despite the enormous sums that he earned, he had occasionally to get an advance. Fortunately, there were friends who were proud and happy to aid him. Such never lost by their kindness; every advance was punctiliously met, and the attachment between him and such friends grew ever and ripened. It would be invidious to mention who those friends were. Some perhaps would not like their names mentioned, and so “the rest is silence.”

There were not many occasions when such measures were necessary. I only mention them now lest any of those friends should deem me wanting, in even such a partial record as this, did I not mention that Henry Irving had constant and loving friends who held any power in their hands at his disposal, and were alike glad and proud to help him in the splendid work which he was doing. Let me, as the only mouthpiece that he now can ever have, since I alone know all those friends, say that to the last hour of his life he was grateful to them for their sympathy, and belief, and timely help; and for all the self-confidence which their trust gave to him.

III

When after his long illness in 1898–1899 the proposition of selling his interest in the Lyceum was made to Irving by the Lyceum Theatre Company—the parent Company—the terms suggested were these:

He was to convey to the Company his lease—of which some eighteen years were still to run, and all his furniture and fittings in the theatre. He was for five years—the duration of the contract—to play an annual engagement of at least a hundred performances at the Lyceum on terms which were mentioned and which were between 10 per cent. and 25 per cent. less than he was in the habit of receiving in any other theatre. He was to hand over to the Company one-fourth of all his profits

made by acting elsewhere, he guaranteeing to play on tour at least four months in each year. He was to give the Company free use of such of his scenery and properties as were not in his own use. He was to pay all the expenses of production of plays in the first year, and in the others 60 per cent. of the same. For the first season he was to guarantee the Company a minimum of £100 for their share of each performance. He was to pay all the stage expenses, and half of the advertisements.

For this the Company were to pay him down £26,500 in cash and £12,500 in fully paid shares in proportion of the two classes, viz., £100,000 6 per cent. preference shares and £70,000 ordinary shares.

I protested to Irving against the terms. I had already worked out the figures of results, according to such data as were available, of this scheme and also of an alternative one, in case he wished to abandon or alter the one on which we had already decided. The difference was that according to the alternative scheme, he would at the end of five years, in addition to the total of profits realisable by the Company scheme, be still in possession of his theatre, scenery, and property of all kinds.

That I was correct has been shown by the unhappy result of the Company enterprise. The Company lost almost persistently except in the seasons when Irving played. The one exception was, I believe, when William Gillette played Sherlock Holmes, a piece which Irving recommended the directors to accept. I was present at its first night in New York, and saw at once its London possibilities.

The Company lasted from the beginning of 1899 till the end of the season of 1902. During this period of less than four years the total amount in cash accruing to the Company from Irving’s acting was roughly £29,000.

In estimating this amount I took as the basis of the Company’s expenses the cost of running the theatre in our own time for the number of weeks covering the time of Irving’s seasons with the Company. This allowed as liberal an amount as our own

management, which was carried out on a much more generous scale. I excluded only the item of rental, which, as the Company was its own landlord, would be represented by the productiveness of the capital. The above amount would, roughly, have paid during each of the whole four years in which the contract lasted the preference shareholders their whole 6 per cent. and the ordinary shareholders over 1½ per cent. in each entire year, leaving seven whole months of each year, exclusive of summer holidays, for earning the 4 per cent. dividend on the £120,000 mortgage debentures, and increasing the dividend on the ordinary shares.

It will from the above figures be seen that the contract which Irving made with the Lyceum Company was not in any way a beneficial one for him, but an excellent one for them.

I am particular about giving these figures in detail, for at some of the meetings of the Company there was the usual angry "heckling" of the directorate regarding losses; and there were not lacking those who alleged that Irving was in some way to blame for the result. But I am bound to say that when, at the meeting in 1903, I thought it necessary to put a stop to such misconception and gave the rough figures showing the results of his playing during the time the contract existed, my statement was received even by the disappointed shareholders with loud and continuous cheers—the only cheers which I ever heard at a meeting of the Company. I honestly believe that there was not one person in the room who was not genuinely and heartily glad to be reassured from such an authoritative source as myself as to Irving's position with the Company.

The cancellation of the contract between Irving and the Lyceum Theatre Company was in no way due to any fault or default of his. It became necessary solely because the Company was unable to fulfil its part. The London County Council, in accordance with some new regulations, called on the Company to make certain structural alterations in the theatre. The directors said they could not afford to make

them as their funds were exhausted; and so the theatre had to remain closed. At that time Irving had already undertaken vast responsibilities with regard to the play of Dante, for which he had made contracts with painters and costumiers, and had engaged artists. It was vitally necessary that he should have a theatre wherein to play; and so there was no alternative but to annul the contract. Even as it was, he had to take on his own shoulders the whole of the vast cost of the production upon which he had entered as a joint concern.

In fine, Irving's dealings with the Company may be thus summed up. He received in all for his property, lease, goodwill, fixtures, furniture, the use of his stock of scenery and properties, and a fourth of his profits elsewhere, £39,000 paid as follows: cash, £26,500; shares, £12,500. He repaid by his work £29,000 in cash. The shares he received proved valueless.[6] He gave, in fact, his property and £2500 for nothing;—and he lost about two years of his working life.

6. The preference shares at the break-up sold for, as well as I remember, seven pence for each fully paid share of one pound sterling. He would never sell his shares lest his doing so might injure the property of the Company. They were only parted with at the winding-up, when the Receiver sold, on his own authority, all unapplied-for shares.

I should like to say, on my own account, and for my own protection, inasmuch as I was Sir Henry Irving's business manager, that from first to last I had absolutely no act or part in the formation of the Lyceum Theatre Company—in its promotion, flotation, or working. Even my knowledge of it was confined to matters touched on in the contract with Irving. From the first I had no information as to its purposes, scope or methods, outside the above. I did not take a single share till it began to look queer with regard to its future; I then bought from a friend five shares for which I paid par value. This I did in order that I might have a right to attend the meetings. Later, in 1903, when shares were selling at all sorts of prices I bought some in the

open market. This was simply as a speculation, as I regarded the freehold of the Lyceum as a valuable property which might eventually realise a price which would make my investment at the prevailing figures a good one. These shares I protected on the winding-up and reconstruction of the Company with an assessment of 25 per cent. of their face value. But finally, seeing the conditions under which the new Company was about to work, I sold them in the usual way through my broker.

As a matter of fact I was on the Atlantic or in America at the time the parent company or syndicate—to whom it was that Irving had sold his property—was formed. When I arrived home this association had become merged in the Lyceum Theatre Company which had been floated, and of which the whole capital had been subscribed. Not for nearly a year afterwards did I even see a copy of the prospectus of the Company.

LXXV THE TURN OF THE TIDE

I

"There is a tide in the affairs of men." For twenty-five years it flowed for Henry Irving without let or lull. From the production of The Bells in November 1871 he became famous; and thence on he bore himself so well that with the exception of the disgruntled few who grudge success to any one, he was accorded by all an unquestioned supremacy in his chosen art. For a full quarter of a century there was nothing but ever-increasing esteem and honour and position; an undeviating prosperity which made all things possible to the ambitious actor. True, the success was accompanied throughout by endless labour and self-sacrifice, and by grinding responsibility. His life was more strenuous than the lives of most successful men. For an actor's work is altogether personal, and when in addition to the practice of his art he undertakes the added stress and risk of management such, too, is altogether personal. But, after all, labour and responsibility are the noblest roads by which a

man may travel towards honour. By any other way success is merely the outcome of hazard.

