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THE VARIETY STAGE

A HISTORY OF THE MUSIC HALLS FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY

CHARLES DOUGLAS STUART

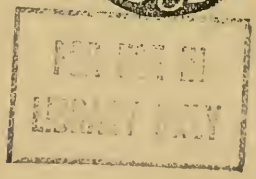
AND

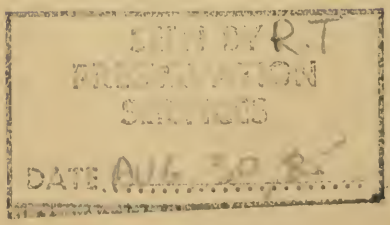
A. J. PARK

London

T. FISHER UNWIN

PATERNOSTER SQUARE





PREFACE

To the general reader, as well as to the thoughtful observer of the social institutions of the English people, the story of the rise, progress and present condition of Variety Stage in this country presents features of peculiar attraction.

As a factor in the domestic life of the masses, its influence can hardly be over-estimated; while the hold which it retains to-day on the suffrage of the people is as remarkable as it is conspicuous. Indeed, few other forms of public entertainment command so large a share of popular support as that presented by the modern Music Hall, which constitutes in itself the most formidable rival in the patronage of the populace which the legitimate stage has ever possessed. Within recent years its

prominence has become still more evident. All that wealth, art and taste could yield have been enlisted in its service. Capital, representing an aggregate of many hundreds of thousands, has been invested in its ventures and recouped by phenomenal returns: veritable Temples of Variety, designed by the leading architects of the day, and upholstered, appointed and embellished in a style rivalling in magnificence, luxury and display the palace of an eastern potentate, have sprung up in all the principal cities of the Kingdom; and *entrepreneurs* of European celebrity have ransacked the globe in their insatiable thirst for novelties of every description.

In placing before the reader, therefore, the present history, the authors feel that the undertaking calls for no apology on their part; but while they are confident that the hour has arrived for such a work, they feel some diffidence in putting themselves forward as the men which the occasion calls forth. They are not, however, altogether unequipped for the task which, in the absence of any attempt by abler or more qualified writers, they have themselves taken in hand.

Their long connection with music-hall

journalism has made them familiar with all phases of the variety world, while the prompt assistance which has been rendered to them by managers and artistes alike, and the facilities placed at their disposal by the profession generally, have enabled them to attempt the work with every confidence in its successful accomplishment.

In The History of the Variety Stage they have endeavoured to deal in a bright, chatty and anecdotal manner, not only with the Music Halls of the past and present, but also with the picturesque and variegated profession which has called them into existence, and while presenting to the statistician, the antiquarian, and the student of domestic history, a substantial and painstaking work of research, they have tried to render at the same time a graphic panorama of the variety world as it was and as it is to-day.

In the following pages, old-time favourites reappear and win their successes anew; the songs that tickled the ears of our grandfathers are heard again, and the rap of the chairman's hammer rings through its pages.

The veil of the Music Hall Bohemia has been discreetly lifted, and the reader escorted

behind the scenes, and through the mazes of this attractive region.

In conclusion, The History of the Variety Stage, which the authors now present to the public, will, it is hoped, be found as attractive to the ordinary and desultory reader as, they trust, it may prove valuable and interesting to the more serious student of contemporary history.

CHARLES DOUGLAS STUART.
A. J. PARK.

LONDON, *May* 1895.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Origin of the Variety Stage—London in the Thirties—Sketch of the Period—Topographical, Political and Social Aspects—Popular Amusements of the Time—Theatres and Opera Houses—Pleasure Gardens—Vauxhall—Cremorne—The White Conduit House—Bagnigge Wells—Highbury Barn—The Judge-and-Jury Societies—Baron Nicholson—The Protean Witness—Brooks—Miscellaneous Entertainments—A Curious Advertisement.

THE English variety stage dates in an historical sense from a comparatively modern era. There are probably many persons still living who were, in a manner of speaking, 'in at the birth.' Nevertheless, the story of the rise and growth of the modern music hall carries us across the gulf of some sixty intervening years away back to the early thirties of the present century. It is an interesting and picturesque period, a cursory

sketch of which, before proceeding further, may perhaps enable the reader better to appreciate the conditions in which the subject of this history was ushered into existence, and the environments which imparted to it in its earliest infancy something of the character and colour which in an improved and modified degree it retains to the present day.

In its topographical, as well as in its political and social aspects, the London of that time presents a curious contrast to the Metropolis in Anno Domini 1895. The sweeping improvements in streets and squares, in public and in private buildings, which are making London, as we know it, one of the finest cities in the world, were then uncontemplated. The betterment question had not been mooted, and ill-paved, ill-drained and ill-lighted, the town lay within a comparatively narrow compass. The dense suburbs, which now stretch out on every side in dreary miles of brick and mortar, were still undreamt of. The jerry builder had not yet made his advent, and smiling landscapes girdled the metropolis within a mile of Charing Cross.

It was a period of political fermentation and social upheaval. The patriotic fervour which had moved the heart of England during the two preceding decades had simmered down, but the country was still in the throes of the first reform legislation which shared the public attention with such burning questions as Catholic Emancipation,

Chartism and Anti-Slavery. The Penny Post was yet a vision of its projector, Mr Rowland Hill, and the franking of letters was a matter of daily practice. The snort of the locomotive had only just begun to make itself heard, and lumbering hackney coaches and clumsy cabriolets were the only available conveyances in the metropolis. Rushlights and tallow candles, the latter with their indispensable concomitants, the snuffers and tray, were the sole domestic illuminants. The lucifer match had not yet come into use, and pending its arrival, the tinder-box, with its flint and steel, continued to exercise the patience of the British housewife. In dress, the variegated silks and satins which had characterised the Georgian *régimes* had given way to an attire, which, if somewhat more sober, still left plenty of room for extravagant display. In ordinary life, the usual male attire consisted of a coat, generally of a blue, or bottle-green hue, cut away sharp above the waist, with claw-hammer tails, and gleaming metal buttons. Flowered vests, of an open pattern, and set off with lavishly-frilled fronts and high stocks were the vogue, while the nether 'continuations' were close-fitting, and terminated above the ankles. The two great generals of the time, Wellington and Blücher, had set the fashion in the special style of boots named after them, while curly-brimmed, beaver top-hats, which either narrowed or widened to-

wards the crown, were the customary form of headgear. The artificial wig, with its knotted queue had gone out of date for general wear, but still continued a prominent feature in the professional attire of members of the bar. The greatcoat of many capes was also a familiar article in the male garb of those days. The feminine costume was about equally original in conception and design. Nevertheless the ladies contrived to look bewitching in Paisley shawls of brilliant tints, silken or muslin gowns of many flounces, rather low at the neck and very much puffed at the sleeves, while their charms were further handicapped with preposterous poke bonnets, adorned with coloured ribbons and set off at the sides with the owner's dangling ringlets. Socially, the period was one of deep drinking among all classes, temperance reform being as yet a dream of the future. Gambling in all its hideous forms was rampant everywhere, and the region of the Haymarket, St James's and Leicester Square was literally honeycombed with hells of the vilest description. The ring was in its palmy days, and the 'noble' art was practised as well as patronised by the gentry at large. At night the thoroughfares were infested by rogues and vagabonds of every description, including 'mad' marquises and harum-scarum swells, who carried on the traditions of the notorious Mohocks of a preceding era despite

the efforts of the newly-formed police, who had just succeeded the old 'charleys,' and made a resplendent display in their shiny top-hats, white ducks and swallow-tail coats. There was a general laxity of morals, and a coarseness of tone pervading every grade of society, which found ready reflection and expression in the many vile and scurrilous prints with which the period abounded.

The popular amusements of the time were fairly numerous and varied. The theatres and opera houses were well represented and patronised, and could boast of not a few illustrious names which were to become emblazoned on the scroll of histrionic fame. At the Haymarket, Webster and Buckstone were the leading lights; Italian Opera reigned at Her Majesty's Theatre; at Covent Garden, not then utilised for the purposes of opera, Macready maintained the ascendency of the legitimate, and at the 'old' Drury Mr Bunn held the reins of government. At the Adelphi, then under the management of Mr Frederick Yates, Reeves, Paul Bedford and Ned Wright were shining lights, while the Lyceum (formerly the Lyceum Opera House), Sadlers' Wells, with Phelps; the Princess's and the Olympic, with Madame Vestris and Robson, had many patrons. Across the water, the Surrey, under Davidge, and Astley's, with that famous ringmaster, Ducrow, were the main attractions; and in addition there were several other

'minor theatres,' as all except the two or three patent houses were then termed.

Among the pleasure gardens which in various parts of the metropolis were then in great favour and resorted to nightly by all classes, Vauxhall held undoubted sway. The admission was two-and-sixpence, but the journey from over the water was both tedious and expensive, for, in addition to the fare, then a pretty heavy one, there was the bridge toll to be considered, to say nothing of the turnpike fee. The attractions, however, were doubtless unique, and although the refreshments were exorbitantly high, the shady groves, rustic arbours, coloured lamps, dancing and pyrotechnic display were well worth the expenditure. Simpson was the Master of Ceremonies when the gardens were in the height of their popularity, and was a great favourite with its patrons. In its later days, Vauxhall had to succumb to its cheaper if less historic rival, Cremorne, which continued to attract the public until 1877, in the October of which year its licence lapsed, and the beautiful grounds were handed over to the all-devouring suburban builder.

Tea gardens, which in the latter part of the preceding century were in such favour, continued to be patronised by lovers of these leafy retreats, and a considerable number were in existence in the 'thirties.' Among the principal were the Old Milestone, in the neighbourhood of what is now

Goswell Street ; Whales', in Bayswater ; the White Conduit House, on the east side of Penton Street, Clerkenwell ; Bagnigge Wells and Highbury Barn, although the latter would perhaps be more fittingly described as an ale-and-cake house. Besides their arborial attractions, these establishments were famous for the creature comforts which they supplied in the form of hot rolls, sweet butter, fresh tea and appetising cress. In addition, there were the dancing-saloons, and the indispensable concert-room, where the leading artistes of the time were constantly to be seen. It was at Whales' Tea Gardens that Richard Flexmore, the famous clown, made his first appearance on any stage, the occasion being the benefit of Mr J. A. Cave, the well-known theatrical manager, then a juvenile entertainer and rising variety artiste.

The WHITE CONDUIT HOUSE took its name from an ancient conduit which formerly existed in an adjacent field. It was at one time a very popular establishment, much patronised by Cockney ramblers, from whom no doubt it earned its familiar appellation of the 'Vite Condick.' It was here that Mr Charles Sloman, the clever improvisatore, of whom more will be heard hereafter, made his first bow to the public. Among other public entertainers who appeared at this establishment were Mrs Bland, a celebrated ballad vocalist of the time ; Chabert, the Fire King, and Graham, the

aeronaut. Mr John Dunn, the 'English Jim Crow,' as he was styled from his clever imitations of Mr T. D. Rice, conducted the amusements in 1840, a few years after which the grounds were disposed of for building purposes.

BAGNIGGE WELLS, which was pulled down in 1841, occupied a charming site at the foot of what is now the Pentonville Road, and it was at the concert-room of this popular resort that Mr John Braham, the celebrated tenor, made his public *début* at the early age of fourteen. HIGHBURY BARN long survived its rivals, and, after many fluctuations of fortune, passed, in 1861, into the hands of its last proprietor, Mr Edward Giovannelli, under whose successful proprietorship it continued to prosper until, like its predecessors, it had to give way before the counter attractions of more popular establishments.

Among the miscellaneous attractions of those days, the Judge-and-Jury shows, as they were called, held a conspicuous position, and after the theatres and other places of amusement were closed attracted audiences of a class composed chiefly of men-about-town, revellers, nightbirds, and frolicsome roysterers of the Tom-and-Jerry stamp. The entertainment consisted of thinly-veiled skits in the form of mock trials on the society scandals of the day, and were conducted with a sham solemnity and a grotesque parody on legal procedure which were certainly diverting.

Humour of the broadest type was the prevailing characteristic of these shows spiced only too frequently by the ribaldest of wit and the rankest of obscenity, such as at the present day would not be tolerated for a single instant. The father of this class of entertainment was a versatile humorist of the name of Nicholson—'Baron' Nicholson he dubbed himself—whose establishment was located at the Garrick's Head, Bow Street, Covent Garden. In the window of this popular hostelry was displayed a brief of Brobdignagian proportions bearing in bold characters the title of the suit. The room where the *causes célèbres* were conducted seated about three hundred people, and was fitted up with the customary appointments of a regular court, viz., the bench for his lordship, and seats for the counsel on either side, the jury and the witnesses. The counsel, who were fully fledged in wig and gown, consisted of three remarkable characters, whose professional cognomens were Mr Bosanquet Thesiger, Sir Barnacle Follett, and another whose personal appearance and admirable make-up and mimicry had earned for him the sobriquet of Lord Brougham's double. The other functionaries of the court were the usher and a 'protean' witness named Brooks. The Baron himself, a corpulent, jovial-looking personage, took his seat upon the bench promptly upon the assembling of the parties, and opened the proceedings by calling for a glass of brandy and

water with a cigar, which was the signal for counsel for the plaintiff to begin. The following, which is one of the 'Baron's' advertisements, conveys a pretty good notion of the general nature of these entertainments, and of the proceedings at similar establishments.

'GARRICK'S HEAD AND TOWN HOTEL, BOW STREET, COVENT GARDEN. Gentlemen visiting London will do themselves a moral wrong, and will merit the censure of their friends at home, if they go back to the provinces without being able to say to their inquiring connections that they have witnessed the extraordinary entertainments provided for the interlection of the convivial in the magnificent saloon of the above-named hotel. Monday night the Judge-and-Jury Society will hear a cause redolent of larkery after darkery, being the Queen on the prosecution of Scard against Pakenos. Tuesday and Wednesday the concert. Thursday the Judge-and-Jury Society will sit again to decide a most important case of breach of promise of marriage, "Hitchon *v.* Rogers." Friday the concert. Saturday (Oh! such a night!) the Judge-and-Jury Society will wind up the week with a serious, momentous and stroddling case of *crim. con.*, being the affair lately so much whispered about of the Hon. Viscount Limpus *v.* The Hon. Powderham Pelter Plantaganet Priapus Pulverton. In this cause it is anticipated that several men of fashion and

ladies in their own right will be examined. Mr Bosanquet Thesiger, Mr Mansfield and Thurlo Pipps are retained for the Plaintiff, and the double of Lord Brougham and Mr Coke Tenterden Phunk will appear for the Defendant. Mastication and Apollo every night after the theatres. Repose and matin feed half-a-crown,' etc.

After quitting the Garrick Head, Nicholson took an establishment opposite, subsequently migrating to the Coal Hole in the Strand, and finally to the Cyder Cellars in Maiden Lane. He was for some time editor of a racy little journal called *Nicholson's Noctes*, and just prior to his death published an interesting autobiography. The success of the original Judge-and-Jury Society brought a host of competitors into the field, but none of them achieved the success of the Baron's. On the latter's demise in 1862 the protean witness Brooks started another with the original corps which had its court in the Strand, and later on in Leicester Square, while opposition shows on similar lines were held in other parts of the town. Improvement in public tastes, however, and severer police restrictions, gradually rendered them unpopular, and with the decadence of public support they died a natural death.

Of the public amusements of the time, however, the most popular, as well as the most widespread, was undoubtedly that afforded by the various

song and supper-rooms, and concert and variety saloons, which flourished in various parts of the Metropolis and were extensively patronised alike by high and low. As in these institutions traces of the elements which were subsequently to develop into the modern music hall become for the first time discernible, their consideration is deferred for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE SONG AND SUPPER-ROOMS

The Song and Supper-Rooms—Evans's—Its Earlier History —'Paddy' Green—Skinner, the Waiter—His System of Calculation — Favourites at Evans's — Jack Sharp — His Songs and Salary—Earnings of Artistes then—Sharp's Sad End—Sloman, the Improvisatore—'The Maid of Judah'—Amusing Anecdote—Sam Cowell — One-Eyed Martin—Herr Joel—His Mythical Benefit—F. Jonghmann—The Coal Hole—John Rhodes—An Ideal Chairman—Sloman—Joe Wells—J. A. Cave—Ben Mills and His Rheumatism—Billposting under Difficulties—Thackeray and the Coal Hole—The Cyder Cellars—Original of the 'Back Kitchen'—John Moody—Tom Penniket — Labern —G. W. Ross—His Song 'Sam Hall'—Wm. Rhodes—Tom Hudson and His Ditties—'Jack Robinson'—The Doctor Johnson—Poynter, the Oyster Man—Bob Glindon—James Bruton—Perrin—French and His Costume Recitals—Harry Fox—Jenny Hill—Chairman Caulfield—The Albert Club.

BETWEEN fifty and sixty years ago, the Song and Supper-Rooms, as they were termed, were amongst the most prominent institutions of London life. They existed in all parts of the town, but their chief stronghold was the West End, between St James's and Temple Bar, where they abounded. As their name implies, their predominant feature was the vocal and instrumental music which they offered to their patrons, in ad-

dition to the usual gastronomic attractions of the ordinary eating-houses. Hot suppers, admirably cooked and served up, might be obtained here at any time of the evening up till one or two a.m.; and here belated Londoners might regale themselves with foaming tankards of stout or steaming glasses of grog, and enjoy a good cigar, to the warbling strains of the comic or sentimental vocalists who were attached to the establishment. The host himself usually took the chair, and contributed to the harmony of the evening. Originally, the vocal part of the entertainment was of an entirely amateur character, the chairman calling upon the regular frequenters to contribute a song. Some of these *habitués* exhibited so much talent in the latter respect, that their services became in constant demand, and were specially retained, the vocalism thus gradually coming to partake of an exclusively professional nature. Among the oldest of these institutions were the Cyder Cellars in Maiden Lane, the Coal Hole in the Strand, Offley's in Henrietta Street, the Dr Johnson in Bolt Court, and Evans's, afterwards Paddy Green's, in Covent Garden. Of these, Evans's undoubtedly took the lead. It was situated at the north-western corner of the Piazzas, in the basement of a fine old mansion house, rich in historic associations. The premises were built in the reign of Charles II., and formed for a period the residence of Sir Kenelm Digby, the mansion

being subsequently altered for the Earl of Orford, who, as Admiral Russell, in 1692, defeated Admiral Tourville near La Hague. Later on, there lived here Lord Archer, who espoused the daughter of Mr West, the then President of the Royal Society, a famous virtuoso, whose splendid library and collection of prints, bronzes and *objets de virtu* occupied Mr Paterson, the well-known auctioneer, over two months to dispose of. In 1773, the place was opened by a Mr David Lowe as a family hotel, and enjoyed the reputation of being the first establishment of that kind started in the Metropolis. In 1790, a Mrs Hodson succeeded as proprietress, and won distinction for herself by issuing a curious advertisement, which announced, 'Stabling for a hundred noblemen and horses.' Mr Richardson was the next owner, and was followed by Mr Joy, who gave his name to the establishment, which was henceforth known as Joy's Hotel. Under this gentleman's management, the place was much patronised by the nobility, who made it a sort of aristocratic rendezvous, West End club houses not being then in existence. The large dining-room became, on this account, known as the 'Star,' as many as nine members of the peerage having been known to dine together here on the same occasion. Subsequently the upper portion of the premises was let in suites of chambers, and the basement was taken over by Mr W. C. Evans, a chorister of

Covent Garden Theatre, who converted the great dining-saloon into a song and supper-room. It was usually opened close upon midnight, and the entertainment consisted of songs of the erotic and bacchanalian order. One or two of the singers were attached to the establishment, but a large portion of the entertainment was originally supplied voluntarily by its patrons. Mr Evans retired in 1844 in favour of Mr John Greenmore, familiarly known as Paddy Green, who had been one of the regular vocalists, and, like his predecessor, originally connected with the chorus either of the Adelphi or Covent Garden Theatre. Under Mr Green's management, the place was entirely reconstructed, and the nature of the entertainment altogether improved. The new hall, to which the old supper-room, now converted into a café, formed a sort of vestibule, was on a level with the cellar in front, and extended into the rear of the house, occupying a portion of ground which formerly constituted the garden of Sir Kenelm Digby. At one period, this same garden contained a cottage in which the Kemble family occasionally resided, and where the illustrious Fanny is reputed to have been born. The new hall, which was erected from designs by Mr Finch Hill, was about seventy-two feet long from end to end, and, with the old room, through which it was approached, the entire length was about 113 feet. The carved ceiling, richly painted in

panels, was supported on either side by a row of substantial columns with ornamental capitals, from which sprang bold and massive arches. These columns helped also to support a screened gallery, which extended along the two sides and one end of the hall. The decorations cost something like £5000, and were extremely fine. A striking feature of the new hall was its admirable gallery of theatrical celebrities, and it was also remarkable for the introduction of a regular platform for the performers, this very desirable adjunct having, up to that time, been dispensed with. Ladies, it should be mentioned, were not admitted to the hall, except on giving their names and addresses, and were then only permitted to enjoy the proceedings from behind the rails of the balcony before mentioned. The whole of the performances were sustained by the male sex and an efficient choir of men and boys, who contributed glees, ballads, madrigals and selections from the operas, the musical accompaniment being supplied with the aid of a piano and harmonium. The performances commenced at eight, but it was not until much later that the room began to fill. By twelve o'clock, however, the place was crowded, and at the various tables, discussing their chops and stout, might be seen many of the leading lights in the literary, artistic, legal, and theatrical and social circles of the day, while 'Paddy' Green, a benevolent-looking old gentle-

man with a rubicund visage, strutted about with his inevitable snuff-box, chatting and conversing with his numerous acquaintances, with whom he was a rare and deservedly popular favourite. A familiar personage at Evans's was the waiter, an old chap named Skinner, who stood at the door as visitors passed out, and totalled up the amount of the reckoning. Skinner had a system of calculation which was astonishing in its rapidity and colossal inaccuracy—the latter, it is needless to add, being invariably in favour of the waiter. The crush at the exit, and the bewildering intricacy of Skinner's mental arithmetic, of course, rendered disputation next to impossible. Among the artistes who favoured Evans's rooms in those days may be mentioned S. A. Jones, a very fine bass, well known in connection with the operas at Drury Lane, and Mr John Binge, an excellent tenor, who might also be heard at the old Adelaide Gallery and Vauxhall. The comic element was supplied by J. W. Sharp, 'Jack' Sharp, as he was familiarly termed by his many friends and admirers, who used originally to sing at such establishments as the old Mogul concert-room in Drury Lane; the Salmon and Ball, Bethnal Green; the Grapes, in Compton Street, Soho, and similar establishments; but his remarkable talents brought him rapidly to the front. At Evans's his salary was only £1 a week, the usual earnings of artistes of the song

and supper period, although, in addition, a singer was entitled to a nightly supper and a limited number of drinks 'free gratis and for nothing.' Sharp could have earned £90 a week easily in these times; but he must have made even in those days at least £20 by the sale of MS. copies of his songs to the noble patrons of that establishment. Most of these ditties were from the pen of Mr John Labern, and were compositions of genuine wit and humour. They were mostly of a topical or political vein, such as 'Who'll buy my Images,' 'Pity the Downfall of poor Punch and Judy,' and the like. Sharp was a comic vocalist whose only equal in the present day is probably Mr Arthur Roberts. In his time, he was the rage of the town, and in constant demand at Vauxhall, Cremorne, and the various public dinners. Unfortunately, the poor fellow wandered into evil ways, lost his engagements, and in 1856, at the early age of thirty-eight, expired in the Dover Workhouse. Among other popular favourites of the time, whose names are more or less closely associated with Evans's, was Sloman, who styled himself 'the only English improvisatore,' and who had a really wonderful knack of tagging rhymes upon any subject selected or suggested by the audience. He was the author, among other pieces, of 'The Maid of Judah,' a composition of which he was extremely proud, and which he persisted in singing upon

almost every occasion, although his voice was peculiarly raucus and strident. One of the lines of the song runs something like 'No more shall the children of Judah sing,' and Sloman had reached this point on one occasion, his voice being at the time perhaps a little hoarser than usual, when a long-suffering member of the audience exclaimed, 'Well, if they can't sing better than that, it's a precious good job!' a remark which was received by the audience with uproarious laughter, in which, it is needless to add, the singer did not join. Sam Cowell was another talented singer who nightly attracted crowds to hear him. He was, indeed, one of the cleverest character vocalists who has ever delighted an English audience, and, previous to confining himself to purely vocal efforts, had achieved no small success on the boards of the legitimate stage. Another familiar character at Evans's was Herr von Joel, a peculiar old German, who sang jödling ditties, and gave imitations on his walking-stick of various musical instruments and the denizens of the farmyard. He came to Evans's from Vauxhall, and remained at the former establishment until his death. In his later days he used to retail cigars among the audience, and augmented his salary by disposing of tickets for his 'benefits' which were continually being postponed, and were ultimately relegated to the Greek Kalends. These forthcoming benefits were the subject of

much merriment among the patrons of Evans's, with whom old Joel was a popular favourite. Tom Martin, who was dubbed 'one-eyed Martin,' from the loss of one of his optics, was a somewhat similar character. He had a song, 'Billy's Birthday,' which he rendered in a peculiarly droll style. The subsequent history of this famous establishment may be very briefly related. After it passed out of the hands of Mr Green, it fell into the possession of Mr Barnes, who, in accordance with the spirit of the times and the improved tone of the performance, felt justified in admitting ladies to the ground floor of the auditorium. Subsequently, however, it lost its licence, and was converted into a club, known as the Falstaff, which failed after a brief existence, after which it reopened as the New Club, which had a similarly curtailed career. It at present forms the habitat of the National Sporting Club.