But the tide must turn some time—otherwise the force would be not a tide but a current. The turning came on the night of 19th December 1896—the night of his production of Richard III. A night of unqualified success—as should be when high-water mark is reached. A night which seemed to crown the personal triumph of the years. After the performance and when the cheering crowd had taken their reluctant way, Irving had a large gathering on the stage. Such had become a custom on first and last nights of the season, and now and again on marked occasions. They were very delightful opportunities for large and comprehensive hospitality, enjoyed, I think, by all. So soon as the curtain fell the scenery would be put rapidly into the "scene docks" and the stage left clear. Then the caterers, who had everything ready, would place long tables round three sides of the stage and prepare a cold "standing" supper for all who were expected. During this time Irving would have rapidly changed his costume for evening dress; so that by the time the waiting guests in the auditorium were beginning to file in on the stage through the iron door in the proscenium O.P., he would meet them coming from his dressing-room. I used to stand at the door myself so as to see that no chance guests whose presence was welcome were denied. For very often there were in the house some whom Irving would like to welcome, and of whose presence we were ignorant to the last. The whole proceeding was an informal one. There were no invitations except such verbal ones as I conveyed myself. On such occasions there would be from three to six hundred guests on the stage, a large proportion of whom were persons whose names were at least widely known; representatives of art and letters, of statesmanship and the various forms of public life; of the great social world, of the professions, of commerce—of the whole great world of personal endeavour.

On this particular occasion there was a large gathering. When the curtain went up on the empty proscenium, the big stage seemed a solid mass of men and women. One

could tell Irving's whereabouts by the press of friends thronging round to congratulate him on the renewal of his success in Richard III. of twenty years before.

Little by little as time wore away the crowd thinned. When the last had gone Irving and a very dear friend of his, Professor (afterwards Sir James) Dewar, went for a while to the Garrick Club. After the strain of such a night sleep was shy and the kindest thing that any friend could do was to keep with him and talk over matters old and new, so as to make a break between strain and rest. That night was a strangely exciting one to Irving. On it he had reproduced after a lapse of just twenty years one of the greatest and most surprising successes of his earlier life. For Richard III. when he played it in 1877 was a new thing to all who saw it. Clement Scott, writing of it in the Daily Telegraph, had said:

"The enjoyment derived from the performance was undoubtedly heightened by the pleasurable astonishment with which the playgoer made the unexpected discovery of a new source of dramatic delight. It is not often that a frequenter of theatres can recall in the course of a long experience one particular night when the channels of thought seemed to be flushed by a tide of new sensations."

On the night of its revival all the old triumph came back afresh. No wonder that the player was too high-strung to rest. From the Garrick the two friends walked to Albemarle Street where Dewar had his rooms in the Royal Institution. There they sat and smoked for a while and discussed the philosophy of Acting and the form of education which would be most beneficial for Irving's sons. When Irving rose to go home—he lived literally "round the corner" in 15A Grafton Street, Dewar went with him. Irving insisted on his going in for a few minutes. This he acceded to, anxious that the super-wearied man should not feel lonely at such a time. After a cigar Dewar left. It was then coming daylight, and Irving announced his intention of taking a bath before turning in. Dewar left him tranquil and now ready for his

needed rest.

The stairs in the Grafton Street "upper part" were steep and narrow, and Irving in the dim light of morning which was stealing into the staircase slipped a foot on the top stair. Unfortunately on the narrow landing stood an old oak chest. His knee as he slipped struck this, and the blow and the strain of recovery ruptured the ligatures under the knee cap. When in the morning the surgeon who had been sent for saw him he declared that it would be utterly impossible for him to play for some time. Further advice was even more pessimistic, placing the period at months.

The disaster of that morning was the beginning of many which struck, and struck, and struck again as though to even up his long prosperity to the normal measure allotted to mankind.

It was ten weeks before he was able to play again. Ellen Terry had gone to Homburg—whither she had been recommended—the day after Cymbeline—which had preceded Richard III.—had been taken off. It was the end of January before she could give up her "cure" and return to London. She played Olivia for three weeks with good effect. We had tried Cymbeline for a week after Christmas; but with Irving and Ellen Terry out of the cast the receipts were such that though the salaries, rent and such running expenses had to be paid in any case, it was cheaper to close than go on. The entire income did not nearly pay the expenses of keeping the theatre open instead of shut.

That accident of a foot-slip cost Irving two months and a half of illness and an out-of-pocket expense of over six thousand pounds. This instead of the prosperous winter season which had already seemed assured.

II

A little more than a year afterwards, February 1898, came the burning of the storage, which I have already described, and the effect of which was so permanently

disastrous in crippling effort. Eight months after that came the greatest calamity of his life.

The disasters of these three years, 1896–7–8, seemed cumulative and consistent. The first struck his activity; the second crippled his resources; the third destroyed his health.

III

To any human being health is a boon. To an actor, quâ actor, it is existence. During the provincial tour in the autumn of 1898 all was going well. We had got through the earlier weeks of the tour when we had, through very hot weather, played at some of the lesser places and were now in the big cities. Birmingham and Edinburgh had shown fine results of the week's work in each place, and we were in the midst of the first week in Glasgow—always a stronghold of Irving. On the Thursday night, 13th October, we were playing Madame Sans-Gêne to a fine house and all was going splendidly. Just before the curtain went up on the second act, in which Napoleon makes his appearance, Irving sent for me to my office. I came at once to his dressing-room. I found him sitting down dressed for his part. His face was drawn with pain at each breath. When I came in he said:

"I think there must be something wrong with me. Every breath is like a sword-stab. I don't think I ought to be suffering like this without seeing some one." As I saw that he was really ill, I asked if I might go and dismiss the audience. But he would not hear of it. Never in his life have I known him let any pain of his own keep him from his work. He said:

"I shall be able to get through all right; but when I have seen a doctor we may have to make some change for to-morrow." I hurried off to send for a doctor, and as his call came he went on the stage. The doctor arrived during the last act, but he could not see him till the end of the play. Then the doctor said he feared he was seriously ill, and hurried him off to his hotel—and to bed. A careful examination showed that

he had both pneumonia and pleurisy. Two nurses of special excellence were picked out and preparations were made for a lengthy illness.

The bill for next night was The Merchant of Venice, and Norman Forbes, almost without preparation, played Shylock. The tour went on by Irving's wish, for the livelihood of some seventy people depended on it. The ten weeks which it lasted cost him a very considerable sum of money.

The cause of his illness was a chill he received the previous Sunday. That day the Company went from Edinburgh to Glasgow, but he remained as he had an engagement to lunch at Dalmeny with Lord Rosebery. In the afternoon he drove back to Edinburgh and took train. At that time, however, the new station of the North British Railway was in process of erection and had reached a stage in which the road from Princes Street down to the level of the line was blocked during reconstruction; so that it was necessary to walk down. There had been a good deal of rain that afternoon and the torn roadway was full of water-pools. In walking through the imperfectly lighted way he got his feet wet and had to sit in this condition in a carriage without a foot-warmer during the hour's journey to Glasgow. He did not feel the ill effects immediately, but the seeds of the disease, or rather the diseases, had been laid.

Of course during his illness he had every help and care that could be. But his case was a bad one. For seven weeks he lay ill in Glasgow. During this time I almost lived in trains, seeing the work started and finished in each town and in the meantime travelling to Glasgow and to London, where immense and responsible work for the future had to be done. Forbes-Robertson had then the Lyceum for an autumn season, but his tenancy expired at Christmas. So we arranged that the Carl Rosa Opera Company should play for six weeks. Then Martin Harvey would produce a play, The Only Way, a version of Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities, dramatised by Freeman Wills. Our negotiations for letting the theatre were very

difficult, for as we did not know when it would be possible for Irving to play, we had in every case to have the option of bringing the temporary tenancy to an end at any time to suit us. This involved that every arrangement made by any one renting the theatre should contain similar conditions with other people. Nevertheless, through all difficulties we arranged for the provisional occupation of the theatre at a good rental right up to the end of July.

As I used to see Irving every few days I could note his progress—down or up. At first, of course, he got worse and worse; weaker, and suffering more pain. He had never in his life been anything but lean, but now as he lost flesh the outline of his features grew painfully keen. The cheeks and chin and lips, which he had kept clean-shaven all his life, came out stubbly with white hair. At that time his hair was iron-grey, but no more. I remember one early morning when I came into the sitting-room and found his faithful valet, Walter, in tears. When I asked him the cause—for I feared it was death—he said through his sobs:

“He is like Gregory Brewster!”—the old soldier in Waterloo. Walter did not come into the room with me; he feared he would break down and so do harm. When I stole into the room Irving had just waked. He was glad to see me, but he looked very old and weak. Poor Walter’s description was sadly accurate. Indeed he realised the pathetic picture of the dying Sir John Falstaff given by Mrs. Quickly: “His nose was as sharp as a pen....”

It was not till 7th December that he was well enough to get back to London. On the 15th at Manchester, where I then was with the Company, I got a wire from him asking to see me at once on urgent business. I saw him next morning. The business was regarding a speculative offer made to him, against which I strongly advised him. The business did not, however, require much thought; it came to an end before it was well started. That day he left for Bournemouth. He was looking well when he left, though still very weak. He felt much even the going down stairs from his

second floor in Grafton Street. For the remainder of his life he could never with ease go up stairs.

On Wednesday morning, 21st December, I got a wire asking me to come down to Bournemouth by the 2.15 train. I arrived at five at the Bath Hotel where he was staying. The note in my diary says:

"H. I. looking well. Much stronger, self-possessed and evenly balanced. Arranged to tour at Easter. Lyceum season in September and October. American tour in autumn."

This was just what I had already advised. We had arranged for a rack-rental of the Lyceum for the season. We should have a tour of three months with small expenses, as we should only take a few plays with light casts and would only play in places in which he had never appeared. The satisfactory result was a foregone conclusion.

Then would come a holiday of two months to recuperate and get strong, and then a season of eight weeks in London. This, too, promised more than well. He had already arranged with Sardou and Moreau to produce Robespierre that year (1899); and as he had paid a thousand pounds advance royalties he would have no fees to pay for five or six weeks. He had then also an offer of ten thousand pounds for his lease of the Lyceum to come into operation after October. This offer was still open in case he should wish to avail himself of it. The American tour promised a rich reward.

Irving's judgment was at high tide when with fresh hope and vigour he accepted this policy. I left him the next morning to join the tour at Brighton where it was to finish on Saturday, Christmas Eve. We were both in good spirits, hopeful and happy.

IV

It was an unfortunate thing for his own prosperity that Irving did not adhere to the arrangement then made. I fear that the chagrin which he felt at the check to his plans

had too operative a force with him. When the offer made by the parent Lyceum Theatre Company was put before him he jumped at it; and before he had consulted with me about it, or even told me of it, he had actually signed a tentative acceptance. It was now three weeks since he had agreed as to the policy of the immediate future. Loveday and I had been during that time engaged in working out the provincial and American tours, so that it was a surprise when he sent to us both to come down to Bournemouth to see him regarding the new proposal. We went down on the 12th January and stayed a few days. We discussed the matter of the Company's proposition, and I laid before him some memoranda comparing this with the scheme already in hand. The advantage was all to the latter. It was easy to see, however, that Irving's mind was made up. The new scheme was attractive to him in his then condition and circumstances. He had been recently very, very ill and was still physically weak. He had for over two years felt the want of capital or of such organised association of interests as makes for helpfulness; and here was something which would share, if it did not lift, the burden. At any rate, whatever may have been the cause or the prevailing argument or interest with him, he had in this matter made up his mind. When a man of his strong nature makes up his mind to a course of action he generally goes on with it despite reasons or arguments. So far as facts and deeds go he is like a horse that has taken the bit between its teeth. He listened, as ever, attentively and courteously and with seeming thoughtfulness, to all I had to say—and then shifted conversation to details, as though the main principle had been already accepted. On the 14th Comyns Carr came down on behalf of the Company as had been agreed before Irving sent for us. Together we all went over the scheme. As Irving had accepted the principle and was determined to go on, we could only discuss details. I tried hard to get a betterment of the sharing terms; but without avail. The only change of importance I could effect was that Irving should be put down for the same salary—almost nominal to an actor of his position—which had always been entered on our books. Even this was to be only the provincial salary,

not the American which was three times as much. This concession, however, as to salary was eventually to him an addition of some five thousand pounds. A few lesser matters, such as the Company sharing the cost of storage, were to his betterment.

In the original proposition it had been, I believe, suggested that Irving should be a director of the Company, but when he told me of this I said such a decided "No" that he acquiesced. I impressed on him that he must not have his name in any form as a participant in the venture mentioned. He was selling to the Company and sharing his outside profits with them; and that such being the measure of his association, he should not be implicated beyond it.

According to our previous plan of policy I was already in treaty with Charles Frohman regarding the tour in America, to begin in the autumn of that year. There was to be no change in this arrangement, as after the London season with Robespierre was to come this tour. The correspondence with Frohman had now reached a point when it was absolutely necessary that one or other of us should cross the Atlantic. A multitude of details had to be discussed, and as this was our first business transaction with Frohman, all had to be gone over carefully so as to insure a full understanding of our mutual and individual interests and responsibilities. This could not possibly be done by cable, and there was no time for letters; already we were nearly a year later than was usual with such arrangements. As we had to settle things face to face, and as his own affairs would not allow of Frohman's leaving America at that time, I had to go to New York. I left London on 31st January, 1899, and arrived at New York in the Germanic on 11th February—after coming through the greatest storm in the North Atlantic ever recorded. I left New York in the Teutonic on 22nd February, and arrived in London on 1st March. During the time of my absence everything in which Irving was concerned had been completed. The contract between him and the Syndicate Company had been finally settled by the solicitors. The Syndicate Company had sold its rights to the Lyceum Theatre Company, which had been effectively floated and of which the whole capital had

been subscribed. There was not anything left to me to do in the matter.

On my return I was surprised to hear that, in addition to the amount of capital originally mentioned in the provisional contract with Irving as that of the final Company to which his agreement was to be transferred on its flotation—namely, £170,000 in £100,000 6 per cent. preference and £70,000 ordinary shares—there appeared a sum of £120,000 mortgage debentures given to the original freeholders as a part of the purchase money. This made the responsibility of the Company up to £290,000.

Later on I learned that Irving's name had appeared in the prospectus as "Dramatic Adviser," a thing against which I had cautioned him. As a matter of fact he was never called by the directorate of the Company to fulfil the function. Once, he offered advice as to an engagement—which advice was happily taken to considerable advantage to the Company. But so far as I know he was never asked for his advice, nor were the Company's prospective arrangements ever made known to him in advance of the public intimation. I mention this here as it is, I think, advisable for his sake that it should be known.