The COAL HOLE was situated in Fountain Court, Strand, on the site of which famous old tavern now stands the elegant theatre, which has been named after its clever lessee, Mr Edward Terry. How the first-mentioned establishment earned its peculiar title is now lost in the mist of obscurity, but it is surmised that it arose from the contiguity of the coal wharves, which at one time existed in its vicinity. The patrons of this celebrated old hostelry comprised, at one time, the leading celebrities of the day, and enjoyed

a repute more cosmopolitan than local. It was, indeed, no vain boast of its worthy host, Mr John Rhodes, that upon the tables of the Coal Hole might be seen, on occasion, more silver plate in the shape of goblets, flagons, tankards and loving cups than could be found in any big hotel in the Metropolis. Mr John Rhodes, the earliest proprietor, was himself a remarkable character. He had been originally a vocalist at the Drury Lane Theatre, but being withal a man of business aptitude, noted the facilities for money making presented by the Coal Hole, which he took the earliest opportunity of purchasing, and at once began to run the establishment on lines similar to those which had been pursued with so much success, artistic and financial, at Evans's. The result amply justified his anticipations, and his enterprise was more than liberally rewarded. When his son, Mr John Rhodes, Junior, took over the tavern the same policy was pursued, and the house speedily became the nightly resort of the *bon ton* of the town. The entertainment, which commenced about seven or eight in the evening, and rarely terminated until two o'clock the next morning, comprised sentimental and humorous vocalism, which in the earlier days was supplied by local amateurs, and was rendered without instrumental accompaniment. Later on in its history, the singing was exclusively professional, and then in addition the *prestidigitateur*

and the dancer might be frequently seen there. Rhodes, a heavily-built man, and the possessor of a really admirable baritone voice, took the chair at the head of the singers' table, and joined in the glees, besides himself contributing several rattling ditties. He made an ideal chairman, possessed an excellent memory, was a facile mimic, had a ready wit, and was a past master in the art of the *raconteur*. Mr Charles Sloman, the improvisatore before mentioned, was one of the leading attractions of the Coal Hole, in addition to an old singer named Joe Wells, whose ditties were chiefly characterised by their coarseness and vulgarity, although the latter was somewhat relieved by a broad and racy humour. Mr J. A. Cave, then rapidly rising into popularity with his clever Ethiopian melodies and violin accompaniments, was another and brighter light of the establishment. An eccentric old character named Ben Mills was also a familiar personage at Rhodes's establishment. He used to sing an amusing ditty called 'Billy Nuts, the Poet,' and another entitled 'Fire off the Guns.' Billy suffered acutely from rheumatics, and it was a somewhat ludicrous sight to see the poor old fellow after he had finished his 'turn' at the Coal Hole toiling across the Strand in the direction of the Cyder Cellars, where he was due a little later on, and to get to which meant to Ben an immense amount of time and exertion,

to say nothing of danger from the passing vehicles. Mills finished up his career as a billposter, and in his later days might occasionally be seen in front of a huge hoarding upon which he would be vainly struggling to affix a six-sheet poster. The old chap's spasmodic exertions to wield the paste brush would have been laughable had they not been so pitiful. The Coal Hole is generally conceded to have formed the original of the 'Cave of Harmony,' where the scurrilous song was sung which so outraged the moral susceptibilities of Colonel Newcome. The sketch of Hoskins, the landlord, was apparently drawn from Rhodes himself, and that of little Nadab, from Sloman, of whom it is a life-like portrait. Thackeray, however, probably fused his recollection of Evans's and the Cyder Cellars, to be described later on, with that of the Coal Hole, and blended the salient traits of each into one striking picture. Mr John Rhodes died at his residence at Norwood, on Thursday, the 1st of January 1850, and the place was for some time carried on by his widow, and afterwards by a Mr John Bruton, of the Vauxhall Gardens, who used to take the chair promptly at eleven, and sing a variety of topical and comic songs, one, 'The Cattle Show,' being exceptionally well rendered. The Coal Hole, popular as it was, never enjoyed the celebrity of its two principal rivals, and was among the first to go down before the keen competition which was ushered in by the music hall era.

On the south side of Maiden Lane, at the western corner, or to be more precise at No. 20, stood that historic temple of Apollo—the old CYDER CELLARS, which even in 1840 had been sacred to the muse of song for a century and a half at least. In his day, it had been the favourite haunt of Professor Porson, that learned pundit doubtless fully appreciating the devilled kidneys, immaculate oysters and Welsh rare-bits, not to mention the excellent cigars, old brandy, good brown stout, and cool cider for which the establishment enjoyed a wide-spread reputation. In other respects, the Cyder Cellars was a place of notoriously bad reputation, rivalling and excelling in their worst aspect the peculiar features of the Coal Hole and Judge-and-Jury Societies before alluded to. In the pages of *Pendennis*, Thackeray has immortalised it under the pseudonym of the 'Back Kitchen,' of which it bore unmistakable evidence of being the original. The entertainment to be found here was similar to that given at the Coal Hole, with its worst features perhaps rather more pronounced. The artistes specially associated with the place were John Moody, with his admirable mimicry, who was also in great demand at Vauxhall and public dinners; Tom Penniket, great in his song of the raw recruit 'Soldier Bill'; Labern, and W. G. Ross. The latter, a comic vocalist whose admirable delineations of a certain type of

character, combined with power of dramatic expression, have never been excelled. Ross started his career as a compositor on one of the Glasgow papers, singing occasionally at local harmonic assemblies. His success as a vocalist induced him to come to England and try his luck as a professional singer, and he made his first appearance in this character at a place known as Sharple's in Bolton. He then came on to London, and opened at the Cyder Cellars, where his many excellent qualities as a character vocalist at once brought him into prominence. His first success was made in such ditties as 'The Lively Flea,' a parody on the Ivy Green, 'Jack Rag,' 'Pat's Leather Breeches,' 'Mrs Johnson,' and 'Going Home with the Milk in the Morning.' But Ross's name will ever be associated with his most successful essay, a song entitled 'Sam Hall,' which at one time was the rage of London, and drew dense crowds to the Cyder Cellars nightly to hear him in this particular ditty. The sale of his portrait in character, which was sold for a shilling at the bars, had an enormous sale at the time, which may be taken as a further proof of the singer's popularity. The subject of this remarkable song was a chimney sweep, who is condemned to death for murder, and who is represented as philosophising on the situation the night before his execution. The song was startingly realistic in tone, and its

rendering by Ross as powerful as it was artistic. The preliminary acting and 'business' adopted by the singer, such as the lighting up of his cutty pipe by the condemned criminal, his fitful sighs, and the air of swaggering despair with which he flings himself into his chair before breaking forth into his horrible ditty was strikingly sensational and effective. The opening lines of the song, which may be taken as a fair specimen of the rest, run as follows :—

> 'My name it is Sam Hall, chimney sweep.
> My name it is Sam Hall,
> I robs both great and small,
> But they makes me pay for all,
> D—n their eyes !'

The amount of brutal ferocity and pent-up fury which Ross managed to infuse into these lines was remarkable, and in this respect he was unequalled by any other singer. Ross made such a name over this performance that Buckstone, then the manager of the Haymarket Theatre, engaged him for that house, where he opened in a small Irish farce. He does not appear, however, to have made a hit on the legitimate stage, and speedily returned to his old love, the concert platform, where in his own peculiar line he was probably without a rival. Ross appears to have belonged to a school of which Mr Charles Godfrey, Mr Charles Coborn and Mr Gus Elen are among

the best modern exponents. Ross, unfortunately, was unable to maintain his early reputation, and though long after the days of the Cyder Cellars had become numbered he continued to appear with varying success at the different Metropolitan halls, he gradually fell behind in the race for popularity, and died some few years back in the obscure capacity of a humble chorus singer.

Mr Charles Sloman frequently figured among the 'stars' at the Cyder Cellars in those days, and his remarkable rhyming improvisations were equally enjoyable if less exciting than the lyrics of Ross. The proprietor of the Cyder Cellars in its palmy days was Mr William Rhodes, a brother of the landlord of the neighbouring Coal Hole. One of his most intimate friends—and their name was legion—was Mr Barnabas Brough, the progenitor of a family of admirable comedians, and himself an actor of no mean merit. After Mr William Rhodes's demise, the establishment was carried on with considerable success by his widow, but it finally had to succumb to the improvements in public taste. Subsequently it was transmogrified into a school of arms, and lastly converted into a synagogue, for the purpose of which it is still used.

An historical record of either the Cyder Cellars or the Coal Hole would be incomplete without some mention of Thomas Hudson, one of the earliest and not the least talented

of vocalists, who helped to make these and the other song and supper-rooms of the day popular among the most fashionable circles. 'Tom' Hudson, as he was called in convivial circles, was a man of considerable literary ability, and the author of many popular songs, some of which continue to be chaunted to the present day. This celebrated song writer, who was 'a fellow of infinite jest,' and wont by his compositions 'to set the table in a roar,' was born in Mount Street, Lambeth, in April 1791, and was the son of Mr John Hudson, of the Stamp Office, Somerset House. He was at the usual age apprenticed to a grocer, and subsequently commenced business in the metropolis, but appears to have preferred the *deliciæ musarum* to the sweets of his own trade. He was accustomed, like many other professional song writers of that time, to warble his own ditties, which he rendered with excellent effect. He was at his best, perhaps, at the time when Moore's melodies and Dibdin's nautical lyrics were so popular, and some of the former he parodied with rare ability. Many of Hudson's songs, such as 'Jack Robinson,' became coined into catchwords, and were current among the street sayings of the day. A verse from this capital ditty conveys a good idea of this author's capacity as a writer, and of the style of song then in vogue. Jack's sweetheart is supposed to be excusing her infidelity to her roving lover,

and the pair discuss the situation in the following droll strains :—

'Says the lady, says she, "I have changed my state."
"Why, you don't mean," says Jack, "that you have got a mate?
"You promised to have me!" Says she, "I couldn't wait,
For no tidings could I gain of you, Jack Robinson.
And somebody one day came to me and said
That somebody else had somewhere read
In some newspaper that you were somewhere dead."
"Why, I've not been dead at all!" says Jack Robinson.'

Another very popular song of this author-vocalist was 'The Spider and the Fly,' still frequently sung at harmonic assemblies. 'Walker, the Tuppenny Postman,' and 'The Dogs' Meat Man,' rough character studies of London life, unstained by vulgarity and abounding in a rich and racy humour peculiar to their author. Hudson excelled in stage Irishman's songs, then all the vogue, and many of these lyrics were written for, and sung by, Mr Fitz Williams, the comedian, Mr Rayner and others. Hudson died on the 26th June 1844, like so many others of his class, in straitened circumstances, although, be it said to his credit, he was the reverse of intemperate in his habits, and a model husband and parent. A number of warm-hearted admirers organised a vocal and instrumental performance for the benefit of his widow and children. This took place at the concert-room at the back of the old Princess's Theatre, many of the leading artistes

giving their services, and the whole being under the distinguished patronage of the then Duke of Cambridge, the Lord Mayor, several sheriffs and aldermen, and Mr F. Duncome, M.P., a gentleman well known in the theatrical circles of that day.

Another famous tavern of a similar character to those previously mentioned was the Dr Johnson, originally styled the Dr Johnson Concert-Room, in Bolt Court, Fleet Street. The Dr Johnson derived its name from the erudite lexicographer, who, when engaged upon his *magnum opus*, resided close by, and died in the vicinity. No price was charged for admission to the concert and supper-room, the entertainment, which was similar to that supplied at the other taverns of the same *genre* west of Temple Bar, being quite gratuitous. But although there was no fee charged to go in, visitors had usually to pay pretty stiffly to go out. The reckoning was paid on quitting the room, a waiter totting up the account as you passed through. The tavern was noted for the excellence of its brown beer and succulent chops and kidneys, and, in the season, oysters were in great demand here, a curious old fellow named Poynter wheeling in towards midnight a barrel full of these delicious bivalves, which found a ready sale with the audience. Among the professional singers to be heard here were Bob Glindon, the talented author and composer,

whose name at once suggests that admirable lyric, 'The Literary Dustman'; Sam Cowell; James Bruton; Geo. Perrin, a successful operatic artiste; J. A. Cave, and those clever violinists, the Brothers Holmes. French, who gave costume recitals, and Tom Penneket, in such ditties as 'When these Old Clothes were New,' were rare favourites here. Another capital singer who used to favour the Dr Johnson was John Moody, whose rendering of 'Good St Anthony,' 'The Seven Ages' and 'Lord Tom Noddy,' still lingers in the memory of those who had the rare pleasure of hearing them. W. G. Ross and J. W. Sharp also appeared here; and, among the later 'stars,' must be mentioned Harry Fox, in such popular rustic melodies as 'The Jolly Waggoner,' etc.; and it was at this concert-room that Miss Jenny Hill, familiar to later patrons of the halls, as the 'Vital Spark,' made her professional *début*. There was a chairman at this establishment—then a very necessary and important personage, who announced the singers, maintained order, and kept the business going briskly. One of the last and best of the Dr Johnson chairmen was Mr John Caulfield, who had been for some years an actor at the Haymarket, when that house was under the management of Mr Buckstone. Caulfield was a man of parts, and a song writer of no mean ability. After quitting the Dr Johnson, he officiated for some time as chairman

at the Canterbury and Oxford for Mr Morton. One of the first proprietors of the Dr Johnson was a Mr Brown, who was succeeded by Mr Isaac Bryant. The place, which was last known as the City Music Hall, closed its doors as a place of entertainment in 1863. Part of the premises at the present day form the Albert Club, an establishment much patronised by a certain section of the sporting fraternity.

CHAPTER III

THE VARIETY SALOON AND CONCERT-ROOM

The Saloons—Style of Entertainments—The Grecian—Harry Boleno—Harry Howell—Robert Glindon—Robson—Sims Reeves—Salaries of Artistes—'Bravo' Rouse—Union Saloon—Miss Pearce—Dick Flexmore—The Apollo—Mr Love—The Bower—Mr Hodson—Miss Henrietta Hodson—The Albert and Effingham Saloons—The Theatres Registry Act—Interdict of the Lord Chamberlain—The Concert-Rooms—Their Origin—The Grapes—The Mogul—The King's Head—King and Queen—The Rose of Normandy—The White Lion—Moy's—Other Concert-Rooms—The Swan Tavern—J. W. Cherry—Charles Solomon—T. K. Symons the Song Writer—Concert-Room Artistes—A 'Benefit' Bill—The Transition to the Halls.

In addition to the song and supper-rooms dealt with in the preceding chapter, the variety saloon—a temple of amusement contemporary with the former, but of a quite distinct character—constitutes an important element in the history of the variety stage. In conjunction with the first-mentioned establishments and the harmonic assembly, another popular institution to be considered later, the variety saloon may be regarded as one of the three prime factors in the making of the modern music hall, which was their legitimate and immediate successor, and rose, phœnix-like, out of their ashes.

The 'saloon' occupied a sort of mid-position between the concert-room and the theatre. It received its licence from the magistrates, and although, like the 'minor' theatres, it was forbidden to produce Shakesperian drama, it appeared to have *carte blanche* to present whatever other form of entertainment its proprietor cared to present, or the latter's patrons to demand. The programmes usually comprised a *mélange* of opera, drama and farce, in addition to a miscellaneous concert of vocalism, music and dancing, which wound up the evening. One of the earliest and most popular of these saloons was the Eagle in the City Road, the ancient reputation of which is embodied in the refrain of the once popular song, which declares that—

> 'Up and down the City Road,
> In and out the Eagle,
> That's the way the money goes—
> Pop goes the weazel.'

Though what the weazel has got to do with the matter, or why he should go 'pop,' is one of those things which, as Lord Dundreary would observe, 'no fellow could ever understand.'

THE EAGLE, or the GRECIAN SALOON, as it was sometimes called, was situated in the tea gardens of the adjoining tavern. In many respects it resembled a theatre, having a regular stage, a tier of boxes, and an organ by way of orchestra, the latter being located at the back, and during

dramatic performance, concealed by a cloth. When ballets came into vogue at this establishment, however, the organ was removed and a regular orchestra fitted up in front. It was in these ballets that Harry Boleno, subsequently clown at Drury Lane, made his first appearance. Several excellent operas were produced at the Grecian, among which that of *La Somnambula* may be cited as one of the most successful. Among the comic artistes attached to the establishment were Harry Howell, who could give the 'Factotum' better than any of his compeers, J. A. Cave and Robert Glindon. The latter was one of the foremost buffo singers of his time, as well as an author of considerable merit. His songs, 'The Literary Dustman,' 'Biddy, the Basket Woman,' and others of the kind, had a wide reputation. He was a scenic artist, too, of no mean ability, and his panorama of 'London by Day and Night,' which he painted for the Colosseum, Regent's Park, where it formed for many years the chief attraction, ranks among the best of its class. When his voice failed him, Glindon became attached to the scenic department at Drury Lane Theatre, where he continued for some years, playing, in addition, small parts in the pantomime 'openings.' He died on the 23d of February 1866, at the age of sixty-seven. It was at the Grecian, too, that Fred Robson made his first hit in the characters of Wormwood, *The Lottery Ticket*, and Jacob Earwig in *Boots at the Swan;* and here

also, under the prosaic pseudonym of Johnson, the great English tenor, Sims Reeves, started on the road to fame. Salaries earned by the company at the Grecian and similar establishments in those days were woefully small compared to modern standards. Sixteen shillings a week, and even less, were paid to such clever artistes as Flexmore for playing in three different rôles each evening. Thomas Rouse was the enterprising proprietor of the Eagle, and the plaudits with which his appearance before the footlights were greeted won for him the cognomen of 'Bravo' Rouse, by which name he was invariably known amongst his patrons.

THE UNION SALOON, Shoreditch, opened by the late Mr Lane, was another popular establishment of this class, the best talent contributing to a programme which comprised drama, and a good selection of singing and dancing. Mr Lane, however, not having procured a licence, was compelled to close the saloon, whereupon he took the Britannia Tavern, in one of the spacious rooms of which his variety concerts were conducted several nights in the week. Subsequently Mr Lane built a handsome saloon on some vacant ground at the back of his tavern. This saloon was opened to the public on Easter Monday 1841, when a number of the most popular artistes of the day figured on the programme. Among the number was that delightful soprano, Miss Pearce, who was later on so great a favourite at the Canter-

bury and Oxford music halls. Other artistes whose names were more or less closely associated with the fame of the Britannia Saloon, were Dick Flexmore, the clever eccentric dancer and pantomimist, Sam Johnson, Cave and Moody.

THE APOLLO SALOON, situated at the rear of the Yorkshire Stingo, Marylebone, supplied an entertainment similar to that tendered at the Eagle or Grecian. The programme comprised an ambitious operatic or dramatic performance, a farce, and a liberal amount of singing and dancing, in all of which each member of the company was expected to take part. The Apollo possessed a capable, if small orchestra, and its conductor, Mr Love, was a thorough musician, who subsequently filled very adequately the responsible position of leader at the Princess Theatre under Mr Charles Kean. Cave and Glindon were the principal comic vocalists here.

Another popular saloon was the BOWER, in Stangate Street, Lower Marsh. The Bower was erected early in the thirties, by a scenic artist of the name of Phillips, who disposed of it to Mr Hodson, an Irish gentleman, who had previously been an actor and vocalist. Mr Hodson was a clever composer, and some of his compositions, namely, 'Tell me, Mary, how to woo thee,' and 'The Arab Steed,' display high merit. His granddaughter, Miss Henrietta Hodson, a clever actress and vocalist, married Mr Henry

Labouchere, the distinguished M.P., and Editor of *Truth.*

The Bower Saloon, facetiously nicknamed the 'Sower Balloon,' was the starting-place in the histrionic careers of many subsequent celebrities, including, among many others, Fred Robson and Mr James Fernandez.

The ALBERT SALOON, in Shepherdess Walk, and the Effingham Saloon, in the Whitechapel Road, were similar establishments to the last-mentioned. The turning-point in the history of the saloons occurred soon after the passing of the Theatres Registry Act in 1843, when Sir Henry Ponsonby, on behalf of the Lord Chamberlain, informed the proprietors that all saloons under his licence had in future to be conducted as theatres, and to bear that description. The choice was given them of becoming either legitimate theatres with dramatic entertainments, but without the privilege of retailing refreshments in the auditorium, or regular music halls with drinking licence, but minus the right of producing what the Act defined as 'stage plays.' Some of the saloons elected to run on variety lines, while others, notably the Grecian and the Britannia, thenceforth devoted themselves exclusively to the drama.

The tavern concert-rooms, which between fifty and sixty years ago abounded in all parts of the Metropolis, possess greater claims than even the saloons or song and supper-rooms, closely allied

though the three forms of entertainment were to be regarded as the immediate progenitor of the music hall. Indeed, the majority of the existing temple of variety, to say nothing of those which have passed out of existence, had their origin in these establishments, on the sites of, or in connection with which, they sprang up, and after which many were actually christened.

The concert-room appears to have been a development of the casual harmonic assemblies, which most tavern proprietors who could command the services of a pianist and a sufficient amount of local talent were accustomed to hold in their club-room or largest parlour.

Among the oldest and best known of these concert-rooms were the Grapes, in Southwark; the old Mogul, under the proprietorship of Mr Cook, in Drury Lane; the King's Head, Knightsbridge; the King and Queen, Paddington Green; the White Lion, in the Edgware Road; the Rose of Normandy, Marylebone; the Ironmongers Arms, in Old Street; St Luke's, where Mrs Lane, then Miss Wilton, made her *début;* the Swan, in Hungerford Market; the Hungerford Hall, in the same locality; the Salmon and Compass, Pentonville; the New Inn, Westminster Bridge Road, nearly facing Astley's; Deacon's, in Clerkenwell; the Salmon, in Union Street, Borough; afterwards known as the Alexandra, which was destroyed by fire on September 28th, 1871, and reopened by Mr Henry

Hart of the Raglan, in Theobald's Road, on Boxing Night, 1872, with Mr George Ware as manager ; and the Royal Standard, in the Vauxhall Bridge Road, kept by Mr J. Moy, and familiarly known as 'Moy's.'

The Swan Tavern, which stood by the side of the river and was afterwards swallowed up in the construction of the Charing Cross Railway Station, was a very select establishment. The concert-room occupied the whole of the basement, with seating accommodation for upwards of three hundred people. Mr J. W. Cherry, the composer of 'Will o' the Wisp' and other popular ditties, occasionally presided at the piano, a position which was at other times admirably filled by Mr Charles Solomon, the father of the late Edward Solomon, the celebrated composer. Mr Dawson, the proprietor, was indefatigable in procuring the best talent available, and one of the favourite vocalists to be heard here was Mr T. K. Symons, the author of the once popular ditties 'Don't I wish I was Fat,' and 'The Jolly Man.' The majority of these rooms were usually open only three nights a week, and it was customary for an artiste not to appear more than three evenings a week at the same establishment. The Grapes was an exception to this rule, Mr Pearce, the proprietor, engaging his company for the week at a fixed salary, thirty shillings being the price paid to really good 'turns.' In other cases, an artiste was generally remunerated for his services by the evening, his modest

honorarium being somewhat augmented by a stipulated number of gratuitous drinks. At these concert-rooms appeared the rank and file of the variety profession, such as it was in those days, and at the more prosperous establishments some of the West End stars were frequently engaged. Mr E. W. Mackney, the inimitable negro melodist, Sam Collins, the versatile Irish vocalist, and Mr Charles Sloman, the improvisatore, were sometimes to be seen at such places as the King's Head, Moy's, and similar resorts. Mrs J. Taylor, a clever character vocalist and 'male impersonator,' and Mr J. Morley, a good comic singer and comedian, were also popular favourites at these establishments, in the chameleon-like programme of which variety was the conspicuous and all-prevailing element. Most of the features which characterise the modern music-hall entertainment had here already begun to take definite form and shape. The sentimental vocalist, the male impersonator, the comic singer, the Ethiopian minstrel, the ventriloquist, and the step-dancer were familiar performers at the resorts in question, with the proprietors and patrons of which such entertainers were extremely popular.

The 'Benefit' bill,—bills, by the way were only issued on the occasion of benefits—which is reproduced on the other side, will perhaps convey a still better idea of the nature of the entertainment supplied at these concert-rooms, and of the sort of artistes who contributed to the programme.

ROYAL STANDARD,

VAUXHALL BRIDGE ROAD, PIMLICO.

LICENSED PURSUANT  TO ACT OF PARLIAMENT.

Proprietor, - - - - - - - - Mr J. MOY.

MR KENNEDY

(VIOLONIST),

Of the above well-known place of Amusement, respectfully announces to his Friends and the Public in general, that his

FOURTH ANNUAL BENEFIT

CONCERT

WILL TAKE PLACE

On TUESDAY Evening, July 9th, 1850.

J. K., in announcing this Entertainment, has the gratification of asserting that, during the period of his engagement at the above Establishment, he has studiously endeavoured to deserve the good opinion and patronage of the frequenters of the Room ; and assures the Public that every effort will be made on this occasion to produce a Series of Entertainments calculated to gratify those Ladies and Gentlemen who may honour him with their presence. The following Ladies and Gentlemen will have the honour of appearing :

Mrs J. TAYLOR, Mrs PAUL, Miss WILSON, Miss ANDERSON, Miss NEWTON and Miss THOMAS.
Messrs E. G. ALFORD, F. LONG, G. THOMAS, J. MORLEY, Young THOMSON, J. DAVIS, T. DUNN, W. J. WEST, P. RYLAND, C. MACDONALD, W. FERRY, J. BUCK and J. RICHARDS.

J. K. has great pleasure in announcing that in the course of the Evening

Mr Charles SLOMAN

The only English Improvisatore (Author and Composer of the 'Maid of Judah,' 'Daughter of Israel'), will deliver 'My'horama,' or Extemporaneous Vocal Synopsis of Men and Manners.

Mrs J. TAYLOR

The Established Favourite, will sing the 'Middy on Shore,' the 'Waggoner,' and the 'Acting Schoolboy.'

Mr E. G. ALFORD

Will sing 'Shells of the Ocean,' and 'My Father's Land.' (By particular desire.)

Songs, . . . Hard Up, and Courting in the Dark, Mr RAYMOND
Ballads, . The Rich Man's Bride, and The Lover's Farewell, Mrs PAUL
Nautical Songs, Southerly Winds, and The Sea-beach Shore, . Mr F. LONG
Comic Songs, The Lively Flea, and Anything to Yarn a Crust, Mr J. MORLEY
Ballad, . . . The Song of Reconciliation, , Miss ANDERSON
Song, Little Red Riding Hood (accompanying herself on the Pianoforte) Miss THOMAS
Comic Songs, . . Jerry Nuts, and The Auctioneer, . Mr THOMAS

After which the

AMERICAN MINSTRELS

Messrs T. Dunn, W. J. West, P. Ryland and C. Macdonald
Will appear in their New Entertainment, introducing the Far-Famed

COMIC TALES OF THE NEW COUNTRY.