With the one exception of Gillette's engagement, he never had knowledge of, or act or part in any of the business of the Lyceum Theatre Company outside those matters dependent on or arising from his own agreement with them.

As to myself: for right or wrong, when once I had communicated to him my views on the advisability of his contracting with the Company at all, I had no part in the matter and no responsibility.

After that illness of 1898 Irving's health was never the same as it had been before it. There was always a shortness of breath which, if it did not limit effort, made him careful how he exerted himself. It may have been partly this; it may have been partly the wound to a proud nature which was entailed by the long series of misfortunes with their consequent losses; but there was a certain shrinkage within himself during

the last seven years of his life which was only too apparent to the eyes of those who loved him. To the outer world he still bore himself as ever: quiet, self-contained, masterful in his long purpose. Perhaps the little note of defiance which was added was the conscious recognition of the blows of Fate. But outside his own immediate circle this was not to be seen; he was far too good an actor to betray himself. The bitterness was all for himself. He did not vent it on any one; he did not blame any one. He took it as a good fighter takes a hard blow: he fought all the more valiantly. When he was stricken with pleurisy and pneumonia he was in his sixty-first year. He had been working hard for forty-two years; strenuously for twenty-seven of them. Growing age more or less limits the resilient power; labour so exacting and so prolonged increases vastly the wear and tear of life. So we may, I think, take it that he was actually older than his years. Thus every little ailment told on him with undue force. Things that he used not to mind had now to be carefully considered. He had when working to give up many of his old pleasures so as to save himself for his work. Amongst these pleasures was that of sitting up late. Work had to be considered first, and last, and between; and whatever would take from his strength had to be rigorously put aside. Thus life lost part of its charm for him. He felt it deeply; and, all unknowing, was fostered that bitterness which had struck root already. It is the nature of strong men to fight harder through evil hours; and this was indeed a strong man. He would not give way on any point. Well he knew, with that deep, true instinct of his which is always the superior to mere logical thought, that to give way in anything however small is the beginning of the end.

His bearing through the last seven years was truly heroic. Now that it may be spoken of and known, I may say that I can recall in my own experience nothing like it. Each day, each hour, had its own tally of difficulty to be overcome—of pain or hardship to be borne—of some form of self-denial to be exercised. For a long time before this he had a complaint which always goes on increasing—a complaint common to actors and to all men and women who have to speak much; the complaint which is

called “clergyman’s sore throat.” Doctors classify it as Follicular Pharyngitis. It is, as well as an irritating and often painful malady, a lowering condition from its constant loss of those secretions which make for perfect health. After his illness this seemed to grow to alarming proportions. Month by month and year by year the weakening expectoration increased, till for the last three years he used some five hundred pocket-handkerchiefs in each week. Such a detail is a somewhat sickening one even to read—what must it have been to the poor brave soul who through it all had to so bear himself as to conceal it from the world. He who lived with the fierce light of publicity on him had eternally to play his part day and night, bearing his old brave front so that none might know. Whoso is worthy to wear the crown must have the courage and the patience to endure. I ask no pity for him. He would have scorned even with his dying breath to ask for himself pity from any of the sons of men. But to ask for pity and to deserve it are different things. It is my duty—my privilege now that in the perspective of history, recent though it be, I am writing the true inwardness of his life—to speak the exact truth so that those who loved him, even those who were content to accept him unquestioned, should learn how unfalteringly brave he was. It was not till February 1905 when after a hard night’s work he fell fainting in the hall-way of the hotel at Wolverhampton that the true cause of his weakness was diagnosed. Fortunately he fell into the hands of one of the most able doctors in England, Dr. W. A. Lloyd-Davis of that town—a man to whom grateful thanks are due for his loving care of my dear friend. He it was who discovered that for more than six years—ever since his attack of pleurisy and pneumonia—Irving had been coughing up pus from an unhealed lung. I ask no pardon for giving these medical details. It was prudent to be silent all those years; but the time has gone for such reticence. It is well that the truth should be known.

Many and many a time; day or night; in stillness; in travel; in tropic heat such as now and again is experienced in early summer in America; through raging blizzards; in still cold when the thermometer registered down to figures below zero which

would kill us in a breath did we have it in our moist atmosphere; in dust-storms of rapid travel; in the abounding dust of many theatres, the man had to toil unendingly. For others there was rest; for him none. For others there was cessation, or at worst now and again a lull in the storm of responsibility; for him none. Others could find occasional seclusion; for him there was no such thing. His very popularity was an added strain and trial to increasing weakness and ill-health. But in all, and through all, he never faltered or thought of faltering. For the well-meaning friend or stranger there was the same ever-ready hand of friendship, the same old winning smile of welcome. He might have later to pay for the added strain entailed by his very kindness of heart, but he went on his way all the same.

Henry Irving had undertaken to play the game of life; and he played it well. Right up to the very last hour of his life, when he was at work he would not think of himself. He would play as he had ever played: to the best of his power; in the fulness of his intention; with the last ounce of his strength.

If those who make it their business to direct the minds of youth knew what I know about him they would take this man—this great Englishman—as a shining light of endeavour; as a living embodiment of that fine principle, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.” All his life long Irving worked for others—for his art; never for himself. If rewards came—and they showered upon him—he took them meekly without undue pride, without arrogance; never as other than tributes beyond his worth. He made throughout years a great fortune, but nearly all of it he spent as it came on his art, and in helping his poorer brethren. His own needs were small. He lived in a few rooms, ate sparingly, drank moderately. He had no vices that I know of; he was not extravagant; did not gamble, was not ostentatious even in his charities. There are many widows and orphans who mourn his loss; if only for his comforting sympathy and the helping of his kindly hand. In the sacred niche of many, many hearts there is a blank space which only a memory—no longer an image—fills.

Requiescat in pace!

V

In those last seven years of his life I was not able to see so much of him as I had been in the habit of doing throughout the previous twenty. We had each of us his own work to do, and the only way I could help him was to take on my own shoulders all the work I could. As he did not come to his office in the theatre regularly every day as he was accustomed to do, I used to go to him; to his flat in Stratton Street when in London, to his hotel when we travelled. He did not often have supper in the old way. He still entertained to a reasonable amount, but such entertainments were generally in the shape of dinners on Sunday, the only day possible to him. When the play was over at night he would dress slowly, having a chat as he did so; for he loved to talk over his work past, present and future. When travelling he would often be reluctant to take his way to his lonely home—if indeed a hotel can be called a home. When in London he would linger and linger; the loneliness of his home made it in a degree a prison house. But all that while, night by night and year by year, he would stick to his purpose of saving himself for his work—at any cost to himself in the shape of loss of pleasure, of any form of self-abnegation.

Thus it was that through those last seven years I saw less of his private life than I had hitherto done. My work became to save him all I could. Of course each day during working months, each night—except at holiday times—I would see him for hours; and our relations were always the same. But the opportunities were different. Seldom now were there the old long meetings when occasion was full of chances for self-development, for self-illumination; when idea leads on idea till presently the secret chambers of the soul are made manifest. Seldom did one gather the half-formed thoughts and purposes which tell so much of the inner working of the mind. It was, of course, in part that hopes and purposes belonged to an earlier age.

There is more life and spring in intentions that have illimitable possibilities than in those that are manifestly bounded, if not cramped, by existing and adverse facts. But the effect was the same. The man, wearied by long toil and more or less deprived by age and health of the spurs of ambition, shrank somewhat into himself.

This book is no mere panegyric; it is not intended to be. For my own part, my love and admiration for Irving were such that nothing I could tell to others—nothing that I can recall to myself—could lessen his worth. I only wish that, so far as I can achieve it, others now and hereafter may see him with my eyes. For well I know that if they do, his memory shall not lack. He was a man with all a man's weaknesses and mutabilities as well as a man's strong qualities. Had he not had in his own nature all the qualities of natural man how could he have for close on half a century embodied such forces—general and distinctive—in such a long series of histrionic characters whose fidelity to natural type became famous. I have the feeling strong upon me that the more Irving's inner life is known, the better he must stand in the minds and hearts of all to whom his name, his work, and his fame are of interest.

The year 1899 was so overwhelmingly busy a one for him that he had little time to think. But the next year, despite the extraordinary success which attended his work, he began to feel the loss of his own personal sway over the destinies of the Lyceum. There was in truth no need for worrying. The work of that year made for the time an extraordinary change in his fortunes. In the short season of fifteen weeks at the Lyceum the gross receipts exceeded twenty-eight thousand pounds. Five weeks' tour in the Provinces realised over eleven thousand pounds. And the tour in America of twenty-nine weeks reached the amazing total of over half a million dollars. To be exact $537,154.25. The exchange value in which all our American tour calculations were made was $4.84 per £1. So that the receipts become in British money £110,982 4s. 9d.—leaving a net profit of over thirty-two thousand pounds.

But the feeling of disappointment was not to be soothed by material success. Money,

except as a means to an end, never appealed to Irving. We knew afterwards that the bitterness that then came upon him, and which lasted in lessening degree for some three years, was due in the main to his surely fading health. To him any form of lingering ill-health was a novelty. All his life up till then he had been amazingly strong. Not till after he was sixty did he know what it was to have toothache in ever so small a degree. I do not think that he ever knew at all what a headache was like. To such a man, and specially to one who has been in the habit of taxing himself to the full of his strength, restriction of effort from any cause brings a sense of inferiority. So far as I can estimate it, for he never hinted at it much less put it in words, Irving's tinge of bitterness was a sort of protest against Fate. Certainly he never visited it on any of those around him. Indeed, in any other man it would hardly have been noticeable; but Irving's nature was so sweet, and he was so really thoughtful for his fellow workers of all classes, that anything which clouded it was a concern to all.

As his health grew worse the bitterness began to pass away; and for the last two years of his life his nature, softened however to a new tenderness, went back to its old dignified calm.

VI

In the spring of 1905 came the beginning of the end. He had since his illness gone through the rigours of two American winters without seemingly ill effect. But now he began to lose strength. Still, despite all he would struggle on, and acted nightly with all his old unsparing energy and fire. The audiences saw little difference; he alone it was who suffered. Since the beginning of the new century his great ventures had not been successful. Coriolanus in 1901 and Dante in 1903 were costly and unsuccessful. Both plays were out of joint with the time. The public in London, the Provinces and America would not have them; though the latter play ran well for a few weeks before the public of London made up their minds that it was an inferior

play. In both pieces Irving himself made personal success; it was the play in each case that was not popular. This was shown everywhere by the result of the change of bill; whenever any other play was put up the house was crowded. But a great organisation like Irving's requires perpetual sustenance at fairly high pressure. The five years of the new century saw a gradual oozing away of accumulation. The "production account" alone of that time exceeded twenty-five thousand pounds.

Had he been able to take a prolonged rest, say for a year, he might have completely recovered from the injury to his lung. But it is the penalty of public success that he who has achieved it must keep it. The slightest break is dangerous; to fall back or to lose one's place in the running is to be forgotten. He therefore made up his mind to accept the position of failing health and strength, and to set a time limit for his further efforts.

VII

The time for his retirement he fixed to be at the conclusion of his having been fifty years on the stage. He made the announcement at a supper given to him by the Manchester Art Club on June 1, 1904. This would give him two years in which to take farewell of the public. The time, though seeming at the first glance to be a generous one, was in reality none too long. There were only about forty working weeks in each year, eighty altogether. Of these the United States and Canada would absorb thirty. The Provinces would require three tours of some twelve weeks each. London would have fourteen or fifteen weeks in two divisions, during which would be given all the available plays in his répertoire.

At the conclusion of the tour we arranged with Mr. Charles Frohman, who secured for us the American dates for which we asked. We had made out the tour ourselves, choosing the best towns and taking them in such sequence that the railway travel should be minimised. All was ready, and on 19th September we began at Cardiff our series of farewell visits. The Welsh people are by nature affectionate and emotional.

The last night at Cardiff was a touching farewell. This was repeated at Swansea with a strange addition: when the play was over and the calls finished the audience stood still in their places and seemingly with one impulse began to sing. They are all fine part-singers in those regions, and it was a strange and touching effect when the strains of Newman's beautiful hymn, "Lead, kindly light," filled the theatre. Then followed their own national song, "Land of my fathers."

Irving was much touched. He had come out before the curtain to listen when the singing began; and when, after the final cheering of the audience, he went back to his dressing-room the tears were still wet on his cheeks.

During that tour at half the places the visit was of farewell. For the tour had been arranged before Irving had made up his mind about retiring, and it was the intention that the last tour of all, before the final short season in London, should be amongst the eight greatest provincial cities.

VIII

In one of the towns then visited and where the visit was to be the final one, there was a very remarkable occasion. At Sunderland he had made his first appearance in 1856, and now the city wished to mark the circumstance of his last appearance in a worthy way. A public banquet was organised at which he was presented with an Address on behalf of the authorities and the townspeople. The function took place on the afternoon of Friday, October 28, 1904. The occasion was of special interest to Irving. For weeks beforehand his mind was full of it, for it brought back a host of old memories. He talked often with me of those old days, and every little detail seemed to come back vividly in that wonderful memory of his which could always answer to whatever call was made upon it. Amongst the little matters of those days when all things were of transcendent importance was one which had its full complement of chagrin and pain. In the preliminary bill regarding the New Lyceum Theatre, where the names of all the Company were given, his own name was

wrongly spelled. It was given as “Mr. Irvine.” At that time the name in reality did not matter much. It was not known in any way; it was not even his own by birthright, or as later by the Queen’s Patent. But it was the name he hoped and intended to make famous; and the check at the very start seemed a cruel blow. Of course the error was corrected, and on the opening night all was right.

In his early life he was very unfortunate regarding the proper spelling of his name. I find in the bill of his first appearance in Glasgow at the Dunlop Street Theatre his name thus given in the case of the great spectacular play, given on Easter Monday, April 9, 1869, The Indian Revolt:

“Achmet, a Hindoo attached to the Nana, by Mr. Irwig (his first appearance).”

I do not think that these two mistakes ever quite left his memory—certainly he was always very particular about his name being put in the bill exactly as he had arranged it.

The Sunderland function went off splendidly. Everything went so well that the whole affair was a delight to him and gave the city of his first appearance a new and sweet claim on his memory.

IX

Another provincial tour was arranged for the spring of 1905. It began at Portsmouth on the 23rd January and was to go on to 8th April, when it would conclude at Wigan. But severe and sudden illness checked it in the middle of the fifth week. The passage through the South and West had been very trying, for in addition to seven performances a week and many journeys there were certain public hospitalities to which he had been pledged. At Plymouth, lunch on Wednesday with the Admiral, Sir Edward Seymour; and on Thursday with the Mayor, Mr. Wyncotes and others, in the Plymouth Club. At Exeter, on Wednesday a Public Address and Reception in the Guildhall. Two days later at Bath a ceremony of unveiling a memorial to Quin the

actor, followed by a civic lunch with the Mayor, Mr. John, in the Guildhall. On the following Tuesday, 21st February, a Public Address was to be presented in the Town Hall of Wolverhampton under the auspices of the Mayor, Mr. Berrington.