(From the Royal Flora Gardens.)

YOUNG THOMSON

The Lancashire Step Dancer (late of the Surrey Music Hall), will perform his celebrated Clog Dance, introducing 100 Different Steps.

DANCE IN REAL PATTENS & CLOGS - MR H. MORLEY
(Late of the Queen's Theatre.)

Songs. . . . The Haymakers, and Go forget me, . . Mr LONG
Comic Song, . . . Stage-struck Barber, . Mr J. MORLEY
Song, . . . When this Old Hat was New, . Mr THOMAS
Ballad, ... Bid me discourse, . . . Mrs PAUL

In the course of the Evening

JUBA DAVIS

Will perform his celebrated Medley Overture, entitled THE

BREAKING of the JUBA!

Several Ladies and Gentlemen have kindly consented to appear on the occasion, whose names are not inserted in this bill owing to their numerous engagements elsewhere.

Pianoforte, ... Mr FERRY
Violins, ... Messrs KENNEDY & BUCK
Cornopean, ... Mr RICHARDS
Managing Director, ... Mr G. THOMAS

Tickets to be had of Messrs Kennedy and Thomas in the Room, an early application for which is solicited.

Concert Nights Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

From the foregoing it will be seen that 'variety' was the prevailing element at shows of this description, and that from the concert-room, with its varied programme of popular artistes, its freedom and its conviviality, the transition to the music hall proper, with which we have next to deal, was an easy and natural gradation.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUSIC HALL

The Rise of the Halls—The Old Rotunda—The First Music Hall—Its Early Associations—Mr and Mrs Johnny Wilde—The Surrey, afterwards The Winchester—Richard Preece—His Art Collection—M. Phillips—Zéluti—T. Norris—The Vokes Family—William Warde, and his Clever Children—The Great Mogul—The Middlesex—E. Winder—Harry Fox—Later Proprietors—Mr J. L. Graydon—A Patron of Budding Talent—Dan Leno—Pat Feeney—Gus Leach—The Old Canterbury—An ancient Hostelry and Ferry House—Pilgrims, and Knightly Wassailers—Theatrical Connections—Host Warbridge—The Canterbury Arms—Morton and Stanley—The Weekly 'Harmonic'—The First Canterbury Hall—John Caulfield and Ferdinand Jonghmann—High Salaries and High Art—Augustus Braham and Miss Turpin—Miss Russell—Operatic Selections—Popularising Gounod and Offenbach—The Second Canterbury Hall—Its Picture Gallery—'The Royal Academy over the Water'—Ritchie's Description—Later History of the Canterbury—William Holland—His Enterprises—George Leybourne, the 'Lion' Comique—His Carriage and Pair 'By way of Advertisement'—The New Canterbury—Edwin Villiers—Music Hall 'Stars'—Ballets and Spectacles—Royal Visitors—Subsequent History of The Canterbury—Its earlier Rivals—The Spread Eagle—East London—Prince of Wales—Frampton's—Wilton's, Wellclose Square—Weston's.

To the Old Rotunda Assembly Room, which stood on the right-hand side of the Blackfriars Road, close to the Bridge, belongs the distinction of hav-

ing anticipated by many years the subsequent development on music hall lines of any similar establishments. As early as the year 1829, when Sloman appeared at this hall, variety entertainments were the principal form of amusement given here, and the Rotunda must be regarded as the pioneer of the general movement in the same direction adopted some fifteen years later by its contemporaries. The history of the Rotunda extends back to the time of the Georges, when it formed one of the favourite haunts of the bucks and bloods of the day, and was patronised by a 'set' which was said to include the 'first gentleman in England' himself. It may interest admirers of that inimitable little variety comedian, Mr Dan Leno, to learn that, at the old Rotunda, his parents appeared as duettists and dancers under the description of Mr and Mrs Johnny Wilde. The proprietor of this hall was a Mr Wallis, of Wallis & Wood, but he was later on succeeded by Mr Wood, of Wood & Bennett. Its name was changed subsequently to the Bijou. About twelve years ago, when it was flourishing exceedingly, and when its then owner had serious thoughts of enlarging the hall, the authorities ordered it to be closed on account of a cock fight having been permitted to be held within its walls.

Of the tavern concert-rooms, one of the earliest to burst its chrysalis state, and emerge into the full-grown music hall, was the Grapes, in the

Southwark Bridge Road. This establishment was also one of the first to style itself a music hall in the modern sense of the term, and under the description of the Surrey Music Hall was well known to pleasure-seekers early in the forties. The hall, which was prettily decorated, was capable of seating as many as a thousand persons, and in the upper hall might be seen a valuable collection of pictures which the enterprising proprietor, Mr Richard Preece, had secured from M. Phillips, a French artist whom he was instrumental in introducing to the British public. The hall was provided with an excellent orchestra under the direction of Mr Zéluti, while the arduous position of manager was filled with great credit by Mr T. Norris. The clever Vokes Family were among the many well-known entertainers who appeared here. The company here used on an average to cost about £30 a week. Louie Sherrington sang here on many occasions, and Willie and Emma Ward were very successful in their song 'The Gigham Umbrella,' besides whom Pat P. Fannin, a smart dancer, and Mr and Mrs Jack Carroll, negro banjoists and dancers, were rare favourites with its patrons.

Closely identified, too, for many years with the earlier history of the Surrey Music Hall was William Warde, the father of Mrs D'Auban, whose fame as a dancer has been for many years established. When the Surrey Gardens were formed, and the handsome edifice known as the

Surrey Music Hall—which was a music hall in the classic sense only—was erected on part of its grounds, Mr Preece changed the name of his establishment to the Winchester, which it retained till its demolition for building purposes in 1878.

The GREAT MOGUL, passing from Mr Cook into the hands of Mr E. Winder, was altered and enlarged, and, in a vastly improved form, made a fresh bid for popularity under the name of the Middlesex Music Hall. Mr Winder found a capital ally in the person of Mr Harry Fox, the comic vocalist, who rapidly became one of the leading attractions in the programme, and whose burly form and jovial countenance were for many years, and under several changes of proprietorship, associated with the chairman's table. When Mr Winder subsequently took over the White Lion in the Edgware Road, in order to convert it into the Metropolitan Music Hall, he was succeeded in the proprietorship of the Middlesex by a Mr Wood, who shortly afterwards parted with his interest to Mr Lake, who in 1872 rebuilt the premises, which were again altered in 1875. Mr Lake was the predecessor of its present esteemed proprietor, Mr J. L. Graydon, who, in the year 1878, acquired the hall, which a year later, in consequence of increased patronage, he was compelled to enlarge. Further extensions were made in 1891, involving an expenditure of over £12,000. The Middlesex Music Hall is closely associated with

the earlier careers of many popular artistes of the past and present. Here, under the friendly ægis of its present shrewd and enterprising proprietor, many a budding 'pro.' has made his first successful bid for public patronage. Behind the glare of its footlights, too, not a few favourite 'stars' have sung their last song, and heard for the final time the ringing round of applause which only a Middlesex audience knows how to give. It was at the Middlesex that Mr Dan Leno first began to tickle the risible faculties of Metropolitan audiences with his quaint characterisations and mirth-provoking patter; and at this hall poor Pat Feeney, shattered in health and spirits, with the death-damp already on his brow, struggled through his last professional engagement, a little while previous to his untimely demise. With the Middlesex Music Hall, too, the name of Gus Leach is closely connected. For many years Mr Leach, who at the time of writing we regret to hear is seriously ill, was general manager and chairman at this hall. At present he is proprietor of, and has conducted on excellent lines for some time past, an establishment of his own 'down Hoxton way,' as Mr Chevalier would put it, which will claim the attention of the reader later on.

To return to the earlier period with which we are at present mainly concerned, it was not until the establishment by Mr Charles Morton, in conjunction with his brother-in-law, Mr Stanley, of the Canterbury Hall in the Westminster Bridge

Road, in 1849, that the infant music hall began to attract the attention of the general public as a place of reputable entertainment.

The Canterbury Hall occupied the site of what was once an ancient hostelry and ferry house. As late as the year 1816, a brook meandered through the marsh from Searle's boat-building yard, passing the doors of the inn, before the entrance to which stood an old willow tree, as shown in contemporary illustrations. To those who are fond of topography, the following further details may perhaps prove entertaining. When the Canons of Rochester obtained possession of the Manor, the house became a pilgrims' inn. Here stopped the pilgrims who came to pray at the shrines in the chapel of the archbishops, as did many learned men while visiting at the ecclesiastical palace. The kings of England, and the great nobles, with their companions and servants, also rested at this spot during their journeys to Kensington Palace, where many parliaments were held in the time of the Henrys and Edwards. Mary's retainers made the walls ring with their loyal toasts when she visited Cardinal Pole at Lambeth, and many of Elizabeth's followers held high revel in the old inn, while she dined with Archbishop Parker in the hall. The fathers of the English stage, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, with their friends and fellow-actors, Burbage, Cundall, Hemings, Phillips and Pope, when in attendance on Her

Majesty, would also often stop at this house of call rather than journey home through the marshes of St George's Fields to their houses by the Blackfriars Theatre, or the Globe at Bankside. At the time of the Reformation the house lost its priestly patronage, but not its utility as a place of public entertainment, and, following the example of the other pilgrims' inns, it changed its name; but more faithful to the source of its former prosperity than the rest, the new owner, Cuthbert Warbridge, called his house the Canterbury Arms, and under this designation it remained till Mr Charles Morton, who took possession of the inn in 1848, conceived the idea of converting it into a music hall. Mr Morton had frequently spent a pleasant evening at Evans's, and the evident appreciation of the public for the style of entertainment there provided suggested to him the desirability of instituting a somewhat similar style of catering at his own tavern. In the rear of the latter there was a large room, in which the tradesmen and others of the neighbourhood were accustomed to meet and smoke their churchwardens, and in this apartment a weekly harmonic meeting was commenced. In addition to amateur talent, Mr Morton gave piquancy to the proceedings by introducing two or three professionals. These concerts were held on Saturday evenings; no charge was made for admission, and from the first the venture was a complete success. The entertainments were then

given on Thursdays as well as Saturdays, with similar results, the room being packed to overflowing.

Within a year the first Canterbury Hall was erected. It was built on a large piece of ground at the back of the tavern, which had served as a skittle alley, and was constructed to accommodate about 700 persons ; a small charge was made for admission, and an entertainment was given similar to that which prevailed at Evans's. There was no stage, only a large platform. Mr John Caulfield acted as chairman, and the musical conductor was Mr Jonghmann. Mr Morton spared no expense to make his undertaking a success, paying as much as £30 a week to the first-class artistes. Among the latter who appeared here were Augustus Braham, son of the celebrated tenor ; Miss Turpin, afterwards Mrs Henry Wallack ; and Miss Russell, a niece of the distinguished song writer, who was one of the foremost *prima donni* of her time, and enjoys the distinction of having been the first 'Marguerite' to Gounod's *Faust* music in this country, and the original of all the chief feminine *rôles* in Offenbach's operas. The comic element was well represented here by such talented vocalists as Sam Cowell, E. W. Mackney, and a host of other genuine comic singers. It is a noteworthy fact that it was at this hall that selections from *Faust* were first rendered in England, and Offenbach's music first popularised. Indeed, one of the most marked characteristics of the

Canterbury in its early days was the predominance given to classical music, the works of the great masters of melody being interpreted by the best artistes that money and enterprise could procure. The best productions of continental composers were treated with the same conscientious care and finish, and produced with the same lavish and unstinted outlay which was bestowed upon the works of the English musician ; while the lighter and more popular form of entertainment, as represented by the comic element, was characterised by the same spirit of liberality and good taste. As a natural result, the popularity of the Canterbury rapidly grew among Londoners of every class, and the establishment was packed nightly with large and appreciative audiences.

The necessity for further enlargement of the building soon became evident, and without delay a new hall was erected over the old one, the work being proceeded with in such a manner that the performances at the latter were in no way interfered with. A certain Saturday evening saw the demolition of the old building, and the following Monday the opening of the new. To the latter was added an admirable picture gallery, which *Punch* in its description of it aptly termed, 'The Royal Academy over the Water.'

The following graphic description of the old Canterbury Concert-Room is taken from Mr J. E. Ritchie's book on *The Night Side of London*,

in which appears an interesting account of the author's visit to that popular establishment :—

'A well-lighted entrance attached to a public-house indicates that we have reached our destination. We proceed up a few stairs, along a passage lined with handsome engravings to a bar, where we pay sixpence if we take a seat in the body of the hall, and ninepence if we ascend into the gallery. We make our way leisurely along the floor of the hall, which is well lighted, and capable of holding 1500 people. A balcony extends round the room in the form of a horse-shoe. At the opposite end to that at which we enter is the platform, on which are placed a grand piano and a harmonium on which the performers play in the intervals when the previous singers have left the stage. The chairman sits just beneath them. It is dull work to him, but there he must sit drinking and smoking cigars from seven to twelve o'clock. The room is crowded, and almost every gentleman has a pipe or a cigar in his mouth. Evidently the majority present are respectable mechanics or small tradesmen with their wives and daughters and sweethearts. Now and then you see a midshipman, or a few fast clerks and warehousemen. Everyone is smoking, and everyone has a glass before him ; but the class that come here are economical, and chiefly confine themselves to pipes and porter.'

To relate the later history of the Canterbury

with anything like detail might well fill volumes, but a brief record of its subsequent career will answer the purpose of the present work. In 1863, Mr Stanley retired from the partnership, and Mr Morton became sole proprietor until Boxing Night 1867, when Mr William Holland, who had just severed his connection with Weston's, took over the reins of management. The house was now re-decorated, upholstered and appointed with that charming disregard of expense which characterises all the enterprises of this popular and discriminating caterer, and the house became an *édition de luxe* of its former self. Quick to appreciate the changes in public taste, Mr Holland introduced important modifications into the programme. The variety and comic elements became the prevailing items in the evening bill, while the operatic selections were curtailed and gradually discarded. George Leybourne, the 'lion' comique, was then just rising into popularity, and with true showman's instinct Mr Holland presented him with a carriage and pair, on condition, however, that George should drive about in it 'by way of advertisement,' a condition to which it is perhaps needless to say the great comique willingly assented. Mr Leybourne, by the way, was exclusively engaged by Mr Holland for one year at the then princely salary of £20 per week. On the 23d of September 1876, the new Canterbury, which is to all intents and

purposes the present house, was opened under the management of Mr R. Edwin Villiers, who had purchased the old hall from Mr Holland. The premises occupied the site of several adjoining houses, and the cost of erection exceeded £40,000. They covered an area of 27,000 superficial feet, or about two-thirds of an acre, and were built from designs of the late Mr Albert Bridgeman. The auditorium was one hundred feet in length from the orchestra to the back wall, and seventy feet in width.

The programme at that time contained the names, amongst others, of the 'Great' Vance, George Leybourne, Fred Coyne, Fred Albert, Pat Feeney, Fred Laroche, Arthur Roberts, James Fawn, the elder Randall, F. Jonghmann, Nelly Power, Ada Wilson, Madame Bartholdi, and Phyllis Broughton, the latter being principal dancer in the ballet with Florence Powell. The house opened with a ballet called *Ceres*, which was succeeded by one entitled *The Reign of Love*. Nine months after the opening, the grand spectacular ballet *Plevna* was produced and scored an instantaneous success. The Canterbury at that time, it should be mentioned, was the only place in London where really good ballets could be seen, and consequently all the town came over the water to see them. Amongst the visitors were the Prince of Wales, who came on three occasions, the Duke of Cambridge, and the Duke and Duchess of Teck. *Trafalgar*, which

followed, was similarly successful. Mr Frewin presided over the orchestra at this period, and Mr Tressidder, the father of Mr Arthur and Mr Adolphe Tressidder, was stage manager. Arthur, who died in Australia on March 27th, 1894, used to assist his father in the stage management, and succeeded him in that office, while Adolphe took the part of the Sultan of Turkey in *Plevna*. He left to go on tour with a troupe, in the course of which he went abroad, and on his return was offered the post of stage manager at the London Pavilion, a position which he accepted and has retained ever since.

In 1878, Mr R. E. Villiers gave up the Canterbury, which was taken over by Mr Edward Garcia of Manchester, but he only ran it for a year and then failed. Mr J. Baum was the next proprietor; after that a Mr Stuart took it, and was succeeded in turn by Messrs Crowder & Payne, who reduced the prices, and, once more, made a success of the house. The last-named gentleman retained possession of the Canterbury till it passed into the hands of the present Company.

Simultaneously with the rise of the Canterbury, other halls began to spring up in various parts of the Metropolis. Frampton's, which was capable of seating 1000 persons, was among the best of the smaller halls. It enjoyed, however, but a brief and chequered career. It was opened in 1858 by Mr Frampton, who gave £2800 for the property. It subsequently passed into the

hands of mortgagees, who sold it to Mr Krauche, by whom its name was changed to the Lord Nelson. It opened its doors for the last time in 1861.

WILTON'S Music Hall, in Wellclose Square, which opened on March 28th, 1859, was a larger and more flourishing establishment, and continued to enjoy varying prosperity until about the year 1879, when it was finally closed.

Following closely in the wake of the Canterbury, a number of similar establishments sprang up in rapid succession in different quarters of the town.

THE ROSE OF NORMANDY Tavern, previously referred to as a concert-room, was taken by Mr Sam Collins, an Irish vocalist of rare talent and great popularity, who, under the name of the Marylebone, converted it into a regular music hall. Mr Collins, who also became about this time proprietor of the Upper Welsh Harp, which, with true Irish patriotism, he re-christened the Irish Harp, parted with his interest in the Marylebone in 1861 to Mr W. Botting, in whose hands it continued to enjoy a fairly prosperous existence down to this gentleman's demise a few years since.

THE PHILHARMONIC, Islington, was established by Mr Fred Saunders and Mr Edward Lacey, on the site now occupied by Mr Charles Wilmot's handsome theatre, the Grand. On Mr Saunders' retirement, Mr Sam Adams joined Mr Lacey, the last-mentioned gentleman being succeeded in the joint proprietorship by Mr John Turnham,

who continued with Mr Adams to rule the destinies of the house for some years.

In the Theobald's Road, Bloomsbury, Mr Henry Hart established in 1860 THE LORD RAGLAN, which was swallowed up some few years back for street improvements by the Metropolitan Board of Works.

The same period saw the establishment in Knightsbridge of the TREVOR, by Mr J. R. Street, and the SUN, by Mr E. Williams. Both halls, however, have closed their doors for some years past, and their glory has long departed.

At the East End, similar activity was displayed by amusement caterers in meeting the growing demands of the public for entertainments of the music-hall order. In Whitechapel, several attractive halls—to wit, Gilbert's, Turner's, the Rodney and the Lord Nelson, put forth rival claims for public patronage, while the establishment of Mr Phillips, in the Commercial Road, which was known as the Great Eastern Music Hall, and was one of the principal halls that arose after Weston's; the Apollo, in Hare Street, Bethnal Green; the Lamb in Three Colt Lane; the Woodman at Hoxton, and the Spread Eagle in the Kingsland Road, which was owned by Mr Groves, and there Mr W. J. Adams, the father of Miss Emily Adams (Mrs Marlow), who was a clever comic singer, used to appear, as did also the Revill Family, besides other celebrities of that time, swelled the list of competitors.

The Eagle in the Mile End Road was owned by Mr A. Ward until Mr W. Lusby took it, and after a while erected a platform for dancing in the grounds, and called the place Lusby's Summer and Winter Garden. He built a larger hall, and remained proprietor until Messrs Crowder & Payne bought it in the June of 1878. It was afterwards burnt down, and then the present handsome edifice, known as the Paragon, was erected. It is at present owned by the Canterbury and Paragon Company, Limited, and its popular manager is Mr Will Lennon, who formerly acted in a similar capacity at the Marylebone.

In Poplar, amusement-seekers were provided with the Apollo Music Hall, conducted by Mr Michael Abrahams, which was only open on Saturday and Monday nights. It is now known as the Queen's, Poplar, and is still managed by the above-named gentleman, with whom is associated Mr James Chappell. The chairman of this hall for many years was the late Mr Frank Escourt, the husband of Miss Annie Dunbar, the popular serio-comic.

The Victor, Old Ford, and the Three Crowns at Bow were both under the proprietorship of Mr Hawkins. The latter hall was afterwards owned by Mr Marlow, and called by his name. He sold it recently to a limited company, who christened it the Eastern Empire. The venture, however, has not proved a success, in spite of the efforts of Mr Fred Law, the manager, and the hall is now closed.

The first music hall, however, to contest the growing popularity of the Canterbury was Weston's, originally the Holborn National School-rooms, of which, together with the adjoining tavern, Mr Edward Weston was the then lessee. Mr Weston was succeeded in the proprietorship of this popular establishment by Messrs Sweasey & Holland, Mr Sweasey becoming sole proprietor in 1867. When Mr Purkiss succeeded the last-mentioned proprietor, the place changed its name to the Royal, with the late Mr Sam Adams as manager. Mr Purkiss disposed of his interest to a public company, which subsequently went into liquidation. The present proprietors are Messrs Brill & Ellis, under whose skilful catering the hall maintains a high reputation. Familiar personages at present connected with the staff of this establishment are Mr Arthur Swanborough, the genial manager, a worthy representative of a well-known theatrical stock, and Mr George Burgess, the capable treasurer, who has for many years past been associated with the fortunes of this popular house.

The success which attended the opening of Weston's, convinced many influential caterers that the time was ripe for establishing other halls in the West End on similar lines to those adopted by Mr Morton and others with so much success. The popular establishments which now began to rise and flourish on every hand, demand, however, a separate chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER V

PROGRESS OF THE HALLS

Rapid Development of the Variety Stage—The South London —The Site of a Roman Catholic Chapel—Messrs Tindall & Villiers—Description of Hall—Its Destruction by Fire —Speedy & Poole—Mr J. J. Poole—His Previous Career —Ballets and Spectacular Pieces—*Phantasy*—J. Dallas— *Cyprus*—Mr James Fawn—Miss Kate Seymour—Walter Slaughter — Mr Barrington Foote — Connie Gilchrist — Earlier Artistes—George Leybourne—How He became a 'Lion' Comique—The 'Great' Macdermott and 'The Scamp'—Nelly Power—The Musical Directorate—Past Managers—Fred Law—'Baron' Courtney—The Rise of the Oxford—The Boar and Castle—Its Traditions and Associations—The Fire of 1868—The New Hall—Messrs Syers & Taylor—J. H. Jennings—The Fire of 1872— The Present Oxford—The Bedford—Deacon's—Arthur Roberts and Fred Williams—The Oriental—Mr Morris Abrahams—The Old London Pavilion—Messrs Loibl & Sonhammer—Mr Edwin Villiers—Popular Favourites —Pavilion Chairmen of the Past — Russell Grover — Harry Cavendish — Harry Vernon — The New London Pavilion.

DEALING in chronological order with the various halls which now began to start up on every side, the first establishment of any importance to follow in the wake of Weston's was the old South London, which opened its doors to the public for the first time on the 30th of December 1860.

This hall, which covered the site of a Roman Catholic Chapel, was erected by its proprietors. Messrs Tindall & Villiers, at a very heavy cost, and formed one of the handsomest halls yet devoted to Momus and Apollo. The approach from the outer thoroughfare was spacious and columnar, adorned with statues, and arranged after the style of a Roman villa. The hall itself, which was entered from this elegant vestibule, was tastefully and artistically appointed, and presented to the eye a rich and brilliant appearance. In shape, it was oblong, and provided with double corridors, which were divided from the grand hall by circular columns, from which sprang a series of arches. The company engaged for the opening night comprised many of the principal vocalists and leading entertainers of the day, including the 'inimitable' E. W. Mackney, the forerunner and prototype of a whole host of Ethiopian minstrels. Mr Charles Davenport was the first to fill the arduous position of *chef d'orchestre*, a post which he continued to occupy with conspicuous ability until superseded in 1862 by Mr T. Gordon, who combined the dual office of musical conductor and chairman. On March 28th, 1869, the establishment was destroyed by fire, but Mr Villiers, with characteristic energy, at once set to work to repair the mischief, and this pretty and popular transpontine hall was rebuilt within a period of

nine months, and again opened to the public on the 19th of the following December.

In 1874, Mr Villiers parted with his interest in the South London to the late Mr J. J. Poole, Mr H. P. Speedy and a brother of the latter, who continued as partners for a period of over seven years, when Mr Poole became sole proprietor.

Mr J. J. Poole, who was not only a skilful and enterprising manager, but a musician and composer of some merit, had already undergone a varied and interesting career. At the age of twenty, he had filled the position of musical director at the T. R. Birmingham, afterwards joining in the same capacity a theatrical company under the management of a Mr Sydney, with whom he toured the northern circuit, writing all the music for the burlesques, pantomimes and other productions. Coming to London, he obtained an engagement as manager and musical director at the Metropolitan, then Turnham's, which he left when the latter was taken over by Mr Winder, and connected himself with an operatic company. At Mr Winder's request, however, he returned to his former position. When the Metropolitan was sold by Mr Winder to Mr George Speedy, the latter gentleman stipulated for the retention of Mr Poole's services. Here he remained, filling an exacting position with that care and conscientiousness which characterised all his undertakings, until Mr Gooch purchased the Metropolitan, when the

successful partnership before referred was immediately started. After the death of Mr Poole, which occurred on October 6th, 1882, the establishment was carried on with great success by his widow, a lady whose rare business aptitude and tact are only equalled by her personal amiability and unfailing courtesy. The establishment was converted into a Company in 1893, Mrs Poole retaining the position of managing director, though not without considerable opposition on the part of Mr Hugh Jay Didcott, one of the original promoters.

During Mr Poole's management, a number of brilliantly successful ballets and spectacular pieces were produced here, not excepting some beautiful and artistically mounted Tableaux Vivants—*Phantasy*, a spectacular ballet by J. Dallas, ran for two hundred nights. Another popular ballet produced here was one entitled *Cyprus*, in which James Fawn, the well-known comedian, made his first appearance. Other spectacular pieces which proved extremely popular were *Scotland*, *The Leprachaun*, and *Sport and Bird*, Miss Kate Seymour, the clever dancer, appearing in the last-named ballet.