But by this time Irving had become so alarmingly ill that we were very seriously anxious. After the performance of The Lyons Mail at Boscombe on 3rd February he had been very ill and feeble, though he had so played that the audience were not aware of his state of health. The note in my diary for that day is:

"H. I. fearfully done up, could hardly play. At end in collapse. Could hardly move or breathe."

His wonderful recuperative power, however, stood to him. Next day he played The Merchant of Venice in the morning and Waterloo and The Bells at night.

The function at Bath was very trying. The weather was bitterly cold, yet he stood bareheaded in the street speaking to a vast crowd. This required a great voice effort. It was a striking sight, for not only was the street packed solid with people, but every window was full and the high roofs were like clusters of bees. Our journey on the following Sunday was from Bath to Wolverhampton. Much snow had fallen and there was intense frost. So difficult was the railroading that our "special" was forty-five minutes late in a scheduled journey of three hours and ten minutes. In that journey Irving got a chill which began to tell at once on his strength. On Monday night he played Waterloo and The Bells. My note is:

"H. I. very weak, but got through all right."

But that night in going into the hotel he fainted—for the first time in his life! He did not know he had fainted until I told him the next morning. When the doctor saw him in the morning he said that he would not possibly be able to go to the Town Hall in the afternoon and play at night; that he was really fit for neither, but he might get through one of them. Becket was fixed for that night, and it was comparatively light work for him. That night he played all right, but at the end was done up, and short of

breath. The next night he played The Merchant of Venice, and at the end of the play made his speech of farewell to Wolverhampton. But his condition of illness was such that we decided that the tour must be abandoned. Dr. Lloyd-Davies was with him in the theatre all the evening and did him yeoman's service. The next day Dr. Foxwell of Birmingham came over for consultation. After their examination the following bulletin was issued:

"It is imperatively necessary that Sir Henry Irving shall not act for at least two months from this date.

"Arthur Foxwell, M.D.

"W. Allan Lloyd-Davies, L.R.C.P., F.R.C.S."

On 17th March I visited Irving at Wolverhampton. He was looking infinitely better and we had a drive before luncheon. The two doctors had another consultation and it was decided that Irving must not go to America, as arranged for the following autumn. Loveday came down by a later train, and he and Irving and I consulted as to future arrangements. We returned to London next day and a few days later Irving left Wolverhampton for Torquay, where he remained till 19th April.

In the meantime I had seen Charles Frohman and postponed our American tour for a year.

X

A short season of six weeks had been arranged for Drury Lane. This began on 29th April. There were three weeks of Becket and two of The Merchant of Venice. In the last week were four nights of Waterloo and Becket, the last performance of this bill being the last night of the season, and two nights of Louis XI. All went well for the six weeks. He was none the worse for the effort.

The last night of the season, June 10, 1905, was one never to be forgotten by any one who was present. It almost seemed as if the public had some precognition that it

was the last time they would see Irving play. The house was crowded in every part—an enormous audience, the biggest Irving ever played to in London—and full of wild enthusiasm. An inspiring audience! Irving felt it and played magnificently; he never played better in his life. The moment of his entrance was the signal for a roar of welcome, prolonged to an extraordinary degree. Something of the same kind marked the close of each act. At the end the audience simply went mad. It was a scene to be present at once in a lifetime. The calls were innumerable. Time after time the curtain had to be raised to ever the same wild roar. It was marvellous how the strength of the audience held out so long.

It had been arranged that on that night at the close of the play the presentation of a Loving Cup by the workmen of all the theatres throughout the kingdom should take place on the stage. The representatives of the various theatres assembled in due course, about a hundred of them. As there were to be some speeches, a moment of quiet was necessary; we tried turning down the lights in the theatre, for still the audience kept cheering. It never ceased—that prolonged insistent note of perpetual renewals which once heard has a place in memory. After a while we did a thing I never saw done before: the lights were turned quite out. But still the audience remained cheering through the black darkness of the house.

HENRY IRVING AND JOHN HARE The last photograph of Henry Irving taken in John Hare’s garden at Overstrand by Miss Hare, 1905

Irving with his usual discernment and courtesy recognised the right thing to do. He ordered the curtain to go up once more; and stepping in front of the stage said, so soon as the wild roar of renewed strength, stilled on purpose, would allow him:

“Ladies and gentlemen,—We have a little ceremony of our own to take place on the stage to-night. I think, however, it will be the mind of all my friends on the stage that you should join in our little ceremony. So with your permission we will go on with it.”

Another short sharp cheer and then sudden stillness.

The presentation was made in due form and then—the curtain still remaining up, for there was to be no more formal barrier that night—the audience, cheering all the time, melted away.

It was a worthy finish to a lifetime of loving appreciation of the art work of a great man.

This was Irving's last regular London performance, and with the exception of his playing Waterloo for the benefit of his old friend, Lionel Brough, at His Majesty's Theatre on 15th June, the last time he ever appeared in London.

XI

The autumn tour of that year, 1905, was fixed for ten weeks and a half, to commence at Sheffield on 2nd October. The tour commenced very well. There were fine houses despite the fact that it was the week of the Musical Festival. On Tuesday, 3rd, the Lord Mayor, Sir Joseph Jonas, gave a great luncheon for him in the Town Hall. Irving was in good form and spoke well. There was nothing noticeable in his playing or regarding his health all that week. On Saturday night there was a big house and much enthusiasm. Irving seemed much touched as he said farewell. From Sheffield we went on to Bradford.

The Monday and Tuesday night at Bradford went all right. Irving did not seem ill or extremely weak. We had by now been accustomed to certain physical feebleness—except when he was on the stage. On Wednesday the Mayor, Mr. Priestley, was giving a big lunch for him in the Town Hall, at which he was to be presented with a Public Address. I joined him at his hotel at a little past one o'clock and we went together to the Town Hall. He seemed very feeble that morning, and as we went slowly up the steep steps he paused several times to get his breath. He had become an adept at concealing his physical weakness on such occasions. He would

seize on some point of local or passing interest and make inquiries about it, so that by the time the answer came he would have been rested. There was a party of some fifty gentlemen, all friends, all hearty, all delightful. On the presentation of the Address he spoke well, but looked sadly feeble.

That night we played Louis XI. He got through his work all right, but was very exhausted after it. The bill of the next night was the one we dreaded, The Bells. I had been with him at his hotel for an hour in the morning and we had got through our usual work together. He seemed feeble, but made no complaint. There was a great house that night. When Irving arrived he seemed exceedingly feeble though not ill. In his dressing-room I noticed that he did that which I had never known him do before: sit down in a listless way and delay beginning to dress for his part. He seemed tired, tired; tired not for an hour but for a lifetime. He played, however, just as usual. There was no perceptible diminution of his strength—of his fire. But when the play was over he was absolutely exhausted. Whilst he was dressing I went in and sat with him, having previously given instructions to the Master Machinist to send The Bells back to London. When I told Irving what I had done he acquiesced in it and seemed relieved. He had played The Bells against the strong remonstrances of Loveday and myself. Knowing him as I did, I came to the conclusion that his doing so was to prove himself. He had felt weak but would not yield to the suspicion; he wanted to know.