Mr Poole was not only a public caterer of much originality and astuteness, but an *entrepreneur* of keen discrimination. He was quick to detect artistic ability and latent talent in young artistes, to whom he was ever ready to extend a helping hand, and who received from him much fruitful

encouragement and advice. Mr Walter Slaughter, the composer, was one of Mr Poole's favourite *protégés*, and while occupying the position of pianist here wrote his first composition, a ballet entitled *England*, which was produced on the 27th of December 1880. Mr Barrington Foote, the comedian, and Miss Connie Gilchrist, the clever burlesque actress, appeared at the South London under Mr Poole's *régime*. It was at this house that Mr Hollingshead 'discovered' Mr J. Dallas, the comedian, whom he at once introduced to Gaiety audience.

The old programmes of this establishment are rich in professional associations, and there is scarcely an artiste of any note who has not faced its footlights. George Leybourne, who, by the way, received his appellation of 'Lion Comique' from Mr Poole (who had an ingenious knack of bestowing cognomenal gifts of this description), sang here in the height of his popularity. Here, too, the great Macdermott chortled his famous 'Scamp' ditty, and it was at this hall that Fred Coyne sang to his last public audience. Nelly Power, W. B. Fair, of 'Tommy, make room for your Uncle' notoriety, Henri Clarke, and the late Charles Williams are popular names which at once rise to the memory in this connection. The orchestra of this house has been under the direction of many able musicians, among whom must be mentioned Mr Spillane, Signor Moro, Mr Opfermann, and

the present director, Mr Charles Bell. The first manager of the South London, under Mr Poole's tenancy, was a namesake but no relation of the proprietor, Mr Charles Poole, who was succeeded by Mr Fred Law, a very popular personage in his time among the patrons of the South London, and a comic singer of some ability. The managerial cloak next fell upon the shoulders of Mr Ryland, from whom it was transferred after a short while to Mr Will Sergeant, a gentleman well known in professional circles. The present manager is Mr East. Any sketch, however cursory, of the South London would be incomplete without some mention of 'Baron' Courtney, for many years the genial chairman of this popular establishment. Courtney, with his raven locks, his expansive display of spotless shirt front and his grandiloquent manner, at once affable and patronising, was a typical representative of a class which appears to be doomed to speedy extinction.

The success which attended the opening of Weston's, in Holborn, convinced Mr Charles Morton that the West End presented a rich field for further enterprise in the same direction. Accordingly he began, metaphorically speaking, to cast his eye around in different directions for a suitable site whereon to erect yet another temple of variety. While thus prospecting, his attention was directed to the old Boar and Castle Inn, which stood near the junction of the Tottenham Court

Road and Oxford Street, and with the adaptability of which to his requirements Mr Morton appears to have been immediately smitten. The inn formed one of those old roadside taverns which belonged essentially to the days of stage-coaches and post-chaises, and which the advent of the steam monarch had already begun to wipe out of existence. It dated back to a period prior to the Great Fire of London, when its spacious yard, around which ran the picturesque gallery peculiar to these old inns, doubtless afforded an excellent opportunity for the presentment of the theatrical and other entertainments which it was usual to give in these places. Down to the reign of Queen Anne, the inn retained all the characteristics of a genuine village hostelry and posting-house. Stage-coach drivers, postboys and carriers thronged its roomy yards, while the traveller found refreshment and accommodation after his twelve hours' tedious and rather hazardous journey from Oxford by the lumbering stage-waggon. Here nightly assembled the wit and wisdom of the rapidly growing district, with perhaps a 'gentleman of Oxford,' or a Tony Lumpkin of the period come up from his paternal acres in some Buckinghamshire hamlet to 'see the town.' At this period the 'village' pound of St Giles stood nearly opposite the Boar and Castle, on the south side of the Oxford Road; and even at the end of the last century there might yet

be seen from the back windows of the old hostelry such vestiges of rural scenery as an orchard, a pond, and a rustic windmill.

Mr Morton, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, took the first opportunity of acquiring the Boar and Castle, and on the ground mainly afforded by the old inn yard he built and opened on March 26th, 1861, the first OXFORD music hall. The programme on that occasion contained the names of such prominent artistes as Mdlle. Parepa, who afterwards became the wife of the late Carl Rosa, Mdlle. Manietta, Miss Poole, Miss Russell, Miss Ernst and Miss Rosina Collins. In addition there were Messrs Santley, Swift, Genge, G. Kelly, C. Greville, Levy Hime and Jonghmann. Mr Sims Reeves, too, was offered his own terms to come and sing on that occasion, but although at first the celebrated tenor appeared to entertain Mr Morton's liberal proposal, he subsequently thought fit to decline it, expressing, however, at the same time, the greatest interest in the undertaking.

The first Oxford hall, in point of architectural beauty, was one of the finest then existing. It was a handsome structure, forty-one feet high, with a total length of ninety-four feet. One of its chief features was the system of lighting employed, which consisted of twenty eight brilliant 'crystal' stars, a novelty thought very charming and effective in its day, but which was shortly afterwards superseded by four large chandeliers suspended from the roof,

with smaller ones in the galleries. To the Oxford belongs the unenviable distinction of being the first London music hall to be destroyed by fire. Early in the morning of the 11th of February 1868, the night-watchman discovered that a fire had broken out in a corner of the gallery on the Oxford Street side. The fire was confined to the hall itself, and although some damage was sustained by their contents, the several promenade bars, supper-room, entrance hall, and even the private boxes in the gallery were not substantially injured; but the fine plate glass mirror fixed at the back of the stage, and which was a feature in the building, was totally destroyed. The hall was reconstructed and again opened to the public on the 9th August 1869. The new proprietors, Messrs Syers & Taylor, entrusted the musical direction to Mr J. H. Jennings, whose period of service in this capacity, as well as the more general one of acting manager, and subsequently that of proprietor also, continued for over twenty years. But the enterprise of the new management was not destined to proceed unchecked, for early in the morning of November 1st, 1872, the roof of the hall was found to be on fire, with so disastrous a result that little more than bare walls and charred benches were left. On the 17th of March 1873, however, a new and enlarged Oxford was erected. Considerable additional space was then provided for promen-

aders, while the stage and proscenium were completely remodelled and enlarged, and the orchestra placed on a level some feet below that of the floor. Mr J. H. Jennings disposed of his interest in the hall to Mr James Kirk on the 28th of October 1891, the purchase money being £27,100. The hall continued under the proprietorship of the last-mentioned gentleman for a little over twelve months, when it passed into the hands of a Limited Company, which was formed by a syndicate of gentlemen connected with the Tivoli and London Pavilion. It was now felt that the old order had definitely developed into the new, and that the time had come for a fresh departure on the lines of the strictly modern variety theatre. The old hall was therefore at once demolished, and the present handsome and luxurious structure erected in its stead. The foundation-stone of the latter was laid by Mr Charles Morton on the 15th August 1892, and on the 31st of the following January the new Oxford again opened its doors to the public. Up to quite recently, the management of the present hall was in the hands of Mr C. R. Brighten, who was unfortunately compelled to resign on account of ill-health, when, by one of those curious turns which distinguish the fickle dispensations of Dame Fortune, Mr J. H. Jennings resumed his old position as manager, but not for long, however, being soon afterwards succeeded by Mr Harry Lundy, who at present directs its fortunes.

The same year which saw the establishment of the old Oxford, saw also the erection of the Bedford, Deacon's, the Oriental and the London Pavilion.

THE BEDFORD, a little hall still existing, and situated in Grove Street, High Street, Camden Town, retains to the present day many of the features peculiar to the halls of a generation ago. It was built by Mr R. C. Thornton, and opened by him in September 1861, with Mr T. Wilson as director and conductor. Subsequently the establishment passed into the hands, first of Mr Alfred Trotman, then of Mr Walter Gooch, and later Mr and Mrs George Fredericks. Mr Harry Hart, the present proprietor, whose name has been closely identified with the music-hall world for many years, succeeded Mr Thornton, and after disposing of the property to successive lessees, again became sole proprietor. Under his management the hall has long maintained its popularity with the amusement-seeking public.

On December 14th, 1861 (the day on which the Prince Consort died), Clerkenwell, which hitherto had had to depend for variety entertainment on that provided at the Philharmonic in the neighbouring village of 'merrie' Islington, became possessed of a music hall of its own in Mr J. Deacon's establishment, which stood close to Sadler's Wells Theatre.

This hall was not altered until about eleven

years ago, when it was closed for three months. It was at Deacon's that Mr Harry Randall made his first appearance at a recognised music hall, though he had sung at many small places before. Mr J. King was manager of Deacon's at that time, and gave Randall his engagement, when he sang with much success a song that dealt of a man returning from market slightly inebriated, and wondering in verse as to what his wife would say to him on his arrival home. Randall, who was not only a singer of comic songs but a true comic singer, soon after this obtained engagements at the larger halls.

It was at this hall that many years earlier in his professional career Mr Arthur Roberts — a lawyer's clerk by day, a comic vocalist by night— fulfilled one of his earliest engagements, singing several songs nightly for a small weekly salary. On the same day that Arthur Roberts went down to show the management his 'form,' he was accompanied by a brother artiste who came on similar errand. This was Fred Williams, the clever comedian and sketch artiste, who was the first to introduce burlesque performances to the variety stage. Mr Williams was offered the post of chairman, which he accepted at a slightly higher stipend than that of his friend Arthur Roberts, and for the space of four years he continued to wield the ivory hammer pertaining to his office.

Captain Davis took over the hall from Mr Deacon

who died, at the age of sixty-eight, on July 12th, 1871, and it continued under the proprietorship of this popular gentleman until a few years back, when it was purchased by the London County Council, who required the site for street improvements.

In this year, *i.e.*, 1861, a new music hall, called the Oriental, was opened in Poplar by Mr William Davis, formerly of the Apollo Saloon, who sold it to Mr Grimes, during whose proprietorship Mr George Ware was very popular with audiences here in his triple voice entertainment, in which he sang alto, bass and tenor. The Oriental afterwards passed into the hands of Mr Morris Abrahams, who, on the 21st of October 1867, converted it into a theatre.

Before the year was over, the list of Metropolitan halls received yet another addition, and both Weston's and the Oxford a formidable rival. This was the old London Pavilion, in Tichborne Street, Haymarket, which Messrs Loibl & Sonhammer, the proprietors, first ran as a sort of *café chantant*. Previous to their occupation, the premises had been used by Dr Karne for the purposes of a waxwork exhibition, and afterwards it had had a brief existence as a skating-rink. At this time the place was in reality a stable yard roofed in. In 1877, Mr Sonhammer dissolved partnership with Mr Loibl, and opened Scott's Restaurant in Coventry Street, close by.

The hall was altered from time to time, and boxes put in on one side, but the original roof remained down to some ten years ago, when the whole house was rebuilt. The old Pavilion held about 3000 people, the prices of admission being 2s. 6d., 1s., and 6d. The company at that time included Herbert Campbell, Arthur Roberts, the Great Vance, James Fawn, the Brothers Bohee, Fred Coyne, Fred Albert, Nellie Moon, Bessie Bellwood and Harriet Vernon. The Pavilion's first chairman was Mr Russell Grover, who was succeeded by Mr Harry Cavendish, himself an excellent singer, than whom few could render the 'Village Blacksmith' with more telling effect. On Mr Cavendish's death, Mr Harry Vernon topped the chairman's table, a position which he occupied until the abolition of his office, which came about within twelve months after the re-opening.

Early in 1878 the Metropolitan Board of Works acquired the place for street improvements, and paid Mr Loibl as much as £109,347 for the property. Shortly afterwards Mr Edwin Villiers secured a lease from the Board of Works for three years, subsequently extended to five, and then again to seven, at a rental of £7000 per annum. Mr Villiers made numerous alterations from time to time, and finally, in 1884, the old premises were pulled down, and the present house erected. This work of demolition and reconstruction was exe-

cuted within the marvellously short space of eight months, the old house being closed on the 25th of March 1885, and the new establishment started on the 30th of November in the same year. Shortly after the opening of the present classic hall, Mr Villiers disposed of the property to a Limited Company, by whom its destiny has since been controlled with very gratifying results. This has been mainly due to the astuteness and business acumen of Mr Newson-Smith, one of the directors of the Company. Since the opening of the new Pavilion, Mr Edward Swanborough has been acting manger, and is at present general manager. His courtesy and tact are well known to patrons of the establishment. As previously mentioned, Mr Adolphe Tressidder is the stage manager, and Mr Ernest Miles, who came over from the Canterbury with Mr Villiers, was for some time the assistant manager, a post now held by Mr Glennister, while Mr W. Taylor is the present musical director, and Mr George Richter has a responsible position as refreshment manager.

CHAPTER VI

PROGRESS OF THE MUSIC HALL—*continued*

A Boom in 'Varieties'—The Alhambra—Its Metamorphoses—The Old Panopticon—Its Rivals—An Ambitious Charter—Features of the Institution—E. T. Smith—A Palace of Varieties—Howes and Cushing—Sawdust and Horses—W. Wilde—Further Transformations—Loisset, the Ringmaster—Leotard—Frederick Strange—Ballets and Spectacles—The Farinis—The Kiralfy Brothers—Foucart, the Gymnast—M. Rivière—John Hollingshead—The Lansdown Music Hall—Sam Collins—Harry Sydney—H. Watts—Herbert Sprake—The White Lion—Turnham's—The Metropolitan—Mr Meacock—E. Winder—Mr Speedy—Mr Lake—Henri Gros—The Oxford and Cambridge—The Royal, Kensington—The Hoxton—The Regent—Russell Grover and Frank Hall—The Standard—R. A. Brown—Mr Wake—The Eastern Alhambra—The Borough—The Raglan—The Cosmotheca—The Eastern Hall—The South-Eastern—The Pantheon—Lamb—The Swallow Street Music Hall—The Eldorado and Criterion—The Strand Musick Hall—Its Lofty Pretensions and Dismal Failure—'Jolly' Nash and the 'Great' Vance—The Royal Cambridge—'Gatti's in the Road'—St Leonard's Hall—Davey's—Scott's—End of the Boom.

THE number of music halls which by the end of 1862 had arisen with mushroom-like rapidity in all parts of the town by no means satisfied the growing demand for places of entertainment of this description. The music hall had sprung at one bound into popular favour, and although theatrical

proprietors and a certain section of the Press looked askance at the new institution, the public accorded it a support which was both genuine and unstinted. Thus encouraged, proprietors and would-be proprietors looked eagerly around for fresh opportunities, and every month brought forth intelligence of some new enterprise, either contemplated or attempted.

Of these new undertakings, the Alhambra, as the largest and most pretentious, is entitled to precedence. Throughout the thirty odd years that it has been in existence, this palatial building has had a career which has been both varied and chequered. Alternately, it has been an educational institution, a circus, a music hall, a regular theatre, and anon a palace of varieties. It made its bow to the public—if we may be permitted the metaphor—as the Panopticon, and belonged to that class of institution which endeavours to combine instruction with amusement, and which, as a rule, winds up by conveying neither. The old Polytechnic and its weaker rival, the old Adelaide Gallery, were both fair specimens of the kind of institution referred to, and upon the lines of these establishments, though on a bolder and more ambitious scale, the Panopticon proposed to follow. The building, which was a magnificent structure in the resplendent style of architecture peculiar to the Moors, was opened in 1854 by a committee whose undertaking was ratified and ennobled by

nothing less imposing than a Royal Charter, granted by Her Majesty on the 21st of February 1850. This charter authorised the promoters to 'exhibit and illustrate in a popular form discoveries in science and art; to extend the knowledge of useful and ingenious inventions; to promote and illustrate the application of science to the useful arts; to instruct by courses of lectures, to be demonstrated and illustrated by instruments, apparatus and other appliances, all branches of science, literature, and the fine and useful arts; to exhibit various branches of the fine and mechanical arts, manufactures and handicrafts, by showing the progress to completion in the hands of the artisan and mechanic; to exhibit the productions of nature and art, both British and foreign; to illustrate history, science, literature and the fine and useful arts, by pictorial views and representations; to illustrate the science of acoustics by lectures, music and otherwise; to give instructions in the various branches of science and the mechanical arts; to afford to inventors and others facilities to test the value of their ideas by means of the machinery, instruments and other appurtenances of the institution, and generally to extend and facilitate a greater knowledge and love of the arts and sciences on the part of the public;' and it was submitted 'that the establishment and maintenance of such institution would greatly tend to the diffusion of useful knowledge and the improvement of the arts,

and more especially would, by combining instruction with amusement, supply a source of recreation to all classes of the community calculated to elevate their social, moral and intellectual condition.'

Among the chief attractions of the Panopticon were an Artesian well, and the peculiar and pretty device known as a fairy fountain, which sent up coloured sprays from the floor to the dome of the building. In addition, there were electrical machines, working models, a diving-bell, and a huge organ. Despite these manifold attractions, however, the Panopticon was doomed to a brief and not particularly happy career, and eventually had to close its doors in the face of an unsympathising public, which elected to take its amusement pure and unalloyed.

The Panopticon was soon after put up to auction, when, together with its apparatus and other paraphernalia, it was purchased for a comparatively trifling sum by the late E. T. Smith, a gentleman whose name was associated with a number of theatrical and similar enterprises. Mr Smith speedily disposed of his remarkable collection of scientific marvels and machinery which were sold to various purchasers, the grand organ being acquired for St Paul's Cathedral, but afterwards removed to Clifton. Having thus cleared the body of the hall of all unnecessary impedimenta, the new proprietor erected a spacious stage, leaving the rest of the building undisturbed in all the grandeur and

colour of Moorish garniture. Having subsequently obtained the all essential licence, Mr E. T. Smith opened the place under the name of the Alhambra as a theatre of varieties. It was in every respect the most ambitious and imposing of its kind which had so far been attempted, but its first essay as a music hall was apparently unsuccessful. The premises next fell into the hands of Messrs Howes & Cushing, who converted it for a space into a circus, but subsequently transferred the ownership to the late Mr William Wilde, a gentleman hailing from Norwich. Mr Wilde managed the place with varying success, at first on lines similar to those adopted by Mr E. T. Smith, and afterwards as a circus, under the direction of M. Loisset, a Belgian ringmaster. The Alhambra was then again transformed into a palace of varieties, and during this stage of its existence Mr Wilde introduced to London audiences, Leotard, the famous gymnast. This graceful and daring performer remained in England for a few years, attracting large audiences to the Alhambra, and calling into existence at rival shows a whole army of acrobats, wire-walkers and trapezists. On his second visit to the Alhambra, which occurred in 1866, during Mr Hollingshead's management, Leotard was paid, and doubtless earned, as much as £180 a week! He died at Toulouse, of consumption, at the early age of thirty.

Mr Wilde's successor was Mr Frederick Strange, who had acquired a large fortune and much practical experience as a refreshment caterer in connection with the Crystal Palace. He pursued the policy adopted by his predecessor with even greater liberality, and signalised his proprietorship by the introduction of ballets in addition to the usual form of music-hall entertainment. In 1866, Mr Strange disposed of his interest in the Alhambra to the Limited Liability Company, who are the present proprietors. The existing board of directors include Mr Nagle, Mr Bathe, Mr Charles Coote and General Wortham. Mr Henry Sutton was for many years chairman of the Board of Directors, but recently resigned the position owing to ill-health. During his long association with the Alhambra, he devoted a great deal of time and energy to the furtherance of the interests of the shareholders.

With the fortunes of the Alhambra have been associated an entire host of professional worthies, whose name is simply legion. Among those which one most readily calls to mind may be mentioned the two Farinis, father and son, the Kiralfys, Imre and Bolossy, of Olympia fame. Then there were the Foucarts, gymnasts ; Leotard, and, to come to more recent 'draws,' the Georgia Magnet, each attraction in their day being the rage of London. M. Rivière, Mr John Hollingshead, Mons Jacobi, Mr W. Bailey, who was its manager for a while, Mr Moul, Mr

Douglas Cox and Mr Forde are other names intimately associated with this home of ballets and glittering spectacles.

In the early part of 1862 Islington became possessed of another music hall. This was the Lansdowne, opened in connection with the Lansdowne Arms by its then proprietor, Mr Montgomery. The latter, however, appears to have lacked the qualities essential to success as a variety caterer, and speedily parted with his interest in the concern to Mr Sam Collins, who, despite his experience with the Marylebone, was eager to embark on a fresh venture. The Lansdowne accordingly passed into the hands of this popular Irish vocalist, and was opened by him on September 20th, 1862. Owing, however, to some little misunderstanding with the licensing authorities in the following October, Mr Collins was unable to obtain the necessary licence for music and dancing before the next session, and the house remained closed until the 4th of November 1863, when it was opened with *éclat*, as newspaper reporters say. The old hall had been re-decorated and enlarged, and was now capable of seating from 800 to 1000 persons. The direction was placed in the hands of Mr James M'Donald, but the bright particular star of the establishment was the genial proprietor himself, after whom the hall had been very aptly renamed. On the death of Sam Collins—whose real name, by-the-way, was Samuel Vagg—which took

place on the 25th May 1865, when this popular artiste was in his thirty-ninth year, the house was conducted for some time by his widow, with the assistance, as manager, of Mr Harry Sydney, a song writer and composer of conspicuous ability, and a rare favourite at this hall. Mr H. Watts succeeded Mrs Collins in the proprietorship, and the establishment afterwards came into the possession of Mr Herbert Sprake, the present proprietor, who, it may be mentioned, is a nephew of the great Samuel. In the person of 'Jack' Read, the cheery old chairman of this popular hall, Collins's is still linked with the past, while in shrewd and courteous Mr Nilen, the present assistant manager (who succeeded Mr. E. S. Barnes in that office when the latter went to manage the New London Music Hall in Shoreditch), the new school is ably represented.

The 'White Lion' in the Edgware Road, which was one of the old concert-rooms, became, on the 8th of December 1862, transmogrified into a full-blown music hall, capable of accommodating 4000 persons. The place was named after its proprietor, Mr John Turnham, and was a really handsome hall. The vicinity of the Edgware Road Station, on the Metropolitan line, which had just been opened, rendered it easy of access from the City and West End, although the hall did not want by any means for local support. Turnham's, however, soon became converted into one of the numerous

Limited Liability Companies, which the Act of 1862 had begun to call into existence. Under the management of this Company, which had a capital of £30,000, with power to increase, it opened its doors as the METROPOLITAN MUSIC HALL on Easter Monday, 1864, but not coming up to the expectation of its new proprietors, it was sold to a Mr James Meacock, who had been one of the original directors. Mr Meacock, after a comparatively short space, found that he had had enough of the business, which he disposed of to Mr Edward Winder, who, after successfully directing its fortunes for a number of years, made way for Mr Speedy. This gentleman was succeeded by Mr Lake, who had previously been proprietor of the Middlesex. Mr William Bailey was installed as manager, Mr A. E. Oliver being the treasurer, and Mr Harry Brett the chairman. In 1889 Mr Lake parted with his interest to a limited company with a large capital, but the shareholders not securing very big dividends, Mr Lake bought the property back, and continued to 'run' the hall until Mr Henri Gros purchased it in 1892. There is another Henri very popular at this establishment, and that is Mr Henri Clark, a vocalist of much humour and originality, who quitted the variety stage to take over the management of this hall.

The year 1863 was prolific in music-hall enterprise. Early in the January of that year the Oxford and Cambridge Music Hall, in the

Hampstead Road, near Chalk Farm, was opened by Mr Johnson, and on the 7th of the following month the Royal New Music Hall was opened in the High Street, Kensington, with Mr Alfred Swales as manager, and Mr F. Upton as musical director. On November 2d, Mr James Mortimer opened a new music hall in High Street, Hoxton, and the 30th of the same month saw the establishment in Regent Street, Westminster, of another hall under the proprietorship of Mr Shedlock, assisted by Mr Charles Sinclair, with Mr Russell Grover as director, and Mr Frank Hall, the popular song writer, as manager. A month later, namely, the 26th of December, Moy's became transformed into the ROYAL STANDARD MUSIC HALL, under the proprietorship of Mr R. A. Brown. This is one of the few halls erected in that year which has had anything more than ephemeral existence. Under its present proprietor, Mr Richard Wake, it has been greatly improved and beautified, and is at present one of the prettiest and best patronised halls in London. The end of 1863 witnessed the inauguration of a new hall in Shoreditch—the Eastern Alhambra, opened by Mr R. Fort, who in 1872 parted with his interest to Messrs Tanner & Parkes. Another hall, viz., the Foresters, in Cambridge Road, Whitechapel, was opened on April 13th, 1870, by Messrs Street & Kite, who in January 1871 disposed of the property

to Mr Fort of the Alhambra Hall, before alluded to. A few months later, *i.e.*, September 4th, Mr Fort re-opened the premises, which he had enlarged at a cost of £2000. The present proprietor of this hall is Mr W. Lusby, who possesses a capable coadjutor in the person of his manager, Mr Wilton Friend.

Other halls of varying degrees of importance which under the sunny rays of public patronage blossomed forth about this period, were the Borough, in Union Street, a development of the old Salmon Concert-Room, under the proprietorship of the late Mr Gear, who subsequently parted with his interest to Mr Hart, when soon after the place changed its name from the Alexandra to the Raglan; the Cosmotheca, in Bell Street, Edgware Road—a music-hall venture of Mr J. A. Cave; the Eastern Hall, Limehouse, opened by Mr James Robinson, with Mr Harry Carter as chairman and conductor; and the South Eastern, in Tooley Street, Southwark, opened by Mr P. Haslip. In addition, there were the Pantheon, in Oxford Street, under the proprietorship of Mr Lamb, and further west still, was the Swallow Street Music Hall, in the thoroughfare of that name; the Eldorado and the Criterion near Leicester Square; and the Star Music Hall, Neckinger Road, Bermondsey, which was opened by Mr Thomas Hayes. Subsequent proprietors of the last-named establishment have

been Mr Fred Evans, and Mr John Hart, who is the present owner and manager of the hall.