It may be wondered at or even asked why Henry Irving was allowed to play at all, being in his then state of weakness.

In the first place, Irving was his own master, and took his own course entirely. He was of a very masterful nature and took on his own shoulders the full responsibility of his acts. He would listen to the advice of those whom he trusted naturally, or had learned to trust; but he was, within the limits of possibility, the final arbiter of matters concerning himself in which there was any power of choice. The forces of a

strong nature have to be accepted en bloc; these very indomitable forces of resolution and persistence—of the disregard of pain or weariness to himself which had given him his great position—ruled him in weakness as in strength. His will was the controlling power of his later as of his earlier days.

Moreover, he could not stop. To do so would have been final extinction. His affairs were such that it was necessary to go on for the sake of himself in such span of life as might be left to him, and for the sake of others. The carrying out of his purpose of going through his farewell tours would mean the realisation of a fortune; without such he would begin the unproductive period of age in poverty. Accustomed as he had been now for many years to carry out his wishes in his own way: to do whatever he had set his heart on and to help his many friends and comrades, to be powerless in such matters would have been to him a never-ending pain of chagrin. All this, of course over and above the ties and duties of his family and his own personal needs. He was a very proud man, and the inevitable blows to his pride would have been to him worse than death—especially when such might be obviated by labour, howsoever arduous or dangerous the same might be. We who knew him well recognised all this. All that we could do was to keep our own counsel, and to help him to the best of our respective powers.

XII

The next morning, 13th October, I went to Irving at half-past twelve. Loveday as had been arranged came at one o’clock. We three discussed matters ahead of us fully. We decided on the changes to be made in the bill for the following week when we were to play in Birmingham. Irving seemed quite calm, and, under the circumstances, cheerful. He endorsed the decision of the previous evening as to leaving The Bells out of the répertoire for the remainder of the tour; he seemed pleased at not having to play the piece for the present. We then decided on such other arrangements as were consequently necessary. During our conversation Irving

said:

“Of course the American tour is absolutely impossible! It will have to be abandoned! But time enough for that; we can see to it later.”

That morning he was undoubtedly feeble. He was so unusually amenable in accepting the changes of his plans that when we were walking back I commented on it to Loveday, saying:

“He acquiesced too easily; I never knew him so meek before. I don’t like it!”

When he came down to the theatre that night Irving seemed much better and stronger, and was more cheerful than he had been for some time. He played well; and though he was somewhat exhausted, was infinitely less so than he had been on the previous evening. There was no speech that night, so that the last words he spoke on the stage were Becket’s last words in the play:

“Into Thy hands, O Lord! into Thy hands!”

I sat in his room with him while he dressed. He was quite cheerful, and we chatted freely. I thought that he had turned the corner and was already, with that marvellous recuperative power of his, on the way to get strong again. I told him that it was my opinion that now he was rid of the apprehension of having to play The Bells he would be himself soon:

“You have been feeling the taking up of your work again after an absence from it of four months, the longest time of rest in your life. Now you have got into your stride again, and work will be easy!”

He thought for a moment and then said quietly:

“I really think that is so!” Then he seemed to get quite cheery.

Percy Burton, who arranged our advance matters, had in answer to my telegram come over from Birmingham, so that he might be fully told of our prospective changes. He was coming home to supper with me before he got the train back to

Birmingham. I had asked Irving if he wanted to see him; but he said he did not, as Burton quite knew what to do. Then, always thoughtful of others, he added:

"But if he is going by the one o'clock train you must not wait here. He will want time to take his supper." I stood up to go and he held out his hand to say good-night. Afterwards, the remembrance of that affectionate movement came back to me with gratitude, for it was not usual; when men meet every day and every night, hand-shaking is not a part of the routine of friendly life. As I went out he said to me:

"Muffle up your throat, old chap. It is bitterly cold to-night and you have a cold. Take care of yourself! Good-night! God bless you!"

Those were the last words that I heard Henry Irving speak!

Burton and I were at supper when a carriage drove rapidly up to the door of my lodging. I suspected that it was something for me and opened the door myself at once. Mr. Sheppard, one of my assistants who always attended to Irving's private matters, stepped in, saying quickly:

"I think you had better come down to the Midland Hotel at once. Sir Henry is ill. He fainted in the hall just as he did at Wolverhampton. When the doctor came I rushed off for you!" We all jumped into the carriage and hurried as fast as we could go to the hotel.

In the hall were some twenty men grouped round Irving who lay at full length on the floor. One of the doctors, there were three of them there then, told me quietly that he was dead. He had died just two minutes before. The clock in the hall showed the time then as eight minutes to twelve. So that he died at ten minutes to twelve.

It was almost impossible to believe, as he lay there with his eyes open, that he was really dead. I knelt down by him and felt his heart to know for myself if it was indeed death. But all was sadly still. His body was quite warm. Walter Collinson, his faithful valet, was sitting on the floor beside him, crying. He said to me through his sobs:

“He died in my arms!”

His face looked very thin and the features sharp as he lay there with his chest high and his head fallen back; but there was none of the usual ungracefulness of death. The long iron-grey hair had fallen back, showing the great height of his rounded forehead. The bridge of his nose stood out sharp and high. I closed his eyes myself; but as I had no experience in such a matter I asked one of the doctors, who kindly with deft fingers straightened the eyelids. Then we carried him upstairs to his room and laid him on his bed.

I had to send a host of telegrams at once to inform the various members of his family and the press. The latter had to go with what speed we could, for the hour of his death was such that there was no local information. Loveday arrived at the hotel after we had carried him to his room. He was indeed greatly distressed and in bitter sorrow.

The actual cause of Irving’s death was physical weakness; he lost a breath, and had not strength to recover it.

Sheppard told me that when Irving was leaving the theatre he had said to him that he had better come to the hotel with him, as was sometimes his duty. When he got into the carriage he had sat with his back to the horses—this being his usual custom by which he avoided a draught. He was quite silent during the short journey. When he got out of the carriage he seemed very feeble, and as he passed through the outer hall of the hotel seemed uncertain of step. He stumbled slightly and Sheppard held him up. Then when he got as far as the inner hall he sat down on a bench for an instant.

That instant was the fatal one. In the previous February at Wolverhampton, when he had suffered from a similar attack of weakness, he had fallen down flat. In that attitude Nature asserted herself, and the lungs being in their easiest position allowed him to breathe mechanically. Now the seated attitude did not give the opportunity

for automatic effort. The syncope grew worse; he slipped on the ground. But it was then too late. By the time the doctor arrived, after only a few minutes in all, he had passed too far into the World of Shadows to be drawn back by any effort of man or science. The heart beat faintly, and more faintly still. And then came the end.

Before I left the hotel in the grey of the morning I went into the bedroom. It wrung my heart to see my dear old friend lie there so cold and white and still. It was all so desolate and lonely, as so much of his life had been. So lonely that in the midst of my own sorrow I could not but rejoice at one thing: for him there was now Peace and Rest.

I was at the hotel again at 7.30, and then went to meet his eldest son, H. B. Irving, at the Great Northern Station at 9.35. He had received my telegram in time to start by the newspaper train. His other son, Laurence, with his wife, arrived later in the day; my telegram to him had not arrived in time to allow his coming till the morning train. The undertaker had come in the morning at nine, and the embalming done before Irving's sons had arrived.

That afternoon all the Company, including the workmen, came to see him. It was a very touching and harrowing time for all, for he was much beloved by every one.