The most ambitious essay of the following year was the opening, on the 17th October, by another Limited Liability Company of the Strand Music Hall, which stood on the site of the old Exeter 'Change, where Mr Cross formerly kept his famous menagerie. The Strand Music Hall, which, it is curious to note, styled itself the Strand Music*k* Hall, in order to distinguish itself from inferior competitors, was at the start a very select affair indeed. It was proposed to supply the public with vocal and instrumental music of the best available description, and refined sentiment and classic art went hand in hand with the enterprise in spite of its purely commercial object. Alas! for the hopes of the directorate, however, the public fought shy of the hall, which was an elegant little place, and charmingly upholstered and appointed. There was, if anything, too much elegance and a *leetle* too much refinement about the establishment for the average Britisher, who became oppressed by the luxury of his surroundings, and equally depressed by the classical altitude of the entertainment provided. The result was that the company had to come down from their pedestal, and meet the demands of the public, or lose both capital and dividend. Naturally they chose the first alternative, and there was a complete turn-about in the features

of the programme. The comic element, as represented by the Great Vance, Leybourne and other vocalists, was brought in to the rescue, but despite these concessions and the efforts of Mr 'Jolly' Nash, who officiated as chairman besides contributing one of the best 'turns' of the evening, the undertaking succumbed to a rapid decline, and its obsequies were conducted with the usual formalities in the Court of Chancery. Upon the site of the Strand Music Hall was afterwards erected the present Gaiety Theatre.

THE ROYAL CAMBRIDGE, opened by Mr Nugent on the 10th of December 1864, with Mr Charles Greville as manager and conductor, was inaugurated under a more favourable star, and has continued to enjoy a successful existence down to the present day. The property was transferred on July 14th, 1866, to Mr G. S. Page, a Melbourne gentleman, from whose hands it subsequently passed to Mr William Riley, whose right-hand assistant is Mr E. V. Page, the author of many of the best music-hall songs of the past decade.

In November 1865, Mr Carlo Gatti, a refreshment caterer of 214 Westminster Bridge Road, having obtained the needful licence, opened the hall which has since been associated with his name. This was followed in 1867 by the opening of St Leonard's Hall, Shoreditch, better known as the 'Panorama,' the proprietor of which was

Mr George Harwood, who some years later purchased the Varieties, Hoxton, from Mr Verrall Nunn, who had built it and run it as a theatre, an experiment which completely failed. A few years ago Messrs Leach & Kirk became proprietors of this hall, which now bears the name of the first-mentioned gentleman. Other halls opened in this year were Davey's Music Hall, Stratford; and Scott's New Music Hall, Grove Street, Victoria Park.

The MAGPIE was the title of a music hall opened in Battersea about the year 1869, and which held 600 people. It was constructed, as far as architectural design was concerned, on the lines of the Winchester, but had neither a balcony nor a billiard-room as had its elder sister. Several years later the WASHINGTON MUSIC HALL came into existence, and has continued to succeed well under the proprietorship of Mr G. W. Moore, late of the Moore & Burgess Minstrels. The chairman here was for a lengthy period Mr Theodore Gordon, but in the autumn of 1894 he vacated the position, which is now held by Mr Will Sergeant, who previously had filled a similar post, first at Gatti's (Westminster Bridge Road), and later at the South London.

The phenomenal 'boom' in variety affairs which had distinguished the advent of the halls now began to slacken, and there commenced among

the various competitors that fierce fight for the survival of the fittest, which appears to be the prevailing characteristic of all mundane ventures, music-hall enterprises not excepted.

CHAPTER VII

OLD TIME FAVOURITES

The Demand for Variety Artistes—Influx of Fresh Talent—The Old School—Sam Cowell—Birth and Parentage—His Theatrical Career—His Success as a Buffo Singer—Returns to America—His Death—The Benefit Concert at St James's Hall—Sims Reeves—Toole—'A Norrible Tale'—Miss Braddon's Address—Sloman—'Bill' Williamson—'The Better Engagement'—Sam Collins—His Humble Origin and First Start—'Paddy's Wedding'—'Limerick Races'—Story of Collins—The Newer School—A. B. Hollingsworth—His Blindness—A Pathetic Incident—Eugene and Unsworth—Stump Orations—J. G. Forde—W. Randall—Tom Maclagan—Paddy Fannin—George Hodson—'Jolly' Little Lewis—Annie Adams—Nelly Power—Jenny Hill—J. H. Stead—The 'Cure'—Its Phenomenal Success—The 'Nerves'—The 'Great' Vance—Sketch of his Career—'The Chickaleery Bloke'—George Leybourne—'The Lion Comique'—'Champagne Charlie'—'The Lancashire Lass'—Fred Albert—J. H. Milburn—Harry Liston—Victor Liston—Walter Laburnum—Harry Rickards—Fred Coyne—'Jimmy' Taylor—A Singing Competition—A Comic Vocalist put up to Auction—'Jolly' Nash and Arthur Lloyd—'Prince and Peers for an Audience'—A Remarkable Concert Party—Lord R—— and 'Rackety Jack'—A 'Noble' Chairman.

ONE of the first effects of the rise and spread of the variety halls was to create a sudden and sustained demand for fresh artistes. The limited ranks of existing vocalists received a rich influx

of new talent of every kind, quality and degree, and, as it seemed, at one bound a new and remarkable profession sprang into existence. The acrobat, the trapezist and the rope-dancer had of course been for centuries familiar characters, but their sphere of operation had hitherto been confined to the village fair and the public pleasure garden. Now, however, their services were requisitioned for the all popular music hall, and their performances formed, with those of the juggler, the *prestidigitateur* and the step-dancer, a special feature in the programmes of those 'halls of dazzling light,' which, like the palace of Aladdin, seemed to have arisen in a single night. Swelling the ranks of the variety profession, too, came the 'character' vocalist, with his grotesque make up and vermilioned proboscis, the resplendent comique, the topical patterer, and last, but by no means least, the serio-comic lady with such unsophisticated ditties as 'The Captain with His Whiskers took a Sly Glance at Me,' 'I must go out on Sunday,' and similar effusions from the prolific pens of the music-hall poets of the period. Operatic vocalism continued for some time to form a leading and prominent position in the nightly programme, but was gradually eliminated till it reached the vanishing point. Shorn of its former glory and importance, however, it has managed to survive down to the present day in the form of the classic ballad, still an attractive item in

modern music-hall entertainments. Many of the older school of comic singers were well able to hold their own against the new-comers, and quickly adapted themselves to their changed conditions. Most of these singers have already figured in these pages, and of such men as Sharpe, Ross and others little remains to be said. The rest belong quite as much to the early music hall period as to the previous concert and supper-room era, and call for some further mention in the former connection.

Among the old school of singers who continued for a while to keep abreast of the growing competition Sam Cowell occupies a conspicuous place. His artistic finish, incomparable style, and effervescent humour were not easily matched. Sam was born in America on the 5th of April 1820. his father, Joseph Cowell, being an actor of some rank and standing. Young Cowell came to England at an early age, and possessing a good voice, turned his attention to 'singing parts' on the London stage, his *début* in the Metropolis being made at the Surrey Theatre, during a summer season, when an English Opera Company performed there. His first appearance was made as Alessio in *La Somnambula* on July 15th, 1844. From this engagement he went to the Olympic, and afterwards for some time filled original parts at various London theatres. He then joined Mr Conquest at the Royal Grecian, making his

appearance there as 'Nobody' in the extravaganza entitled *Nobody in London*, written by the late Mr Blanchard to illustrate the eventful period of the great Exhibition of 1851. It was his success as a buffo vocalist in these pieces which drew his attention to the use he might make of his talents as a singer. About the year 1861 he went to America, after a highly successful provincial tour in this country; but the success he obtained in New York was dearly purchased by his loss of health, which, soon after his return to England, became painfully manifest. The seeds of consumption sown in his frame rapidly developed, and, after some months of painful suffering, he expired at the little village of Blandford, in Devonshire, on March 11th, 1866. A benefit was immediately got ready on behalf of his widow and children, who were left by his untimely death, after many financial misfortunes, in comparative destitution. On the committee formed for this purpose were J. L. Toole, Paul Bedford, G. W. Anson, Leigh Murray, Howard Paul, C. Morton, and several other well known and influential gentlemen. The concert took place on June 7th, at the St James's Hall, among the artistes appearing being Sims Reeves, who contributed to the programme the immortal 'Come into the Garden, Maud,' and the 'Bay of Biscay,' with encores. Toole gave 'A Norrible Tale,' and Miss Braddon, the popular novelist, just then rising

into fame, wrote some special verses, which were read by Mrs Alfred Mellon, and in which occur the lines :—

> 'Many, it may be, will recall the face
> Of him whose genial voice can never more
> Be heard amongst us, save when echoing faint
> And fitful from the realms of memory.'

Cowell's contemporary, Sloman, continued years after the demise of the former to amuse English audiences with his improvisations, his final appearance in public being at Gatti's Hall, Villiers Street. In his last days the poor little improvisatore fell upon evil times, and was compelled to apply for charitable relief. He died on July 21st, 1870, and was buried in the grounds of the Dramatic, Equestrian and Musical Sick Fund Association, an institution of which he was one of the founders, and also one of the first officers.

Another artiste of the old school, very popular in his day, but who failed to make any lingering impression on his generation, was 'Bill' Williamson How natural it seems to refer to these old singers by such familiar diminutives! They are all 'Jack this,' 'Dick that,' or 'Tom' the other, their very appellatives being a silent testimony to the conviviality and *bonhommerie* of the times in which they lived and sang.

A good story is told of Williamson in connection with Charles Sinclair, one time director of the

old Canterbury hall, which is worth recording here. Williamson, it seems, had been fulfilling a standing engagement at this hall for something like three years—it was not unusual in those days to retain an artiste for an indefinite period—subsequent to a week's notice—but at last 'Bill' received his *congé* and was given formal notice to look out for another 'shop,' as in professional parlance engagements are termed. One evening Sloman was talking to Sinclair, and happened to mention *en passant*, 'So old Bill's got the sack at last!'

'Yes,' exclaimed Sinclair, tapping his cheek with his right hand, a peculiar habit he had when talking, 'and I'm d—d glad he's going!'

Just then, however, he chanced to turn his head and catch sight of Bill's form standing at his very elbow. With more discretion than valour, he thereupon promptly wound up the sentence with the remark—'*to fulfil a better engagement!*'

Sam Collins was another brilliant luminary of this period, who with his jovial face and cheery manner rises like a friendly ghost out of the darkness of the dimly-remembered past. Like many other men who have achieved success in far different walks of life, Sam arose from very humble beginnings, and, before blossoming into a professional vocalist, pursued the honest if somewhat smutty vocation of a chimney sweep.

His tendency, however, always inclined towards the 'boards,' and possessing a good voice and a fund of genuine Hibernian drollery, he found little difficulty in making a start. He commenced his professional career with Mr Lamb, the proprietor of the Pantheon Music Hall in Oxford Street. During the period of his appearance here he was observed by Mr Winder, the then spirited proprietor of the old Mogul, now the Middlesex, Drury Lane. An engagement was offered him at this hall which he at once accepted, and it was here he made his first great hit, and established himself as a popular favourite in his well-known song of 'Paddy's Wedding.' His success at the Mogul led to a lucrative engagement at Evans's, and while at these popular rooms he was presented with a magnificent diamond ring by Sir George Wombwell, an officer who had distinguished himself for his gallantry in the Crimean war. His style of singing being so original was noticed by Mr Williams, then performing at the Adelphi, who, admiring Sam's quaint and humorous conception of character, presented him with the song in which he made his second great hit, 'Limerick Races.' His next engagements of importance were at the Canterbury, Weston's, Wilton's, etc.

Eventually, as previously mentioned, he became proprietor, first of the Marylebone and afterwards

of the establishment which bears his name at Islington.

Mr Wilton Friend, the present manager of the Foresters', who was a well known patterer at the time when Collins was a struggling beginner, recalls an interesting meeting with the former. Mr Friend was journeying westward one night with his professional equipment—artistes couldn't afford broughams in those days, and walked to their engagements with their properties tied up in a cotton handkerchief and slung across their shoulder at the end of a stout stick—when he encountered Collins going eastward. The pair saluted one another in the usual manner, and Sam explained that, having received permission to give an experimental turn at the Canterbury, he had 'burked' appearing that evening at the William the Fourth, Regent's Park, where he was fulfilling an engagement, and entreated Friend not to 'give him away' at the last-mentioned place.

Sam Collins, whose premature death has already been referred to, was buried in the cemetery at Kensal Green within a few yards from the grave of Flexmore. A handsome marble pedestal was erected at the head of the tomb, containing an admirably carved portraiture of the deceased vocalist, in addition to a cleverly cut group of hat and shillalah, etc., intertwined with shamrock. Beneath is graven poor Sam's epitaph,

written by his friend Harry Sydney. It reads as follows :—

> 'A loving husband and a faithful friend,
> Ever the first a helping hand to lend ;
> Farewell, good-natured, honest-hearted Sam,
> Until we meet before the great I AM.'

Prominent among the newer artistes of that day was A. B. Hollingsworth, a comic singer of many excellent qualities. He first appeared at Wilton's Music Hall in 1853, remaining there for a period of five years, after which he filled various engagements at every music hall in the Metropolis, and became extremely popular. His most famous song was 'The Man with the Carpet Bag.' In the June of 1863 the poor fellow became afflicted with total blindness, caused by partial paralysis induced by over-study and exertion. A number of 'benefits' were got up for him at the time at the different halls at which he had appeared. It was a pathetic sight on these occasions to see the blind vocalist led down to the footlights by a little boy, and to hear him sing his old songs amid the scenes of his former triumphs, upon which, alas! the black curtain of blindness had rung down for ever. Hollingsworth died very suddenly on the 10th of October 1865, and was buried at Finchley.

Two other popular entertainers of the time were Eugene and Unsworth, one giving some really clever operatic and ballad selections, and the other

contributing a topical stump oration, a species of entertainment which he was the first to introduce to the London variety stage. To the same category belonged Mr J. G. Forde, a clever comic vocalist, whose son, Mr A. G. Forde, has for some time past occupied the responsible position of stage manager at the Alhambra Theatre. Another popular singer of the period was J. H. Ogden.

William (commonly known as 'Billy') Randall and his wife used to appear as duettists until the Act was passed forbidding two artistes to appear on the music-hall stage in duologues. Randall then started as a 'single turn,' and met with much success. He is the father of Polly Randall, a popular serio in the last decade. The principal songs of William Randall were 'Jones's Sister,' 'Simple Simon' (written for him by Mr Harry Sydney), 'The Porter's Knot,' 'The Hole in the Shutter,' 'Two in the Morning,' 'The Charming Young Lady I met in the Train,' and 'Bathing.' Mr Randall is still alive, and appeared at Deacon's just before that hall closed its doors. Besides being a comic singer, he was also an excellent dancer.

Tom Maclagan, Paddy Fannin, George Hodson, and 'Jolly Little Lewis,' were other favourites in the sixties; while among lady vocalists must be mentioned Miss Annie Adams, Miss Nelly Power, and Miss Jenny Hill, the two last mentioned just

then rising into popularity as child singers. But the artiste who made the greatest impression on music-hall audiences of that day was probably Mr J. H. Stead, whose remarkable song, the 'Perfect Cure,' with its still more remarkable jumping accompaniment, created quite a *furore* at the time, and brought into the field a whole host of imitators. Nothing had been witnessed before it since the days of T. D. Rice in 'Jump, Jim Crow,' when the whole town was set following the peculiar gyrations of that mythical personage. The only thing like it in modern days has been the exuberant high-kick dance of Miss Lottie Collins in her wild 'Ta-ra-boom-de-ay' refrain. The 'Cure' was written by a comic vocalist named Tom Perry, who also wrote the 'Dramatic Maniac' for Mr Cave, and was sold to another singer, whose name was Bowmer. It was resold to Stead, who developed it and added the jumping business, which was suggested by a happy inspiration. The scene of Stead's first success was at the old Weston's, where crowds were attracted nightly to see him in this particular song. Stead's resources could not produce another 'Cure,' and he was unable to maintain his sudden and unique reputation. He died in a garret in the Dials in the direst poverty some few years ago. Marcus Wilkinson, who was a patterer of some celebrity about this time, was yet another artiste who died in abject poverty.

The eccentric sensational dance business of Stead's was rivalled by the performance of Taylor and Bryant, two other vocalists and dancers, who were known as the 'Nerves.'

Two artistes whose names stand out in bold prominence in the annals of the music-hall stage of this period, and who have won for themselves an enduring reputation, are the 'Great Vance,' and George Leybourne the 'Lion Comique.'

Alfred Peck Stevens, professionally known as Alfred Glanville Vance, was born in London in 1840, and originally destined for the law, for which purpose he was placed in a solicitor's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields. He cherished a secret delight, however, in theatrical affairs, and after three years' experience of pounce and parchment, quitted the office stool, and donned the sock and buskin. His first professional engagement was with Mr Edmund Falconer at the Preston Theatre, where he received a salary of fifty shillings a week, and had to play all sorts of parts, including that of spangled harlequin. He then went on the Northampton circuit, and after wandering about in this manner for some time, accepted an engagement at Liverpool with Mr Copeland. Later on, he opened a dancing academy in that town, which not proving particularly lucrative, he took an entertainment of his own round the provinces, after the manner of Cowell and other artistes. In this entertain-

ment he impersonated no less than twenty different characters, visiting with his show nearly every town in the United Kingdom. He next came to London, where he was induced by Mr J. J. Poole to adopt the variety stage. Following Mr Poole's advice, he made his appearance at the Metropolitan and Philharmonic, scoring an instantaneous and lasting success. Vance was a clever dancer and character vocalist, and in his own peculiar line has never been excelled. He was particularly successful in Cockney ditties, and his 'Chickaleery Cove' will not readily be forgotten. The chorus of this ditty at one time might have been heard chaunted in various keys by various people in every part in London, and the small boy going home from business at eventide persisted in warbling :—

> 'I'm a Chickaleery bloke with my one, two, three,
> Vitechapel was the willage I was born in ;
> To catch me on the hop, or upon my tibby drop,
> You must get up werry early in the morning.'

Vance died in active pursuit of his calling so recently as December 26th, 1889, on the stage of the Sun Music Hall at Knightsbridge.

To George Leybourne belongs the credit of introducing quite a new feature in music-hall characters. This was the 'heavy' swell, who spent his days and nights in 'seeing life,' drinking champagne with boon companions, and dallying with

the affections of 'lady charmers.' He was the idol of a very large class of music-hall patrons, by whom he was regarded both on the stage and off as a typical member of the *jeunesse dorèe.* Leybourne made his first appearance in London at Gilbert's Music Hall, in the Whitechapel Road, where he sang under the name of Joe Saunders. The ditty with which he achieved his first success was an amusing composition entitled 'The Dark Girl dressed in Blue.' Very soon after his songs, 'Champagne Charlie,' 'Up in a Balloon,' 'She danced like a Fairy,' and 'The Lancashire Lass,' were all the rage. He died on the 18th of September 1884.

Fred Albert was another star in the music-hall firmament of the time. He was born November 9th, 1845, and educated at the Birkbeck, starting life in a City merchant's office. He sang all his own songs, the principal and most successful of which were 'I Knew that I was Dreaming,' 'Take Care of the Pence,' and 'The Mad Butcher.' One of the first halls at which this artiste appeared was the Goldsmith Arms, a small place in Little Sutton Street, Clerkenwell, where he and many others used to go to practise their songs on a Friday night. The hall was only open on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays. It was here that the late Henry Sampson, of the *Referee*, used to indulge in exhibitions of sparring, and it was the owner of this hall, Mr George Clark,

who used with his friends to 'back' Mr 'Pendragon' in his running matches. In 1886 Mr Fred Albert appeared as a topical vocalist at Deacon's. It may here be remarked that there is no truth in the oft quoted but utterly erroneous report that this singer had a wooden leg.

J. H. Milburn with 'All Among the Hay,' and 'On the Beach at Brighton,' Harry Liston, Walter Laburnum, Harry Rickards, Victor Liston, of 'Shabby Genteel' renown, and Fred Coyne, were all names to conjure with at this period.

Harry Liston was born in Manchester, September 1843, and began life as a commercial traveller. His first appearance was made in July 1863 at the Scotia, Glasgow, from which place he went on to Liverpool, where he remained at one hall for nineteen weeks. He next gave his popular two-hours' entertainment in Manchester and surrounding towns, calling it 'The Stage Struck Hero.' His greatest successes in songs were probably 'The Convict,' 'When Johnny comes Marching Home,' and 'Nobody's Child.' His introduction to London audiences was made through the influence of Mr J. J. Poole, and on June 12th, 1865, he opened at the Metropolitan and Cambridge. Soon after this he was engaged for two months at the Alhambra. In February 1866 he joined Arthur Lloyd's concert party, and a year later started a similar party of his own, with which he visited the provinces for eighteen months.

Later on he again toured the country with his entertainment 'Merry Moments,' and was one of the first to start what is known as the 'One-horse Show.'

At the time Leybourne was driving about the town in his carriage and four horses, Liston was appearing at the Foresters' and other halls, and by way of burlesque, used to go about the streets in a cart with four donkeys.

Mr Victor Liston, another favourite comic singer, made his first appearance when seventeen years old at a benefit at the Old Bower Saloon, Stangate Street. Afterwards he sang at various of the smaller halls, such as Price's in the Caledonian Road, which was only open on Saturday nights, and where 'Billy Randall' was very popular. Then Harry Fox, of the Middlesex, sent Liston to Sheffield, where he played at Parker's, where J. H. Riley and his wife, Marie Barnum, sister to Johnny Barnum, started as duettists. After a provincial probation, Liston returned to London and sang at the Grapes, the Coal Hole, the Cyder Cellars, the Dr Johnson, and Macdonald's in Hoxton, where Fred Albert made one of his earliest appearances. This is now used as a mission hall. One night Liston deputised at the old Philharmonic, then under the proprietorship of the late Mr Sam Adams, and made such a success with his song 'Shabby Genteel,' that he stayed there for seven months, a ditty which Harry Clifton

used to sing in his 'two-hours' entertainment.' Victor Liston was also popular at the Metropolitan, Collins's, and at Evans's, where one night H.R.H. the Prince of Wales brought the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland expressly to hear 'Shabby Genteel.' After a five months' successful visit to America, Liston returned to England. Among his principal songs were 'The Auctioneer's Daughter,' 'Charming Arabella,' 'Polly Darling,' and 'Of Course it's no Business of Mine.' The last-named was written by Arthur Lloyd, the others by G. W. Hunt. On one occasion Liston was a member of Sam Hague's Minstrels. He was also manager of the Bon Accord Music Hall, at Aberdeen, and 'ran' halls of his own at Gloucester and Cheltenham, where George Leybourne and other stars appeared. He is still hale and hearty.

Three other vocalists still connected with the variety stage, and as popular as ever, who, however, were well to the fore at the period in question, and therefore deserve to come under the description of old time favourites, are James Taylor—'Jimmy' his friends prefer to call him—'Jolly' John Nash, with his admirable laughing song, and Arthur Lloyd.

The first-named distinguished himself in 1864 in a singing contest with Richard Blanchard, which took place in August of that year, at Weston's, for a hundred pounds. Both singers sang six songs

apiece, and the match, which terminated at half-past eleven, resulted in favour of Taylor, who was declared the winner. On another occasion Taylor, who appears to have been possessed of no small degree of ingenuity and originality, put his services up for auction at Messrs Hutchisson & Dixon's establishment, Glasgow, when he was knocked down for £335 for a month to the highest bidder, the purchaser being the proprietor of a local variety hall. The affair was conducted with all the formality of a regular auction, and the bidding, if not exactly furious, was brisk enough to make things exciting. After the transaction was satisfactorily completed, the event was very appropriately celebrated with champagne and cigars, interspersed with comic and sentimental ditties.

Mr 'Jolly' Nash and Mr Arthur Lloyd are among the few artistes of the variety stage who have had the honour of singing before the Prince of Wales. Mr Nash, in his interesting little book of reminiscences, recalls the occasion above mentioned of his appearance with Mr Lloyd before his H.R.H., of which he gives the following graphic account :—

'Accompanied by Mr W. Holland, the 'Napoleonic' caterer, we were ushered into a splendid apartment by powdered attendants in gorgeous liveries, and a rich repast was set before us.

After we had regaled ourselves, we were told that we were required in the drawing-room, and that we were to sing our songs in exactly the same way as we should do in a music hall.

'We found ourselves in the presence of the Prince and about fourteen noblemen, who had been dining, and they were then lounging about the saloon, enjoying cigars, champagne cup and other cooling drinks. It was the quietest function I ever assisted at, although some of the papers described it as something too dreadfully awful. Our accompanist seated himself at the piano, and I, with a preliminary bow to the assembly, commenced singing a popular song with me at that time—"The Merry Toper." This song gave great delight to the noble swells, after which Mr Lloyd appeared and sang some of his favourite ditties, all of which pleased our aristocratic patrons. My own contributions consisted of the above, also one called "Rackety Jack," "I'm not at all Inquisitive," and a few others. When I entered the room as "Rackety Jack," one of the company, the Duke of R——, called out to me to take off my hat and keep it off. I had taken it off to make my preliminary bow, but had resumed it to give effect to the character I was presenting, and I now appealed to him in this way, "Mr *Chairman*"—loud laughter from the noble audience, who appeared mightily tickled at my calling the autocratic individual "Mr

Chairman," and they called him "Mr Chairman" for the remainder of the evening, and thought it great fun.

'"Mr Chairman," said I, "am I to give this song as if I were in a music hall?"

'"Certainly, Nash," from all the other noble guests, "and keep your hat on, if necessary."

'The noble chairman was a duke with a very serious cast of countenance, and he appeared perfectly horrified at my presumption. His comic anger seemed to afford the Prince and his companions great delight. Now Mr "Rackety Jack" commenced to sing of his jolly sort of life, with a refrain to each verse as follows:—

'"Hey! hi! here stop! Waiter, waiter! Fizz, pop!
I'm Rackety Jack, no money I lack,
And I'm the boy for a spree."

'When I came to the refrain, I addressed the solemn-looking nobleman,—"Now then, Mr Chairman, chorus altogether." This was received with roars of laughter by the nobles, who joined in the chorus *con spirito*, and the room resounded with—

'"Hey! hi! here stop! Waiter, waiter! Fizz, pop!
I'm Rackety Jack," etc.

'We continued,' adds Mr Nash, 'to sing alter-

nately—Arthur Lloyd and myself—until about four in the morning, and left with an assurance that we had much pleased his Lordship and his princely guest.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE RISE OF THE AGENCIES

The Agents' Quarter—Meetings at the Coburg—Harry Fox—Ambrose Maynard—How He became Agent—The Turn of the Tide—One Use of an Agent—Charles Roberts—His Career as an Agent—Artistes He introduced to London—Leotard—Continental Troupes—George Leybourne—£1 to £120 a week—'Five Per Cent. Villa'—Agencies in the Early Sixties—George Fisher—British and Foreign Dramatic, Musical and Equestrian Agency—Parravicini—Anson—Frank Hall—Maurice de Frece—First Provincial Agent—His Life—Performers He 'discovered'—Jenny Hill—Bessie Bellwood—'The Guileless Daughter of Erin'—'Too Quiet by Far'—A 'Show' in a Police Court—George Ware—Hugh Jay Didcott—A Comic Singer—Didcott and Chevalier—Ben Nathan—Richard Warner—Kopt & Company—Warner and Farini—Agents of the Present Day—Their Commencement—Lofthouse—De Vere—Sinclair—Higham—Shaw—Nathan and Somers—Brushfield—The Uses of an Agent—'A Necessary Evil'—Opposition from Artistes—Anti-Agency Associations—All short-lived—What Agents have done for the Profession—A Prophecy.

JUST as the students of Paris have their *quartier*, so have music-hall agents their own particular locality. It commences immediately one crosses Waterloo Bridge, and continues in a straight line until the corner where the four roads meet, and there it diverges along, in one direction, the York

Road, and, in the other, Stamford Street. But of late years a fashion has prevailed among agents to cross to the Middlesex side, and now Henrietta Street and Wellington Street are becoming quite a favourite neighbourhood for offices of the variety middlemen.

The birth of the music-hall agency was just forty years ago, but for a considerable time proprietors refused to listen to the voice of the charmer, charmed he ever so eloquently; but it was only a matter of time before the advantages of the agent were discovered, and the reign began which has so vastly succeeded that the number of agencies to-day must be reckoned by the score.

The establishing of the first agency arose in rather a peculiar fashion. A number of music-hall managers, in the earlier years of the fifties, used to hold informal meetings on a Sunday evening at the old Coburg Tavern, near to the theatre of that name. One of the most prominent members of this little coterie was Mr Harry Fox, the manager of the Mogul. Now it sometimes happened that performers who were working in the country were in the habit of writing to this gentleman, and inquiring if he knew of any engagements open for them. Mr Fox used to mention their names to his brother managers on a Sunday night, and he frequently procured 'dates' for the artistes. The bright thought happened just at this time to strike Mr Ambrose Maynard, a

comic singer, of starting a register of artistes which he could submit to managers. To be enrolled on this list of 'talent,' the originator of the scheme made a charge of one shilling. He received the silver coins of the realm in abundance, but for a lengthened period the managers refused to recognise either Mr Maynard or his register. But, whatever else may be said of that gentleman, no one can deny his patience and perseverance, which eventually conquered the hearts of the managers. He seized hold of his first opportunity, and made good use of it. A certain proprietor being in a dilemma, owing to an artiste not being able to perform, Mr Maynard rushed into the breach, and sent him Miss Julia Weston, a serio, who proved very successful. This stroke of good fortune turned the scale, and after a while the business of this music-hall agent became so extensive that, in 1858, he took offices at 20 Waterloo Road, afterwards removing to No. 6 York Road, where he continued to practise his calling up to the time of his death, which occurred on October 3d, 1889, at the age of sixty-six. Two gentlemen, who subsequently became agents themselves, were employed in Mr Maynard's office as clerks. Mr Edward Colley was one, and Mr Fred Gilbert the other.

The system principally adopted by Mr Maynard in dealing with his clients was one that has ever since been more or less in vogue with a section of

music-hall agents. It is colloquially termed 'farming,' by which phrase is meant the engaging of an artiste by an agent for a given length of time, one, two, or three years, at a fixed salary for the entire period, whether the former be in work or not, the agent making contracts with managers at a larger salary and putting the difference into his own pocket. Mr Maynard, however, did more than this. He entered into contracts with various proprietors to provide their entire company each week for a definite *prix fixe*, an arrangement which, while it lessened the trials and tribulations of the management, enriched considerably the coffers of the astute agent. It is said that it was by these means that Mr Maynard secured so much of the gold of this world as to leave behind him no less a sum than £15,000. And in connection with this matter it should be borne in mind that five per cent. commission on engagements procured was the utmost charged in those days, and that the salaries were very meagre when taken into consideration with those of the present time.

There is a little story told—and a true one, no doubt—by Mr Wilton Friend, of a client of Mr Maynard and his views as to the uses of an agent. Bearing in mind the attacks that in the intervening years have been so repeatedly hurled at the system of music-hall agency, the tale, as well as being amusing, points a certain moral. One of the performers on the agent's books was a juggler who at

that time was a 'star.' On some friend remonstrating with him for supporting the unpopular principle of agency, the man of the quick eye replied,—'D'yer see, cully, I cawn't write myself.' A laconic observation, but one that had a deal of meaning in it.

The next to commence in the agency line, and we believe one of the oldest living agents still carrying on the business, was Mr Charles Adolphus Roberts. This gentleman was born on May 12th, 1839, at Gondrin Gey, in the south of France. He came over to England as representative for a foreign house at the Exhibition of 1862, but before this he had secured for a troupe of acrobats an engagement at the Alhambra. He commenced business in a small way at 9 Old Compton Street, and while there was sent for by the management of the Alhambra as knowing the French language. He engaged Leotard for that house, who opened at a salary of 100 guineas a week, which was later on increased. After a while Mr Roberts thought of returning to his native land, but was induced, on the representation of Mr Michael Abrahams, who was the manager of the Apollo Music Hall, now the Queen's Theatre of Varieties, at Poplar, to continue as an agent, being promised the support of a number of prominent managers. Besides Leotard Mr Roberts brought Julien, the trapezist, to the Alhambra, and secured engagements for Arthur and Bartraud at the Alhambra,

Strand Music Hall, Lyceum and Britannia Hoxton, besides doing business for a number of other artistes, chiefly troupes, such as the Chantrill Family, the Elliott Family, the Etoile Family and others. His next move was to start offices at Blyth Terrace, Westminster Bridge Road, which he opened in 1863, but in '65, finding that No. 5 York Road was to let, he took rooms there. This was exactly opposite the premises occupied by Mr Maynard, and some proprietors, fearing lest that important personage might descry them entering the abode of his rival, used to come to talk business with Mr Roberts through a back entrance. In 1887, Mr Charles Roberts left York Road owing to domestic reasons, and went to Spain. Returning through Paris the agent saw a troupe of performing wolves at the *Folies Bergères*, and brought them over to this country, where they appeared for eight months at the Royal Aquarium. Since that time Mr Roberts has continued in the same line, occasionally travelling over to France and other parts of the Continent in search of novelties. Both Mr Edward Colley and Mr Fred Gilbert were clerks with Mr Roberts before they went over to Mr Maynard. Mr Colley, by the way, was a relative of Mr Roberts' wife.

During his career of thirty-four years Mr Roberts has been the means of introducing to London audiences many of their greatest favour-

ites. Once, when on a provincial tour, he saw Mr George Leybourne, who was appearing at the London Music Hall in Manchester, then owned by a Mr Harwood. Leybourne was singing at the time a song, 'Chisel, Chisel,' in which he introduced a mechanical donkey. Perceiving Leybourne's talent, Roberts asked if he had anywhere to go to the next week. 'No,' the 'Lion Comique' replied. The agent at once secured an engagement for the comedian the following week at the Prince of Wales's, Wolverhampton, for six nights, at a salary of £2, 10s. Then he brought Leybourne to London, when the latter opened at the London Pavilion, Sun Music Hall, Knightsbridge, and Strand Music Hall, then managed by Mr Syers. At these halls he was only engaged for a week at £4 a 'turn.' Eventually Roberts secured for his client no less than £120 a week. Another performer of note in the present time whom Roberts worked for was Herbert Campbell, who, at one period of his career, was a member of the negro troupe of Harman and Elston. Nelly Power started at the magnificent salary of 25s. a week at the Regent Music Hall, in Westminster, when she sang a ditty—'I'm the Jockey, I'm the Jockey.' Roberts was her agent, and booked her at all the large halls of that day. Fred Albert and Lottie Cherry, duettist's, were on his books, and the former also when he appeared as a single 'turn.' The Brothers Griffiths were at one time members of the Matthews'

Troupe, and this successful agent gave them their present name, and procured for them engagements on the Continent. Another of his clients was Mr H. J. Didcott, who was at that time a comic singer, and others on Roberts's register were Nelly Moon, with her famous song 'The Boy in Yellow;' Mab Chambers, the laughing songtress (a female 'Jolly' John Nash); Clarence Holt; Will Riley, with his celebrated 'Scamp' song; Walter Laburnum; James Hillier; Epinosa, now the ballet-master at the Alhambra; Bessie Bonehill, whose first pantomime was at the Queen's, Poplar; the Brothers Leopold; the Boisset Troupe, who came over from the Continent twenty-three years ago, and were then known as La Famille Boisset; Trewey; E. H. Davis, the ventriloquist; Frank Mordaunt, jester, with his talking hand; Henri Clark and William Bailey. Truly a goodly list!

Before we part from the interesting career of this agent, who has in his life seen so many of his former clients ascend to the height of popularity, and watched young beginners from their start in the business until they have become stars of eminence earning enormous salaries, there are one or two items worthy of mention. In the early sixties, five per cent. commission was Mr Robert's charge to artistes, and when they drew large salaries he was content with £1 a week. A modest increment surely for hard and trying work!

That the agent was fond of the business is

evident from the fact of his having called his residence at Kew 'Five Per Cent Villa!' He started both the Vokes Family, the father of whom was a costumier, and the Livermore Court Minstrels. Both these troupes first appeared at Springthorpe's Music Hall, at Hull, a house that was only open between the hours of eight and ten each evening. Mr Thiodon, late of the Paragon and now of the Grand, Gravesend, was the manager of this hall at that time. In 1871, the directors of the Crystal Palace sent Mr Roberts over to Honfleur to engage an Italian Circus at a salary of £100 a day. The circus folk wanted a 100 guineas; it was granted. They then wanted half fares over. This also was conceded. Then they asked for their full fare both ways, which, however, was *not* granted. When Mr Trotman had the Bedford, Mr Roberts used to engage all the artistes for this hall; amongst others who appeared there being Carrie Julian and George Fredericks, Will Parker and his soldier dog, Miss Bertie Stokes and Annie Dunbar, Kate Everleigh, the Sisters Leamar, and the Sisters Lindon. He was agent for the Astecs, who appeared at the old Savile House, in Leicester Square, and provided the opening company when Mr Nugent started at the Cambridge. Among the company may be mentioned Miss Annie Adams, Mlle. Victoria, Harman and Elston, and George Leybourne.

But there are many other agents we must proceed to mention. In the year 1861, quite a number of music-hall agencies were in existence, many of them being in a flourishing condition. There was Mr George Fisher, who had the British and Foreign Dramatic Musical and Equestrian Agency at 27 Bow Street, Covent Garden, which he continued until his death on the 31st August 1865. There were Messrs George Webb & Company, who with the business of photographers combined that of variety agents. They principally catered for fêtes and galas, which in those days were very much in vogue, considerably more so than at the present time. Another agency which was continued for many years, was that of Messrs Parravicini & Corbyn, at 44 Duke Street, Piccadilly. The business this firm did was almost entirely Continental. After some time Mr S. A. Parravicini continued the agency without the aid of his partner, and it continued to flourish until the death of that gentleman in 1893. Since then his former manager, Mr Percival Hyatt, has started for himself in the Strand, where he has an excellent connection. He procures engagements for most of the artistes who appear at the Crystal Palace. Mr Nelson Lee made a speciality of novelties of out-door entertainments; Mr Harry Fox, besides his managerial and chairmanship duties, continued to find time for agency work; and Mr Frank Hall, the song writer, and at the

present time the secretary of the Music Hall Benevolent Fund, was another who dealt out contracts at five per cent., not always though with 'cash on delivery.' MM. Maurin and N. Perrin dealt solely in foreign goods and for the foreign markets. In 1863 Mr J. W. Anson, the honorary secretary of the Dramatic Musical and Equestrian Fund, started a music-hall agency in connection with the society, and appointed Mr W. R. Julian to manage the same, its offices being at 35 Bow Street, while on June 12th, 1864, Mr P. Corri, the musical director of Weston's, became one of the agent brigade.

While so many had entered the ranks as agents in the Metropolis, it must not be supposed that the provinces had been neglected in this respect. The first to commence business in the country was Mr Maurice de Frece. This gentleman, who was born in London in 1840, was educated at the Dover Collegiate School, and after being connected with the Highbury Barn Gardens, started as an agent in Liverpool in 1858. His offices were in Roscoe Arcade, and among his clients were many of the most popular artistes of that time, among others being Harry Liston, who made his *début* in a celebrated song 'The Tinpot Band,' Henri Clark, William Bailey, the late Fred Coyne, the late George Fredericks, Fred la Roche, Lingard, Alice Dunning, and Miss Rose Wreghitt, whom he discovered in a 'free-and-

easy' at Halifax, where she was singing and playing the piano at a weekly salary of only 15s. Mr De Frece brought this lady to London, where she scored a very great success at the Oxford, Metropolitan and Foresters', at which halls she made her first appearance in London on the Easter Monday of 1870. Miss Jenny Hill was another 'star' whom this far-seeing agent found at some provincial hall, and whom he secured engagements for in London, under his ægis the 'Vital Spark' appearing at the Oxford, Metropolitan and Foresters'. Of Miss Bessie Bellwood, Mr de Frece has an amusing little story to tell. He was the first agent the lady ever had, and he engaged her to appear at the Royal, where, tastefully and neatly dressed, 'the guileless daughter of Erin' sang a song entitled 'Come under my Umbrella.' Two nights later Mr Sweasey, the then proprietor of this hall, said to the agent, 'She won't do; she's too quiet!' Through Mr de Frece's instrumentality, Mr Charles Godfrey made his first appearance in the Metropolis, the hall being also the Royal.

Besides his agency business, Mr De Frece has had a varied career in other directions, having been proprietor for a while of the Alhambra Music Hall in Liverpool, which he ran on the two houses a night principle, this being the first hall in the provinces to adopt this practice. Then he took the Adelphi Theatre in the same town, and later

opened the Theatre Royal in 1870. Afterwards he came to London, and had a season at the Charing Cross Theatre (now Toole's), when he produced for the first time in England Offenbach's comic opera *66*, and *The Marble Heart*, an old Adelphi drama. This venture not proving a pecuniary success, Mr De Frece returned to his old love and commenced business as a London agent at 29 Wellington Street, where he remained until 1877, when he removed to 11 York Road, where Mr Tom Holmes joined him as partner, but only for a short while. Then Mr De Frece moved to 55 Waterloo Road, and stayed there till, in '79, he went to America, where he was the first enterprising individual to start agency on the European plan. Later, the traveller sought fresh fields—or rather towns—in South Africa, where he toured the country as 'Professor Hoffman, Wizard of the City of the Golden Gate.' During his stay in the Transvaal he experienced many strange adventures, one of which is certainly worthy of record. At a small town he stopped at, on arrival he went to the estate agent and asked what place he could hire to give his entertainment in. 'There is none,' was the reply, 'except the police court.' Straightway the manager repaired thither and saw the magistrate, Mr Gee, who told him that there had been no amusements in the town for upwards of two years, and that he might give his 'show' in the court after the business of the day was done.

That afternoon De Frece had the 'court' cleared and erected a stage. The entertainment proved a great success, and as there were no seats the audience brought their chairs with them. The next morning Mr De Frece went to pull down the fittings, when the enthusiastic magistrate said, —'Never mind, I'll remand the prisoners!' And remanded they were for the space of four days. In 1884, Mr De Frece returned to London, where he met Mr Richard Warner, and became the provincial manager to the firm of Warner & Company, which position he continues to hold with conspicuous ability and success at the present time. Mr De Frece is, as well as an agent, a song writer and a dramatic author of no mean prowess.

Mr George Ware is a veritable veteran in the ranks of agents. He secured for Mr Maynard the first provincial engagement he ever had, that was in the days when he was a comic singer, and was made in 1850, four years before Mr Maynard started as a music-hall agent.

Mr George Ware started in the agency business as early as 1850, when he used to book novelties with Mr P. T. Barnum, among others being the famous Liliputian, 'Tom Thumb.' In 1857 Mr Ware was employed as manager by Mr Heath of the Colosseum, Liverpool, and afterwards officiated in the same capacity at the Whitebait Music Hall, at Glasgow. He was also manager for Mr Pullan at Bradford, and for the late Mr John Wilton at

his hall in Wellclose Square, in the east of London. After quitting his position here, Mr Ware devoted himself more particularly to the agency business, and in 1878 took offices in London, where he has remained ever since. Mr Ware, who was born in 1829, and commenced life as a sailor, and was also in the army, is also a song writer of repute. Among the best known ditties from his pen are, 'The Whole Hog or None,' which the great Mackney made so popular; 'The Squire and Maria,' 'Up goes the Price of Meat,' and 'Whacky, Whacky, Whack.' He also wrote all the principal songs for Sam Collins, including 'The Fiddler's Wife,' and gained the prize offered for the best song by Sam Cowell with 'The House that Jack Built.'

No account of music-hall agents would be complete without mention of Mr Hugh Jay Didcott, who, when a comic singer, decided to try his fortune in the agency line. His first offices were at 7 Waterloo Road, but afterwards he took premises at 11 York Road. Later, he migrated to Covent Garden, but returned to the Surrey side and took premises at 68 Waterloo Road. His business enormously increased, and early in 1889 Mr Didcott took possession of large offices in the York Road, where he remained till 1892, when he again moved his quarters, this time to 5 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, where he is carrying on his agency at the present time. Mr Lofthouse, afterwards

an agent himself, was at one time in Mr Didcott's office, and for a space Mr Frank Egerton acted as his manager. Mr Leon Victor was also employed by Mr Didcott for a period. In 1891 Mr Didcott took into partnership Mr Ben Nathan, and the firm of Didcott & Company continued until the summer of 1894, when it was dissolved by mutual consent. At one time Mr Didcott was very influential and powerful in the music-hall world, and he was mainly responsible for the now very prevalent three years' system of engaging artistes. There is no doubt but that it is greatly due to this agent that performers are to-day securing the enormous salaries many of them are in receipt of.

Another very celebrated agent whose reign of popularity is yet unabated is Mr Richard Warner, the head of the firm of Warner & Company. This gentleman became first associated with the profession through his brother, who was a large diamond merchant, marrying Miss Annie d'Est, who at that time was a well-known artiste, performing at Day's Music Hall, Birmingham Over twenty years ago Mr Warner met Mr De Frece, the Liverpool agent, and as the former was constantly travelling about for amusement, he agreed to transact business on the latter's behalf in the provinces. In 1882 Mr Warner started as an agent with Mr Kopt, an old schoolfellow, who had come over to England as the manager for the giantess Marian, who was appearing at the Alhambra. The firm was styled

Kopt & Company, but the partnership only lasted for twelve months, Mr Warner continuing the business alone. About this time Mr Warner met Mr Farini, who then was at the Royal Aquarium, and the two together, with Mr Charles Crowder of the Canterbury and Paragon, journeyed over to the Continent in search of novelties, among other artistes whom they secured being the Schaffer Troupe and the Eugenes. Mr Farini, some nine years ago, became a partner with Mr Warner, and has been associated in the wonderfully successful firm of Warner & Company until last February, when the partnership was dissolved. Among other novelties that Mr Richard Warner has introduced to London audiences may be mentioned Ulpts, the dwarf; Aama, the giantess; Princess Pauline, the Midget; Sandow, the strong man, and the Dahomey warriors. Mr Warner has a very large and important agency, as may be judged from the fact that on his books are no less than two hundred and fifty prominent artistes. The offices of this agency were for many years at 11 York Road, but last summer they were moved to 20 Wellington Street. A speciality of Messrs Warner & Company is that they principally act for troupes and other big combinations, in which line they are the first agents of the day. Mr G. A. Farini, it may be noted here, was recently the manager of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels. Among the clerks in the employ of the firm have been three gentlemen who have since

started agencies on their own account. They are Mr Fred Higham, Mr George Sinclair, and Mr Felix Napoli.

Brief mention must be made of the many other agencies which have flourished, or are continuing to flourish at the present time. Messrs Victor & Turnbull formerly had an agency in Stamford Street, the latter being the husband of Jenny Hill. At the close of the partnership Mr Leon Victor became manager to Mr Edward Colley, and on the latter's death in 1890, after continuing the business for the widow till November 1892, he purchased the business, and is now carrying on the agency. He is agent for Mr Dan Leno and many other 'stars.' Mr Leno was brought to London by Mr Edward Colley, who also introduced Little Tich to Metropolitan audiences. Mr Fred Gilbert started for himself, and was very successful. Afterwards he became manager to Mr G. H. Macdermott, and for some time was a partner with W. B. Fair as agents in Waterloo Road, York Road and Stamford Street, and he has recently commenced again on his own account at Savoy House, Strand. Mr Tom Holmes, who was one of the firm of Holmes & Gant, negro comedians, also started an agency, later on joining Mr Wieland, with whom he remained for two years or more. After being associated for a while with Mr Macdermott, Mr Holmes went to America with the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, and when he re-

turned joined Mr William Oliver, and started an agency business in the York Road, which is still being carried on there with much success. Mr Wieland, who had offices in the Waterloo Road, was an agent of considerable repute. In 1868 Mr Wieland held an important position at the Crystal Palace, having the engagement of all artistes for that establishment under his control. He has made a speciality of gymnastic acts, and was manager for, among others, the Midgets, the Hanlons, the Brothers Volta, and the celebrated Zæo. In 1878, Mr Wieland left the Crystal Palace, and took a circus over to the Continent, where he remained until 1890. He was interested in the unfortunate Alexandra Palace, and also the Royal Aquarium, Westminster. In his capacity as agent he had often visited Europe in quest of novelties for London variety theatres. Mr Wieland is at the present time watching over the interests of his clever and charming daughter, Miss Clara Wieland, the English Vanoni, who has made such a pronounced success at the halls.

The late Mr Lofthouse was formerly proprietor of the Oxford Music Hall in Liverpool, where he used to engage such people as Tom Croslin, the celebrated negro comedian, Jenny Hill, and Ada Lundberg's mother, a character singer, who used to sing 'Too-ral-laddie' and 'The Charity Girl. Mr Lofthouse also had a hall in Dublin, but he failed to make his business succeed, and became

manager to Mr Didcott. After some time he started an agency of his own in the York Road, and was doing very well, when, on going to Manchester one day to see the late Mr Garcia, he caught a severe chill. When he returned, he laid up and died a few days later. Miss H. Lofthouse is his daughter. She has continued in her father's footsteps, and until the end of 1894 carried on an agency with Felix Napoli, the son of Napoli, the Italian Hercules. Miss Lofthouse is at the present time conducting the business alone, and Mr Napoli has opened offices as an agent at 55 Waterloo Road, which premises were many years ago in possession, for similar purposes, of Mr Fred Abrahams, and more recently of Mr Alf Abrahams, his brother.

Mr Ernest de Vere's first connection with the music-hall profession was when he married, in 1876, Miss Stella De Vere, the well-known comedienne, but it was not until 1883 that he commenced as an agent, his offices being at that time at 60 York Road. Some eighteen months later he crossed over the road to his present abode, at 41 Waterloo Road. Mr De Vere was born in 1853, at 73 Southgate Road, opposite where Nelly Power lived and died. Among other artistes he has brought to London from the provinces are the clever Sisters Preston. Mr De Vere is a Past Master in Freemasonry, speaks three or four languages, was educated on the Continent, and makes a speciality of his pantomime engagements for his clients at Christmas.

Mr George Sinclair's agency is in Stamford Street. He is of English birth, but left this country when young, and did not return till 1878, when he secured an engagement at the Lyceum, and acted in the production of *Romeo and Juliet* at that theatre. Then he went to the Alcazar, where he played Silly Billy in the pantomime of *Cinderella*. Next he went on the variety boards, and opened as a comic singer at the Hungerford. Later, he assumed the management of the Bedford Music Hall, where he remained for two years, until, indeed, Mr Fredericks sold the hall. In 1885 he started in the agency business, and in 1887 he was acting as secretary to Messrs R. Warner & Company. After a while he decided to start for himself, and took offices at 20 York Road, and is now at 182 Stamford Street. Mr Sinclair has written upwards of eight hundred songs.

Mr Fred Higham has for several years had an agency of his own, first in Stamford Street and now at 9 York Road. He has a number of popular favourites on his books, and has managed to keep most of them in constant work. Mr G. H. Macdermott, the well-known vocalist, also has an agency. He started first at 130 Strand, with Mr Holmes as his partner, but they separated, and Mr Macdermott went over the water to 7 York Road, and for a time Mr Frank Egerton joined him, but the partnership did not continue for long. Mr J. Rosen is now his manager, and his present address is 50 Tennison Street, York Road. Mr George

Foster is a young agent, who, during a brief career in the agency business, has earned for himself the title of the 'Busy Bee.' He started agency first in a small way at Bow, but some eighteen months ago shifted to 24 York Road, and is one of our rising agents. Messrs Tom Shaw & Company, of 86-7 Strand, have only been established in London for a little over a year, but previous to that time Mr Shaw had carried on a very successful agency in Liverpool. Since his arrival in London, this agent has worked very energetically and very successfully, and has many well-known artistes on his book. Mr 'Jones' is his smart manager and secretary. Mr Jack Edgar, of Leicester Square, is now continuing, with much prosperity, the agency started by the late Herr Graff, whose partner he became shortly before the latter's death. Mr Richard Elliott, the husband of Miss Lucy Clarke, the celebrated contralto, is another popular agent, who has his habitat close by the Alhambra, and makes a speciality of introducing Continental novelties to London. His agency is one of the best managed and most successful in town. Messrs Auckland & Brunetti have an agency at 44 Waterloo Road, to which address they have removed from Stamford Street. Other existing agencies are those conducted by Mr Frank Albert, father of the Albert and Edmunds' Troupe, Mr Gallimore Fox, Mr Tom Prichard, Mr T. Pavillio, Beresford's Agency Messrs Dietrich & Company, Mr St John Denton,

whose connection is chiefly theatrical, and Mr Gus Healy, who at one time was partner in the firm of Healy & Cooke, at 44 Waterloo Road, and prior to that was associated with Mr Will Oliver at the same address.