At seven o'clock in the evening the body was laid in the lead coffin. I was present alone with the undertakers and saw the lead coffin sealed. This was then placed in the great oak coffin—which an hour later was taken privately through the yard of the Midland Hotel by a devious way to the Great Northern Station so as to avoid publicity; for the streets were thronged with waiting crowds. At Bradford, Saturday is a half-day, and large numbers of people are abroad. The ex-mayor, Mr. Lupton, who had entertained Irving in the Town Hall at his previous visit, kindly arranged with the Chief Constable that all should be in order in the streets. All day throughout the City the flags had been at half-mast, and there was everywhere a remarkable silence through which came the mournful sound of the minute-bells from seemingly

all the churches.

At half-past nine we left the hotel to drive to the railway station. The appearance of the streets and the demeanour of the crowd I shall never forget; and I never want to. Everywhere was a sea of faces, all the more marked as all hats were off as we drove slowly along. Street after street of silent humanity; and in all that crowd nothing but grief and respect. One hardly realised its completeness till when, now and then, a sob broke the stillness. To say that it was moving would convey but a poor idea of that attitude of the crowd; it was poignant—harrowing—overwhelming. In silence the crowd stood back; in silence, without hurry or pushing or stress of any kind, closed around us and followed on. It was the same at the railway station; everywhere the silent crowd, holding back respectfully, uncovered.

For a quarter of a century I had been accustomed when travelling with Irving to see the rushing crowd closing in with cheers and waving of hats and kerchiefs; to watch the moving sea of hands thrust forward for him to shake, to hear the roar of the cheering crowd kept up till the train began to move, and then to hear it dying away from our ears not from cessation but from mere distance. And now this silence! No nobler or more loving tribute than the silence of that mighty crowd could ever be paid to the memory of one who has passed away. Were I a Yorkshireman I should have been proud of Bradford on that day. It moves me strangely to think of it yet.

XIII

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey were memorialised by a number of persons of importance to have a Public Funeral with burial in the Abbey. So important were the signatories that no difficulty was experienced. The only condition made was that the body should be cremated, as a rule had been established that henceforth no actual body should be buried in the Abbey. The ground had in the past been so broken that for new graves it would be necessary to go down into the concrete, which might injure the structure. The Abbey authorities were most kind in

all ways. Dean Armitage Robinson gave from his sick-bed his approval, and Sub-Dean Duckworth and Archdeacon Wilberforce made all arrangements. Indeed the Dean on the day of the funeral got up in order to perform the burial service.

The Baroness and Mr. Burdett-Coutts, knowing that Irving's flat in 17 Stratton Street was not suited to receive the crowds who would wish to pay their respects, kindly placed at the disposal of his family their spacious house in Piccadilly and Stratton Street. Here on Thursday, the 19th, he lay in state. The great dining-room was made a Chapelle ardente, and here were placed the many, many flowers that were sent. There was a veritable sea of them—wreaths, crosses, symbolic forms of all kinds. On the coffin over the heart lay the floral cross sent by the Queen. Attached to it was a broad ribbon on which she had written as her tribute to the dead the last words he had spoken on the stage:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord! into Thy hands!"

On a little table in front of the coffin lay the wreath sent by Ellen Terry. Behind, hung high along the end wall of the lofty room, was the pall—"sent anonymously," as the card on it declared. Surely such a pall was never before seen. It was entirely wrought of leaves of fresh laurel. Thousands upon thousands of them went to its making up. It was so large that at the funeral when fourteen pall-bearers marched with the coffin it covered all the space and hung to the ground, before, behind, and on either side.

Through that room all day long passed a silent and mournful crowd of all classes and degrees; and at any moment of the time a single glance at their faces would have shown what love and sorrow had brought them there.

XIV

a

The Public Funeral took place on Friday, 20th October. It would be impossible in a

book of this size to give details of it, even if such belonged to the scope of my work. Suffice it that all the honours which can be paid to the illustrious dead were observed. The King had sent to represent him, according to the custom of such ceremonies, Irving's old and dear friend, General the Right Hon. Sir Dighton Probyn, V.C. The Queen's formal representative was Earl Howe; but her personal tribute was the beautiful cross of flowers which lay on the actor's coffin. The Prince and Princess of Wales were also represented. Others were there also whom men call "great"—chiefs of all great endeavours. Ministers and soldiers, ambassadors and judges, peers and great merchants, and many sorrowing exponents of all the Arts. To name them would be impossible; to try to describe the ceremony unavailing. But the place for all this is not here; it belongs now to the history of the Age and Nation.

b

All the previous night the coffin had lain in the little chapel of St. Faith between the South Transept—wherein is the Poet's Corner where Irving was to be laid—and the Chapter House, where the mourners were to assemble. The funeral had been arranged for noon, but hours before that time every approach to the Abbey was thronged with silent crowds. There was a hush in the air through which the roar of the traffic in the streets seemed to come modified, as though it had been intercepted by that belt of silence. Slowly, imperceptibly, like shadows in their silence, the crowds gathered; a sombre mass closing as if with a black ring the whole precincts of the Cathedral.

Noon found the interior of the edifice a solid mass of people, save where the passage-way up the Nave and Choir was marked with masses of white flowers. Wreaths and crosses and bunches of flowers must have been sent in hundreds—thousands, for in addition to those within, both sides of the Cloister walks were banked with them.

Who could adequately describe that passing from the Chapter House, whence the

funeral procession took its way through the South and West Cloister Walk, down the South Aisle and up the Nave and Choir till the coffin was rested before the Sanctuary; the touching music, in which now and again the sweet childish treble—the purest sound on earth—seemed to rend the mourners' very hearts; the mighty crowd, silent, with bowed heads; everywhere white faces with eyes that wept.

Oh that crowd! Never in the world was greater tribute to any man. The silence! The majestic silence, for it transcended negation and became positive from its dormant force. "Not dead silence, but living silence!" as the dead man's old companion, Sir Edward Russell, said in words that should become immortal. All thoughts of self were forgotten; the lesser feelings of life seemed to have passed away in that glory of triumphant sorrow. Eye and heart and brain and memory went with the Dead as to the solemn music the mournful procession passed along. Surely a lifetime of devotion must have gone to the crowning of those long-drawn seconds. To one moving through that divine alley-way of sympathetic sorrow it seemed as though the serried ranks on either hand, seen in the dimness of that October day, went back and back to the very bounds of the thinking world.

As from the steps of the Sanctuary came the first words of the Service for the Burial of the Dead, a bright gleam of winter sunshine burst through the storied window of the South Transept and lit up the laurel pall till it glistened like gold.

And then for a little while few could see anything except dimly through their tears.

When the last words of the Benediction had been spoken over his grave, there came from the Organ-loft the first solemn notes of Handel's noble Dead March. The great organ had been supplemented by military instruments, and as the mournful notes of the trumpets rose they seemed to cling to the arches and dim corners of the great Cathedral, tearing open our hearts with endless echoes. And then the solemn booming of the muffled drums seemed to recall us to the life that has to be lived on,

howsoever lonely or desolate it may be.

“The song of woe

Is after all an earthly song.”

The trumpets summon us, and the drums beat the time of the onward march—quick or slow as Duty calls.

March! March!

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TRANSCRIBER’S NOTES

P. 408, changed “Are we all to burned” to “Are we all to be burned”. Silently corrected obvious typographical errors and variations in spelling. Retained archaic, non-standard, and uncertain spellings as printed. Re-indexed footnotes using numbers.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF HENRY IRVING ***

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