Messrs Nathan & Somers established, in the June of 1894, an agency at 10 Henrietta Street, which is as flourishing as a green bay tree. Among their clients are Mr E. J. Lonnen, Miss Alice Lethbridge, Mr Gus Elen, and a great number of first-class artistes. This firm has opened up an extensive continental business, and are influential alike in the Metropolis and in the country.

In the provinces the chief agents are Mr Oswald Stoll of Cardiff, 'Lord' George Aytoun, and Messrs Sley, E. Leon, Fineberg & Company of Liverpool, and John Tiller, besides several others.

Mr W. F. Bushfield, at present with Mr E. de Vere, has had a varied experience both as manager and agent. In 1865 he was a travelling agent, charging a sovereign on every engagement he secured an artiste. In 1870 he came to London, and opened in the Blackfriars Road, Nelson Square, where he remained for two or three years, and then opened an office in the West Strand with a gentleman named Waldiane. This firm continued for two years, and then Mr Bushfield took over the management of the old Alhambra Music Hall, Nottingham, for the late Mr George Allen, who had previously been chairman of the Philharmonic

at Islington. After directing the fortunes of this house for eighteen months, Mr Bushfield managed the Alexandra Music Hall for a magistrate named Jobson. Later, he was a comic singer, and then started the first music hall in Battersea, which he called 'The Magpie.' This is more than fifteen years ago. His next move was to Mr Fred Abrahams' Agency, where he remained for some years, at the same time undertaking the duties of acting manager and secretary of the Apollo Theatre, now the Queen's Poplar. Later on he managed the agency business for Mr H. Wieland, in the Waterloo Road ; and after being employed by Mr H. Didcott (when he commenced agency), Mr Macdermott and others, he joined the late Mr George Fredericks, with whom he remained until the latter's death, when he continued the business on his own account, but suffered a number of financial losses. He has travelled all through America, and brought over from that country Mr G. W. Hunter, who first appeared in London at the Royal, the Cambridge and the Raglan. Mr Hunter, when discovered, was a member of Mr Tony Denier's *Humpty Dumpty* Company. Mr Bushfield brought out Mr Will Oliver as a comic singer, and secured him engagements at Hull, Manchester and Sheffield. While he was managing the Alexandra, Dudley, Mr Dan Leno, with his father and mother, appeared there in sketches, and the Albert and Edmunds

Troupe made their first appearance at that hall.

The business of the music-hall agents sprang, as we have shown, from very humble beginnings, but, with the rise of the institution it was so intimately associated with, it developed to the prodigious proportions it has at present attained. But it must not be thought that this gradual growth was nurtured without opposition. As in every other trade the middleman has been treated ofttimes with scant courtesy, his pretensions have been ignored, and his usefulness depreciated, but without avail. The agent is to the artiste a 'necessary evil'—if he be an evil at all, which is a matter of opinion. And the reason of his necessity is not far to seek. The average music-hall performer, however clever and talented he may be in his own special line, is no match in the matter of business acumen with an astute manager, and the former cannot, in the reason of things, extol his own abilities and his own worth to the latter without egotism and undue boasting. But with the agent this is very different. He can, and he does, prove clearly to a manager that a certain performer is worth to him the terms that he asks, and often more. He has, or should have, that invaluable 'gift of the gab,' which, added to a smartness in business matters, and a full knowledge of the subject in hand, convinces the proprietor that he really needs that artiste whom half an hour before he had decided he would not have at any price.

Another *raison d'être* for the existence of the agent is that while an artiste is touring in the provinces he can only communicate with a manager by letter, which is more often than not rapidly relegated to the realms of the waste-paper basket, and forgotten as soon as read. The agent, on the other hand, is on the spot, and by repeatedly dinning into the ears of a manager the intrinsic value of a performer, at length obtains an engagement. A not unimportant part of the duties of an agent, but one that is often overlooked, is the matter of 'times.' An artiste has, we will say, four 'turns' to work in London; probably there is one in the northern quarter, another in the centre, yet another 'down East,' and the last far West. It is a problem of no easy solution how to fix the time when he is to appear at the respective establishments so that he can drive to his other engagements. The majority of managers all wish a 'star turn' to appear at or about ten o'clock, and it is beyond the ken of man to know how any ordinary mortal can be in four places, each, perhaps, two or three miles apart, at the same identical moment. All this worry and anxiety of fixing the 'times' the artiste leaves to his agent; and surely this alone is worth some remuneration. Quite recently the crusade against the agent has been once more very prominently to the front, and the directors of several of the largest London halls have publicly announced that they prefer to engage artistes direct, and not

through any agency. But however this system of direct dealing between managers and artistes may become the custom in London, it is not likely to be much adopted in the provinces, where insuperable difficulties would naturally arise. There agents are a necessity and a boon indeed.

But, as has been said above, there has been a continual friction existing between the agent on the one part and the artiste on the other. This friction has become so acute that on some three occasions open war has been declared on the latter, but in each case, either through want of proper organisation, or because of the greater power of the opposing party, the victory has been with the agent, and a flag of truce declared. Even now there are several very prominent artistes who prefer to transact their business themselves, and not through the medium of an agent, and small blame to them if they have the ability to do so. But for the rank and file the agent is a 'long felt want,' and must continue so to be until the days when the music halls shall be but things of the past, which, it is needless to add, is not yet.

Of these anti-agency societies the most deserving of notice was one started some twenty years ago, the offices of which were in Bow Street, Covent Garden. In connection with this a largely attended meeting was held at the Royal Music Hall, at which several of the leading lights of

the profession spoke in bitter words of the iniquities of the middlemen. They were denounced in virulent terms as men without conscience, men who took large sums from artistes and did no work for the money, men who were all that was base and sordid. But it was all a flash in the pan, all talk, talk, talk, and the anti-agency association lived but a very brief while, and died an unregretted death.

Another and an earlier attempt to stamp out the agents, at that time but few in number, was an equal 'frost,' to use a theatrical term. This organisation, the offices of which were at 24 York Road, and whose manager was Mr Walter Burnot, the song writer, lasted but eighteen months. The most curious portion of the programme put forward by the promoters of this venture was, that while they held the agent and his doings in abhorrence, yet they were prepared to procure engagements for those artistes who supported them, and to charge them commission at precisely the same rate as those middlemen they were endeavouring to abolish. Yet another organisation started in 1870 with objects akin to those already mentioned bore the high-sounding title of 'The Music Hall Artistes' Association and Club.' Their offices were over Clarkson's wig shop in Wellington Street, but the affair only lasted for a brief two years. One of the features of this association was that it started its own journal, which was

edited by Charles Coborn, and another of its characteristics was that it charged a commission of only two and a half per cent. to the artistes who were members of the society.

That the agents have devoted themselves with energy and intelligence to music-hall matters, and have been a mighty factor in gaining for artistes the enormous salaries that they at the present time enjoy is an undoubted fact. Much has been said, and much more written, in abuse of these professional middlemen. No doubt many of them study their own personal interests at the sacrifice of their clients', but, on the other hand, it is only fair and just to state that they should not all be tarred with the same brush, and that the artistes owe them no small debt, and one not easily repaid, for the benefits received at their hands. As the music halls increase in popularity, and the variety theatres are more and more patronised, so will the rise of the agents continue and their number multiply.

CHAPTER IX

THE MUSIC-HALL PRESS

Rise and Growth of Music-Hall Journalism—The *Era*—Beer and *P*olitics—Charles Hibble and the 'Sheridan Knowles'—Development of the *Era* as a Theatrical and Variety Organ—The *Magnet*—Mr W. Fraser—The *London Entr'acte*—'W. H. C.'—Albert Bryant—The *Music Hall Critic and Programme of Amusements*—The *Artiste*—The *Music Hall Gazette*—The *Prompter*—C. D. Stuart—Alec Nelson—The *Music Hall*—W. McWilliam—Frank Allport—The 'Leaf'—The *Encore*—Its Chequered Career—Charles Douglas Stuart—Cecil Howard—'Will o' the Wisp'—Will Dodds—The *Stage*—The Periodical Press and the Halls—Future of Music-Hall Journalism.

In these days of professional journals, class journals and trade journals, when 'the baker, the butcher, and the candlestick-maker,' not to mention the lady who condescends for a consideration 'to wash our linen and iron it too,' have all special journalistic organs of their own, it would be surprising, indeed, if the variety world were not equally well represented in the periodical press. As a matter of fact, it has to-day no less than three widely circulating journals, specially and exclusively devoted to its interests—as well as their own. The story of the rise and growth of this

division of the music-hall world is not altogether devoid of interest, and the writers have endeavoured to record it in the following pages without fear or favour, 'setting down nought in malice and nought extenuating.'

With the gradual development of the music hall, then, came also in the course of time its own representative press. But, as in other matters appertaining to the variety world, this was brought about by easy, progressive stages.

Before the year 1850, though there were numerous but ephemeral journals devoted to the drama, yet none of them referred, except occasionally in patronising terms, to the saloons. The latter were at that period not worthy, it would seem, of more than cursory notice. But the time of the importance of their successor, the music hall, was approaching.

The first newspaper with which we have to deal as coming under the head of this chapter is the *Era*, which came into existence in the year 1838. But it must not be thought that this journal commenced as an exclusive organ of even the theatre. It was published on Sunday, had two editions, the town and the country, and was an ordinary general newspaper, dealing in its columns with matters political, matters relating to the licensed victuallers' body, which it represented, matters of all manners of sport and, to a limited extent, matters of theatrical interest. Mr Charles Hibble

was one of the earliest managers of the *Era*. He was parliamentary agent for the Licensed Victuallers, and proprietor at the same time of the 'Sheridan Knowles' tavern in Brydges Street, Covent Garden, a famous resort at that day for men about town, literary and sporting gents and others. Here 'Vates,' the racing prophet, Mr Bailey and other members of the staff were accustomed to foregather and discuss affairs over steaming glasses of punch after the manner dear to the hearts of Bohemian journalists of half a century ago. To return to the journal itself, however, slowly and by degrees its advertisements became more and more dramatic and musical—not to say music hall—in tone, and in his wisdom the editor began to give more space to recording notices of plays produced at the chief theatres at that time in existence in the metropolis. A new departure was later on introduced, viz., reports from such leading cities as Liverpool, Manchester, and so forth, which, in addition to recording news of theatrical interest, referred briefly to any important feature in the programmes given at the saloons. Still later, in looking through the pages of the *Era*, one comes across a footnote, or a small paragraph, which deals with some event which has occurred or is about to occur in some saloon or in a certain concert-room. Time, we have often been told, works wonders, and as in other instances, so in the subject under consideration. These little footnotes

developed into extended accounts of the music-hall programmes of the time, with numerous jottings and gleanings from the variety world of that day. It had become apparent at last to those editing the paper, that the music hall was a growing and popular institution, in the affairs of which the public had begun to exhibit more than passing interest.

The honour of being the pioneer of the professional penny music-hall press belongs to the *Magnet*, a paper first published in September 1866. Its office was at Talbot Yard, Leeds, and its editor ever since the first number up to the present time has been Mr W. Fraser. When first published, it consisted of four pages, foolscap size, but in 1870 was enlarged to four pages demy folio; two years after it was again improved and altered to eight pages of the same size, and in this form it remained until the end of its twenty-fifth year of publication, when it was once again enlarged, this time to its present size. Its principal feature throughout its existence has been a 'Professional Directory' of the variety halls in the United Kingdom, and the artistes engaged thereat for the current week. It is now in its twenty-ninth year of publication, and has a large circulation, almost entirely confined to the provinces. These two journals remained without a rival until, in January 1870, a newspaper was started, called the *London Entr'acte*, its sub-title being 'The Illustrated Theatrical and Musical Critic and Advertiser. A consulting paper for all amusements.' Its weekly cir-

culation was stated to be 20,000. In its twenty-seventh issue we find the names in its advertising columns of Mr Herbert Campbell, Mr 'Jolly' Nash, Mr Victor Liston, Mr Gus Linton, the Great McLagan, the Onzalas, Liskard, Walter Laburnum, and others. These were what is now termed 'card advertisements.' Among the agents were Parravicini, Mr A. Maynard, Mr John Lauri, Mr Charles Roberts, and Messrs Bushfield & Company.

One of the features of the paper was a sketch of some celebrated performer, or someone well-known in music-hall circles, which was accompanied with a few brief remarks concerning the subject of the picture. For some time these sketches were signed 'W. H. C.,' but after the first few numbers there appears the name of Mr Alfred Bryan, a gentleman who has been connected with the paper right up to the present day. The first editor was Mr Samuel Albert Barrow, but he resigned his post in May 1870. Another feature of this new departure in journalism was the insertion, upon the page facing the sketch, of the programme given at a certain hall, the paper being then sold in the halls as a programme, a practice which has continued in vogue up to the present time, and on which a great portion of the circulation of the paper is based. The proprietor of the *London Entr'acte* was Mr H. W. Foster, who afterwards sold it to Mr W. H. Coombes, the

present proprietor, who has for many years had as his lieutenant Mr Barber.

On the 20th of June 1870, another journal saw the light of day. It was christened the *Music Hall Critic and Programme of Amusements.* They were evidently fond of lengthy titles in those days. The imprint showed that it was printed by Ralph Augustus Harrison at the offices, 7 Piazza, Covent Garden. This journal also gave sketches of prominent professionals, with interesting accounts of their lives, and, like the *London Entr'acte*, it published programmes in the centre of the paper, opposite the sketches. Among other artistes, interviews with whom appeared in this paper (or rather what did justice for interviews, which had not yet come into vogue in English journalism), were Vance, Harry Liston, Charles Roberts and Miss Wreghitt. In opposition to the rhythmical effusion of its rival this paper also possessed a tame and harmless poet in 'Little Johnny Horner,' and by his verses it is seen that such things as matinées on Saturdays at the Oxford and Royal were, just as they are now, the meeting places for professionals. Sad to relate, this bright little paper only ran for a few weeks—seven numbers in all—and on the 1st of August it expired, leaving the *Era*, the *Magnet* and the *London Entr'acte* in the field to compete one against the other.

For a number of years after this no paper dealing

solely with the music-hall profession was started —none, that is to say, worthy of recording—until 1887, when a promising little journal was born, entitled the *Artiste*. The first number was issued on January 1st of that year, and was printed and published by Read, Brookes & Company, of 25 and 26 Newberry Street, Aldersgate Street, for the proprietor, Mr James Deacon, at 164 Strand. Mr Deacon was at the time connected with Deacon's Music Hall, Clerkenwell. The principal feature of this brightly-written journal was that it contained two wood block pictures each week, but despite the large amount of support it received from all sections of the profession, it was doomed to a short existence, and, after appearing for eighteen weeks, expired, to the regret of many who believed in the principles of competition. At the commencement of this same year a paper was started which was named the *Music Hall Gazette*, published in John Street, Clerkenwell, but though it had as members of its staff several clever journalists, the day of a paper of its class had not yet arrived, and it lasted but a very brief while.

The failure of these ventures made enterprising people shy of endeavouring to establish a music-hall paper in antagonism to those then in existence, and it was not until February 1889 that another was issued to the public. This was christened the *Music Hall*—a good title—and was founded

by Mr W. McWilliam, a journalist connected with the cycling world. A week later another appeared in the field called the *Prompter*, which had a very short but a merry life. This was owned by Mr Charles Douglas Stuart, and was very largely supported by the best artistes, proprietors and agents, but fate was against it, and owing to the failure of a partner whom the owner entered into an arrangement with, the latter sold it, after it had run for eight weeks, to a gentleman who continued it for one issue more and then it died. Perhaps this paper was the most ambitious attempt to provide the profession with a journal such as it deserves that has yet been essayed. It was profusely illustrated with sketches of artistes, and was contributed to by such well-known writers as Dr Aveling (Alec Nelson) and many others. It also circulated as a programme in several of the principal London halls.

Its rival, the *Music Hall*, continued to hold its sway, thanks to the energy of its editor and proprietor, who, in spite of a certain lack of the all-necessary money, was so persevering and determined that eventually he won the day. During the perilous and early times of this paper, Mr McWilliam had as partners, each for a short while, Mr Charles Coborn, Mr Sam Torr and Mr Tom Merry. The latter, during the time of his part ownership, contributed a series of coloured plates of artistes, which were given away with the paper.

The chief features of the *Music Hall* in its earlier years were the sketch it gave of some celebrity in the profession on its front page, and the light, chatty way in which its columns were written. In 1891, Mr McWilliam sold the paper to one of his contributors, Mr Frank Allport—better known to his readers as the 'Leaf'—under whose proprietorship it has since been, and who is now its editor and owner. He has been assisted in the literary work of the paper by Mr J. Barnes—familiarly known as 'Barney'—and under their management the journal has attained a large circulation all over the United Kingdom, and also abroad. Among its particular features at the present date are the alphabetical arrangement of the card advertisements, its list of music-hall stocks and shares, its monthly catalogue of new songs, and its presentation of prizes in competitions. It continued without any new rival worthy of mention until, on the 16th of December 1892, the youngest of all the music hall papers, the *Encore*, was born. Of course it had a special feature, which was the presenting its readers with a half-tone photograph of a well-known artiste. This idea, coupled with the style of the paper, modelled somewhat on the lines of the *Prompter*, was speedily supported by the profession, but lack of money again intervened, and for a long time the paper had a very chequered career, though, in spite of this, its sale was very large from the com-

mencement. Its editor and founder was Mr Charles Douglas Stuart, who was assisted for some time by Mr Edward Lawrance, and among its literary staff was Mr Cecil Howard, who conducted its theatrical columns, and Mr A. J. Park, who, under the pseudonym of 'Will o' the Wisp,' contributed a series of dramatic sketches entitled, 'Told by the Chairman,' which went through the first volume. Among the artistic *corps* was Mr Will Dodds, a clever black and white artist who had made a speciality of music hall work, and Mr Percy Hudson. After a change of proprietorship in December 1893, it was still edited by Mr Stuart, with Mr Fred Lacey as sub-editor. In June 1894, the paper, in consequence of its success, was enlarged, and in September of that year a new feature was introduced, in the shape of small photographic blocks, the size of a postage stamp, which were inserted in each card advertisement. In November '94, Mr T. Murray Ford, one of the proprietors, joined Mr Stuart as co-editor, and the former gentleman is continuing to direct the fortunes of the journal at the present time—Mr Charles Douglas Stuart's and Mr Fred Lacey's connection with the periodical in question having since ceased.

In the above *resumé* of the professional press mention has only been made of those papers mainly or principally dealing with the music-hall world. But it may be as well to record that, as

the variety theatres, as they are termed to-day, became more prominent and more popular, the general newspaper press began to devote a column or two to these establishments. The *Stage*, which at first confined itself purely to theatrical matters, felt the advisability of a small infusion of the variety element, and started a couple of columns, which it has since continued, the writer of them being Mr Francis Raphael. The *Topical Times* also, ever since it was first established in 1883, had devoted a column or more to music-hall matters. Among the writers of these notices have been Mr R. Barnard, Mr Willie Young, and Mr C. Douglas Stuart, who, on severing his connection with the paper, was succeeded by Mr W. E. Rose, a gentleman who still occupies the post of music-hall critic for this paper. The *Sporting Times*, *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, and nearly all the weekly press of a certain order have now a music-hall article chiefly devoted to criticising new performances, with sometimes a paragraph or so. Even some of the evening papers are now giving, once a week, jottings of professional news, and illustrated journals, such as the *Sketch* and *St Paul's*, have, in every week's issue, photographs of prominent artistes.

From the foregoing it is obvious that the music hall has developed into a powerful public institution, whose influence and importance as a factor in the social life of the people cannot be over-

estimated. If further proof of this be required, we have only to glance at the greatest of our dailies, wherein we find recorded notices of considerable length of every new production, every ballet of importance placed on the boards of our variety theatres. The time will come, indeed we believe it not to be far distant, when every daily journal will have its own special music-hall critic, and will give a special column of news dealing exclusively with music-hall affairs, such as the majority now allot to matters of theatrical interest.

The writers of these chronicles indeed venture to prophesy that the music-hall press, which may be said to be still comparatively young in years, will become in time still more influential in connection with the variety profession, for which it has been the means of securing in the past many advantages it would never otherwise have gained, and as the representative of which it will doubtless continue to maintain the high standard of usefulness it has attained at the present day.

CHAPTER X

THE GROWTH OF THE VARIETY PROFESSION

Rightly called a Profession—Clannish but not 'Clubbable'—The Scheme for a Music-Hall Club—Artistes Societies—Objects, Charity and Sociability—The Dramatic Equestrian and Musical Sick Fund—Date of Establishment—Music Hall Provident Society—First Meeting—Title of 'Sick Fund' added—Mr Dion Boucicault—A Successful Meeting—The Career of the Society since—Its Officers—The M. H. B. Fund—When started—Its Objects—How it is managed—Its Present and Past Officers—How it raises its Funds—The Annual Dinners, and the Chairmen—Music-Hall Sports—The Scanty Support received from the Profession—The Reasons therefor—The Rats—The Terriers, now a Friendly Society—The Stags—The J's—The Profession and Freemasonry—Proprietors of Entertainments Association—Its Objects and its Officers—Sir Blundell Maple's Proposal—The Lack of Unionism among the Profession—A Hope for the Future—But very much *in nubibus*.

As the variety stage increased in importance, so in the natural sequence of things the artistes who appeared thereon began to be regarded as the professors of a regular calling. It is only within recent years, however, that music-hall performers have had the right to class themselves as members of a recognised profession.

Artistes, taking them generally, may be clannish but they are certainly not 'clubbable,' as Dr

Johnson would say. This, no doubt, is partially due to the fact that their long, hard work each night makes them prefer the solitude and peacefulness of their own fireside to the luxurious comfort of the best club in all the wild world. The idea of a music-hall club is no new-fangled one, the matter has been repeatedly gone into, but in every instance the truth has been arrived at—sometimes after much bitter experience—that professionals will not support a club in whatsoever locality it may be situated, so that these well-meant efforts have all fallen to the ground. But though the profession has not, and for all we know or expect never will have, a club of its own in the more technical sense of the word, nevertheless a number of societies or associations have sprung up in its midst devoted specially and exclusively to its interests. The greater number of these societies have as their main object charity, and as additional aims the consolidation of their members into one united body for mutual protection, assistance and support.

The first of such bodies to take under its fold the music-hall profession was the Dramatic Equestrain and Musical Sick Fund. This was established in 1856, its secretary being Mr J. W. Anson, and its offices in Bow Street, Covent Garden. It remained in existence for a number of years, and in its day contrived to do a large amount of good in a quiet and unostentatious

manner. This institution continued without a rival for a period of over eleven years, when the Music Hall Provident Society, as it was then called (the addition of 'Sick Fund' been added in later years), was established on the 22d of August 1865. A meeting in furtherance of the proposed establishment of a society, the principal object of which should be that it would confine its operations to the music-hall profession exclusively, was held at Weston's, but the scheme does not appear to have developed with anything like lightning speed, for the first meeting of the Music Hall Sick Fund and Provident Society was not held till March 19th, 1867, when the late Mr Dion Boucicault was in the chair, and on which occasion no less than 200 guineas were subscribed by enthusiastic supporters of the idea By the rules of this society a member regularly contributing his shilling a week to the coffers of the fund is entitled to many benefits, not the least of which is a certain sum per week during illness, and in the event of death a specified amount is also handed to the widow or nearest relative of the defunct member.

This society, whose energetic secretary has been ever since the day of its start Mr G. W. Hunt, the at one time most popular song writer of the day, has its offices in the Waterloo Road. It continues to work in its sphere of usefulness in an unobtrusive manner, appealing to the sympathies of the general public only on the occasion of an annual

benefit in aid of its funds held every December at Collins's Music Hall, which on this occasion is granted free of all charge by the proprietor, a grand array of artistes both from the theatrical and the variety worlds contributing to the programme. The present president of the society is Mr Herbert Campbell, and among the committee are Messrs W. Bailey, 'Jolly' John Nash, James Fawn, Harry Randall, and other prominent lights in the music-hall world.

The next important professional society with which we have to deal is the Music Hall Benevolent Fund. This was started by Messrs Richard Warner and Charles Coborn in the year 1888. It begun in a very small way, but, like everything else connected with the variety stage, it followed Miss Topsy's example and 'growed.' The fund is purely benevolent and not a provident fund, relieving needy and deserving artistes with free grants. An annual subscription of one guinea is made for membership, and from this body is formed the general committee, the present chairman of which is Mr James Chappell, and the vice-chairman Mr Fred Law. There is also in connection with this society a relief committee who meet every Thursday to take particulars of applications for assistance. The hon. president of this fund is Sir Augustus Harris, the present president, election for which office is made yearly, being Mr J. W. Cragg, of the Cragg Troupe. A past

president, who has always exhibited much interest in the welfare of the fund, is Captain Purkiss, who is still a member of the committee. The trustees are, and have been for many years, Messrs G. A. Payne and Richard Warner. Mr J. L. Graydon is the treasurer and Mr Frank Hall, the veteran agent, song writer and manager, now worthily fills the position of secretary.

It is a regrettable fact that the profession is very lax in its support of the fund, and the guineas received from those artistes who are earning three and four thousand a year are very few and far between. But fortunately for the continuance of its useful existence, the fund derives a very considerable share of its revenue from the outside public. One of its modes of appealing to them is by a public dinner, at which some notable personage takes the chair, by which means is realised each year some £300 or more. There have been five of these dinners held, the first three taking place at the Holborn Restaurant, and the latter two at the Whitehall Rooms, Hotel Metropole. Sir Augustus Harris has kindly presided on two of these occasions, and Sir J. Renals twice, once when sheriff, and again during his tenure of office as Lord Mayor.

Another means of enriching the coffers of the fund has been the Annual Music Hall Sports, which have now been held for five years past. It should be mentioned in reference to the many

handsome prizes given to the fortunate winners at these modern Olympian games, that very nearly all are sent by friends of the fund, professionals and others connected with the music-hall world.

The scanty support accorded to this society, however, by the profession in a general sense is most perceptible at the general annual meeting held in September of each year, when a very meagre attendance is the rule. The reason for this lack of support from artistes is difficult to find. It is partially due, perhaps, to the fact that members of the profession individually disburse a considerable sum yearly in private charity, that they have their own societies, to which we shall shortly refer, and contribute to the needy through this medium. It may also, in some degree, be due to the prevalent idea that the managers and agents are too much interested in the work, and do not give the artistes a fair representation on the committee. But whatever the reason be, it is a melancholy fact that so rich and prosperous a profession should not be able to make its benevolent fund the flourishing institution which its aims and objects justify.

It has been said that the profession is unclubbable, but it is at the same time essentially sociable and convivial, and revels in gastronomic functions and social festivities, for the promotion of which it has formed itself into numerous little coteries of a friendly and convivial character.

The 'Rats' was the first, and may be said to be the principal of these somewhat curious institutions which have for their motto Charity and Sociability. They are proverbially generous, the members of this Society, and many's the 'pro' who has received aid and assistance in time of trouble from their wealthy funds. Among its members are many of the most prominent artistes in the profession. Its invitation balls at the 'Horns,' Kennington, where the society has its habit at are very enjoyable. In the summer time, being true river rodents, the members go on pleasant trips by launches up the Thames.

Another society of a similar nature is the Terriers' Association, which was founded in May 1890, and was for over twelve months limited to twenty-four active members. Since the restriction as to the number of members was removed, the society has proved most successful, so much so, that it became in 1894 necessary to register it under the Friendly Societies' Act. The funds of the T. A. are growing every day and are applicable to the benefit of members, who are entitled to a doctor's attendance and a certain sum a week when ill, assistance when out of employment, and an allowance to the widow at death. The number of members is close upon two hundred, and the headquarters and place of meeting on Sunday evenings is 'The Three Stags,' Kennington Road. Before the Terriers were registered they did a great deal of charitable

work outside their own association, but since that time, though they do what is in their power, they are bound to devote themselves to benefiting their own members. Mr J. H. Stokes is the present secretary of the Terriers. They hold annually a very successful public fancy dress ball in February at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen Street, which is attended in large numbers by the members of the profession.

A society calling itself the 'Stags' was founded in 1892, but it has since either ceased to exist or else has become merged into one of the larger societies.

Quite a young society yet is the J's, which has already well justified its existence, and has a large number of prominent professionals as members. The J's devote a lot of attention to out-door sport, and delight in baseball, cricket and football. Those who belong to this 'Grand Order' are for the most part young performers of an athletic turn of mind. A gentleman who ever since its birth has acted as a patron, and taken a warm and kindly interest in the society's welfare, is Mr W. Grimes, at whose hostelry, the 'New Crown and Cushion,' in the Westminster Bridge Road, which by the way is a favourite house of call for professionals, the meetings are held. The members cannot be designated as 'jays,' as the slang phraselogy has it, except in name; on the contrary, they are very wide awake,

and while knowing full well how to best assist a friend when in distress, they also are fully cognisant of the most enjoyable means of making life happy, as any visitor at their summer outings or one of their jovial suppers can testify. The society, although at first formed on social lines, has rapidly developed several very useful additional features, notably that of providing an allowance to members unable to follow their profession through sickness or accident, and of assisting members in distress or difficulty. The 'Grand Order of J's' now numbers close on seventy members, many of whom are well known in the world of sport and usually carry off a large number of prizes at the Annual Variety Sports, besides which its well-known baseball team stands in high esteem, having in '94 secured the 'Knowles Trophy' absolutely, and the 'Spalding Cup' for the first time. It is interesting to note the lively interest taken by this society in all matters connected with the profession, and it was the first to take a leading part in the agitation over the Empire licence, sending deputations and petitions in support of the management of the halls. A rather interesting feature of the society is that the members provide out of their number an orchestra which performs, and with great ability too, at music-hall charitable benefits, and which also entertains fellow 'J's' at divers times. Among the best known members of this

Order are the Boisset and Jee Troupes, the Brothers Horn, Charlie Chapman, Stebb and Trepp, Fred Marchant (late stage manager at the Oxford), Edward Nye and numerous others. The present secretary of the society is Mr S. J. Wenham.

Though only of recent date yet a number of music-hall professionals are being initiated into the rites and ceremonies of Freemasonry, and there is now a lodge known as the Pimlico Lodge where the majority of brothers are in some way connected with the music-hall world. To this many of the best agents belong, and also some proprietors and managers.

Though scarcely touching upon the rise of the music-hall profession, yet it is certainly one of the signs of the times, and demonstrates very forcibly the importance of the variety stage, that the proprietors of halls have combined together and have established a society of their own which is called The Proprietors of Entertainments Association. The present president is Mr J. H. Jennings. Mr J. L. Graydon is the honorary secretary, and the solicitor especially engaged to protect the interests of members is Mr W. H. Rutland. The only agent who is permitted to be present when in these solemn conclaves matters of great moment are under discussion is Mr Richard Warner of the firm of Warner & Company.

But it should here be writ down that by no

means all managers belong to the association, a fact that became evident when a resolution was recently put forward to the members as to whether or not they should support the proposal of Sir Blundell Maple, who had written a letter to the daily press advocating that, instead of the L.C.C. being allowed to give or take away licences, the matter should be in the hands of a specially appointed number of magistrates. The members of the Proprietors of Entertainments Association warmly supported this resolution, and the fact of their having done so leaked out in the papers. Immediately on reading this, Mr Newson-Smith, on behalf of the Directors of the London Pavilion, Tivoli and Oxford, caused a statement to be circulated saying that on their part they would support the retention of the London County Council as a licensing authority.

Here is further proof, if it be wanting, that whatever grade of the profession one may take, in all alike is there to be found that sad want of unanimity, that lack of union, which has in so many ways tended to the non-realisation of many projects and schemes which were all for the ultimate benefit of the profession as a whole. It may be that, in the course of time, this may be altered, and artistes may combine to the elevation and improvement of their common cause. It has been growing by gradual but not undefinable degrees this music-hall profession, but it is not likely ever

to make any substantial progress in fraternal consolidation or social status until petty jealousies are eradicated and *esprit de corps* better appreciated.

CHAPTER XI

MUSIC-HALL BARDS AND THEIR LYRICS

Fletcher of Saltoun—Ballad Writers and Ballad *Writers*—The Music-Hall Lyric — Its Peculiar Claims — Music-Hall Bards—Tom Hudson—Blewitt—'The Little, Grey, Fat Man'—John Labern—Invidious Comparisions—'Vilikins and his Dinah'—'The Ratcatcher's Daughter'—Robert Glindon—'The Literary Dustman'—Harry Sydney—Harry Clifton—'Paddle Your Own Canoe'—'Pulling Hard Against the Stream'—'Polly Perkins'—Henry S. Leigh—Victor Liston and 'Shabby Genteel'—Frank Hall—'In the Strand'—E. V. Page—G. W. Hunt—His 'Jingo' Song—Its Effect—The Paris *Figaro*—George Ware—'The Whole Hog or None'—Fred Gilbert—'The Man who Broke the Bank'—Modern Bards—Richard Morton and 'Ta-ra-ra-bom-de-ay'—Phenomenal Success of the latter—J. P. Harrington—Felix M'Glennon—J. Tabrar—Other Authors—Popular Composers—Song Publishers—Status of Song Writers—Old Prices and New—Custom of the Profession.

FLETCHER of Saltoun is accredited with an observation anent the making of a people's laws and the making of a people's ballads, which has become historic. Fletcher, however, lived and died before the era of the music hall, or the preference which he is alleged to have expressed for the composition of popular lyrics to the manufacture of national statutes might have undergone considerable modification. Doubtless, the peculiar variety of ballad

which this ancient writer had in contemplation when he delivered himself of the reflection which is attributed to him, was that to which belong such metrical effusions as appear in Bishop Percy's interesting anthology—the Battle of Chevy Chase, the romances of Robin Hood, and the various domestic and patriotic lays which moved the hearts of the people in the days of wandering bards and local laureates, when the barrel organ and the pianoforte were not, and the palace of variety had yet to appear. The claims of the music-hall lyric, however, to rank among the legitimate ballads of the people are incontestable. It is the genuine successor of the ancient national lays before alluded to, and reflects with unerring fidelity the social and political sentiments and aspirations of the great proletariat, of whose manners, customs and feelings it may fairly be regarded as the direct lyrical expression. In this respect, and as presenting in some degree 'an abstract and brief chronicle' of the times, the songs of the music hall are well worthy of the attention of the student of social history, while, to the general reader, the subject should possess special attraction. In any case, the story of the rise and progress of the English variety stage would hardly be complete without some account of its own particular bards, and the most popular of their lyrics. In this chapter, therefore, it is proposed to review, in more or less detail, the work of those

song writers who have left their mark in the annals of the halls, and whose effusions, topical, amatory, bacchanalian, or political, still echo faintly along the corridors of Time.

Of Tom Hudson, whose name is among the first to suggest itself in this connection, mention has already been made in an earlier chapter. For literary finish and genuine humour, he has seldom if ever been excelled by modern bards, and his compositions remain models of their kind. Hudson had an excellent collaborator in the person of Blewitt, the composer, who was himself the author of several admirable ditties which had a rare vogue in the days of the song and supper-rooms, and one or two of which have since passed into classics. One of Blewitt's most popular compositions was 'The Little, Grey, Fat Man.' This song, unlike so many others of the period to which it belongs, is devoid of the slightest trace of vulgarity, while it is animated from beginning to end by the drollest of humour. The following verse may be taken as a fair sample of the others:—

> 'There's a little man dressed all in grey,
> He lives in the city, and he's always gay;
> He's round as an apple, plump as a pear,
> He has not a shilling, nor has he a care.
> Yet he laughs and he sings ah! ah! ah!
> That merry, little, fat, grey man.'

John Labern was a prolific writer of songs at the time when Cowell, Sharp and Ross were the

rage of the town, and supplied each of these singers with numerous witty compositions. He was a clever and versatile author, but much of his work was marred by the coarseness of his language and allusions.

There is a constant charge of vulgarity and literary weakness brought against the writers of music-hall songs of to-day, and invidious comparisions in these respects are constantly being drawn between the latter and those of the period just alluded to. Yet many of the songs popularised by Cowell and his school would scarcely be tolerated in any West End hall to-day. 'Vilikins and his Dinah' tickled the ears of an older generation, but a modern music-hall audience would hardly go into raptures over such sorry doggerel as the following :—

'As Dinah vas valking
In the garden vun day,
Her papa came up to her
And thus he did say,—
"Go, dress yourself, Dinah,
In gor-ge-ous array,
And I'll get you a husband
Both vally-ant and gay,"
Singing too-ral-loo,' etc.

Or take the following lines from another well-known ditty of the period :—

'His donkey cocked his ears and brayed,
Folks couldn't tell what he was arter,
To hear a lily-white sandman cry,
"Do you want any rat-catcher's daughter?'"

There were nevertheless capable song writers enough in the fifties and sixties, and of these Robert Glindon the vocalist was probably one of the best.

A very fair idea of Glindon's capacity as a lyric author may be gleaned from the opening verse of one of his principal efforts 'The Literary Dustman,' which will convey to the reader at the same time some notion of the style of song in vogue about forty years ago.

'Some folks may boast of sense, egad!
Vot holds a lofty station;
But, tho' a Dustman, I have had
A liberal hedication.
And tho' I never vent to school,
Like many of my betters,
A turnpike man vot varn't no fool,
He larnt me all my letters.
They calls me Adam Bell, 'tis clear,
As Adam vos the fust man—
And by a co-in-cide-ance queer,
Vy, I'm the fust of Dustmen,
Vy, I'm the fust of Dustmen!'

The advent of the music hall proper, with the increase in the number of popular singers which followed, brought to the fore a fresh army of song writers, among whom two authors, Harry Sydney and Harry Clifton, long held conspicuous positions. The former, who was a comic vocalist as well as author and composer, will be best remembered by his songs, 'In a Quiet Sort of Way,' and 'A Rolling Stone gathers no Moss.' During his professional

career Mr Sydney was associated with the first Oxford Music Hall, and with Sam Collins's during the proprietorship of Mr and Mrs Watts, while still later he was manager of the Philharmonic. After quitting the Philharmonic, Sydney fulfilled numerous starring engagements in the provinces, and was a great favourite at Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool. He died at Holloway on the 16th of June 1870, at the age of forty-five, after a short illness of Bright's disease.

Harry Clifton was an author whose songs had almost as much vogue in the drawing-room as on the variety stage. They were sentimental in tone, and generally gave expression to some homely or inspiriting motto, which made them very popular with audiences of every class.

'Paddle Your Own Canoe' was a song with a theme eminently calculated to awaken the sympathies of the average Britisher. There is a good, honest sentiment pervading the following lines, which is very characteristic of this song writer's work :—

> 'Then love your neighbour as yourself,
> As the world you go travelling through,
> And never sit down with a tear or a frown,
> But paddle your own canoe.'

Take another of Clifton's motto songs, 'Pulling Hard Against the Stream,' and you will find the same spirit of cheerful *camarderie* breathing in every line :—

'Do your best for one another,
Making life a pleasant dream,
Help a worn and weary brother
Pulling hard against the stream.'

'Work, Boys, Work, and be Contented,' is another effusion in a similar vein. In his lighter moods Clifton was equally happy in the selection and treatment of his theme, and could turn out some very amusing lyrics. Most patrons of the halls whose recollections extend back to the later sixties will be able to recall such ditties as 'The Calico Printer's Clerk,' or 'Polly Perkins of Paddington Green,' the latter was a very popular ditty in its day, and the simple refrain,—

'She promised she would marry me
Upon the first of May;
But she left me with a bunch of watercreases,'

was chaunted for months all over the town.

Harry Clifton was a native of Hoddesden, in Herefordshire, and was educated at Cheshunt. Left an orphan at an early age, he entered the concert-room profession, and subsequently migrated to the halls, where he was highly successful as a comic and motto vocalist. He died at his residence at Shepherd's Bush on the 15th of July 1872, after a brief illness. He was buried on the 18th of the same month in the cemetery at Kensal Green.

The late Mr Henry S. Leigh, of *Punch*, one of the most versatile writers then on the staff of the London *Charivari*, did not disdain to occasionally supply the popular music-hall artistes of his day

with flowing lyrics, and deserves some mention in this place. One of Mr Leigh's most successful essays as a writer of music-hall songs was 'Shabby Genteel,' a ditty popularised by Mr Victor Liston, a very clever character vocalist. Who has not met the unfortunate creature who has seen better days, and, pinched with poverty, plaintively confesses,—

'Too proud to beg, too honest to steal,
I know what it is to be wanting a meal;
My tatters and rags I try to conceal,
I'm one of the Shabby Genteel?'

Mr Herbert Stewart, better known in music-hall circles as Frank Hall, has been for many years past a prolific writer of songs of the buffo order. His most popular ditty, perhaps, was 'In the Strand,' which the 'inimitable' Mackney has been singing any night these thirty years. The following verse from this old song will probably awaken many interesting associations in the mind of the reader. It is a fair specimen of Mr Hall's ability as a song writer, and of a class of song very common some decades ago:—

'For the last few weeks I've been a-dodging
A girl I know that's got a lodging
In the Strand.
The first thing that put my heart in a flutter
Was her Balmoral boot, as she crossed the gutter
In the Strand.
I wish I was with Nancy,
In a second floor for ever more
I'd live and die with Nancy
In the Strand, in the Strand, in the Strand.'

Mr Frank Hall was born in 1838, and received a first-class education at the Royal Naval College. He was articled to an architect, but speedily abandoned architecture for the stage. After some provincial touring he obtained an engagement at the Adelphi Theatre through the influence of his friend, the late Mr Leigh Murray. Mr Hall was the original Father Walter in *The Bells* when Mr Irving made his first hit in his remarkable impersonation of Matthias in that play. Some years later Mr Hall was manager at the Alhambra, where he produced several successful comic operas. Later on, he was for a short period in management at the Philharmonic, Islington, which he left to return to the Alhambra. Mr Hall is the present secretary of the Music Hall Benevolent Fund, but still finds time to indulge in his literary and artistic avocations.

Another versatile song writer is Mr E. V. Page, the present general manager of the Royal Cambridge, who in his time has been the author of many popular successes, among others, the late Nelly Power's 'La-di-da,' James Fawn's 'Only One,' and Jenny Hill's ''Arry,' which was one of that talented comedienne's greatest hits. Mr Page's connection with the variety world has been long and varied. Until the year 1868 he was engaged in city affairs, but, like many others before him, he left the centres of commerce to try his fortune on the music-hall stage. Under the auspices of the late Ambrose Maynard he held various engage-

ments at the old Philharmonic, Gatti's, Bedford, the Sun, and similar establishments. In 1871, soon after his marriage, he again returned to commercial pursuit, occupying his spare time in the compositions of innumerable ditties. Again, in 1882, he went back to the music-hall profession, and after a short sojourn at the Royal under Captain Purkiss, he joined forces with Mr William Riley at the Cambridge, where he has occupied an important and onerous position ever since.

Another veteran song writer is Mr G. W. Hunt, whose lyrical efforts might be enumerated by the score. Among Mr Hunt's principal successes may be mentioned 'Old Brown's Daughter,' 'Down Among the Coals,' and 'Billy Johnson's Ball,' all of which ditties will be familiar to music-hall patrons of a generation ago. Mr Hunt's most popular song, however, was his celebrated Jingo ditty, by means of which the great Macdermott stirred the patriotism of the people to the very depths, and brought the anti-Russian sentiment of the nation up to bubbling point. John Bull was in his most warlike mood at the time, and his smouldering feelings found free expression in the lines,—

> 'We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo if we do,
> We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too.
> We've fought the Bear before,
> And while Britons shall be true
> The Russians shall not have Constantinople.'

The sensation created by this song at the time was something remarkable. It was sung at political and social gatherings throughout the land, and its notoriety extended beyond the Channel, where it was reprinted as a special supplement, with the music, by the Paris *Figaro*.

George Ware, the agent, who in his time has played many parts, once held a conspicuous position among music-hall song writers. In this capacity he is likely to be best remembered as the author of 'The Whole Hog or None,' a song popularised by Mr E. W. Mackney, who has been singing it in every town in the United Kingdom for many years past. The first verse of this familiar ditty may be taken as a fair specimen of Mr Ware's quality.

'Oh, white folks, I have just come down
To ax you how you do?
And to tell you all the sights I've seen
And all de facts dat's new.
From east to west, from north to south
I've picked up lots of fun,
So now I'm here, I'm bound to go
The whole hog or none.
Oh, lor, gals, I wish I'd lots of money;
Charlestown is a mighty place,
The folks they are so funny,
And they all are bound to go the whole hog or none!'

Mr Fred Gilbert, who as a child appeared at the Adelphi Theatre when the late Paul Bedford was the leading comedian at that house, and was afterwards a chorister at Evans's celebrated

rooms, has been the author of many popular ditties, his most recent success being 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo.' Mr Gilbert also wrote 'Charlie Dilke' for Mr George Macdermott, as well as several other topical and political skits for the same singer.

Among modern music-hall bards Mr Richard Morton has won for himself a position of great prominence. He wields a prolific and facile pen, and has scored numerous successes. It was as the author of the English version of the eternal 'Ta-ra ra-boom-de-ay' that Mr Morton first sprang into popularity, but the position he acquired in connection with the authorship of that phenomenal song he has well maintained by bright and clever work ever since. Of the Ta-ra-ra ditty, with its sensational dance and its maddening refrain, there is nothing new to be said. Miss Lottie Collins, who brought the original version and melody over from America, sang the song for over two years, and in conjunction with the itinerant musicians from Italy, or rather Hatton Garden, nearly contrived to drive the peaceable inhabitants of Great Britain completely crazy.

Another clever young song writer who for the past ten years or more has been supplying the principal stars with brilliant and original ditties, sketches and monologues, is Mr J. P. Harrington, whose work is characterised by more than the usual amount of literary ability and originality

displayed in the majority of music-hall songs. To the same category of writers belongs Mr Felix M'Glennon, the author of 'That is Love,' a really charming lyric, sung by Miss Marie Loftus, and 'The Ship I Love,' a sentimental nautical ditty, admirably rendered by Mr Tom Costello, one of the foremost character vocalists the modern variety stage possesses. Other song writers of distinction calling for mention in this connection are Mr Joseph Tabrar, Mr Fred Bowyer, Mr H. C. Hudson, Mr Norton Atkins, Mr E. W. Rogers, Mr Harry Dacre, the author of 'Daisy Bell,' Mr Alfred J. Morris, a lyric writer of conspicuous ability, and Mr Carl Howard, one of the youngest members of the same fraternity who is fast rising into prominence.

Closely allied to the song writers, are the composers, although many authors combine the two functions, Mr Joseph Tabrar, Mr Felix M'Glennon and Mr Harry Dacre belong to the latter class.

Among music-hall composers proper must be mentioned the late Herr Ferdinand Joughmann, who very properly heads the list, and the late Mr A. E. Durandeau. Mr Orlando Powell and Mr Fred Epplett are also very able representatives of the same class. One of the most popular music-hall composers of the day is Mr George Le Brunn, who produces with marvellous facility so many of the original and tuneful melodies which delight modern music-hall audiences.

A young composer, too, who is fast making headway in his profession, is Mr George Stratton, whose compositions are marked by much gracefulness and power.

It is a striking proof of the popularity of music-hall ditties, if, indeed, any proof were needed, that at least two large publishing houses are exclusively devoted to their printing and publication. Of these publishers, the firm of Charles Sheard & Company is one of the oldest, and its catalogues contain many of the choicest *répertoires* of the old time favourites, besides those of a large number of popular variety artistes of the present day. Messrs Francis, Day & Hunter, which is an offshoot of the celebrated Mohawk Minstrels, is another well known firm closely identified with the music-hall publishing trade. At one time Messrs Hopwood & Crew, the well known publishers of New Bond Street, and Messrs D'Alcorn did a great deal of business in this line, but the trade has now passed into the hands mainly of the two first-named establishments, although Messrs Reynolds and Messrs Howard also publish a considerable number of songs of this description.

Within recent years the status of both author and composer has been considerably improved. At one time, the highest price paid for a song was ten shillings. Charles Sloman, a prolific song writer in his time, states that his price for songs was the last-mentioned sum, while he was prepared

to supply poems at the rate of five shillings for twenty lines, and threepence a line after. Now-a-days, a good song writer receives from one to five pounds for the singing rights alone of his work, while the royalties on the publishing, when he does not sell the song to the publishers outright, may reach to a very big amount. It is a usual custom in the profession for the singer, the author and the composer, to share all sums obtained from publication, which, considering how much, in these cases, of the popularity of a song depends upon the singer, appears to be a very equitable arrangement.

CHAPTER XII

CHAIRMEN, PAST AND PRESENT

The 'Chair'—Antiquity of the Office—Its Former Glories—The 'Old Guard'—Celebrities of the Past—Rhodes—Caulfield—A Theatrical Family—Harry Fox—Gus Leach—Tom Norris—Fred Williams—Sam Sutton—W. B. Fair—Ralph Edgar—George Thurgood—'Baron' Courtney—Russell Grover—Harry Cavendish—Harry Vernon—The Lost Hammer—Actor—Vocalist—Chairman—Showman—Tom Tinsley—'Young John Bull'—Harry Evans—Fred Law—Barry—His sad End.

THERE have been many drastic changes wrought in music halls within the last decade, not the least marked, and, perhaps, not the least regrettable of which has been the disappearance of the ancient office of chairman. Time was when this functionary held a position of almost unlimited potency and influence, and, seated at the head of his own particular table, surrounded by an admiring group of friends and cronies, and encircled in curling wreaths of smoke—like so much fragrant incense—swayed the destinies of the establishment over which he presided, and of the *genius loci* of which he was a sort of living embodiment. But, Ichabod! his glory has departed! The devastating finger of Time has been laid upon his throne, and

the merry rap of his hammer resounds no more. His cheery presence and his peculiar insignia of office have vanished into the *ewigkeit*. A few members of the old guard, it is true, still linger at their post, and manage to keep green the convivial memories of the past, but they are the scattered survivals of a race which is rapidly departing, and threatens to become soon as extinct as the very dodo. Where have they gone to, those jovial, ever-green sons of Bacchus and Apollo, whose festive humour, like their own ebullient nature, seemed to renew itself nightly, and never grow dimmer? Echo, alas! answers where? And perhaps on the whole it would neither be kindly nor discreet to inquire further.

John Rhodes, of the old Coal Hole, may fairly be regarded as the father of this ancient and illustrious race. He was a typical chairman, and few knew better how to wield the hammer than he. His influence at the table was magnetic, and his presence banished dull care in a flash. Like Falstaff, he was the cause of humour in others, and he could make the merry jest go round until the flight of time was unnoticed, and the company neither cared nor dared to 'look at the clock.' John Caulfield, too, who died on the 24th of April 1865, was another typical chairman. Brisk and cheery in manner, he possessed a fund of interesting anecdote, and was, moreover, a man of culture and ability. He was for some years an actor at

the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, under Buckstone's management, and wrote several excellent songs. His wife, whose professional name was Miss Mattley, and his daughter, known on the stage as Lennox Grey, were both actresses of talent. The latter appeared at the Olympic during Robson and Emden's *régime*. Mr and Mrs Caulfield came to London about 1838, and made their first appearance at the City of London Theatre during Osbaldiston's lesseeship. Caulfield was for some time chairman at the Dr Johnson Concert-Room, and afterwards at the Oxford and Canterbury and Weston's Music Halls.

Harry Fox, for many years associated with the fortunes of the old Mogul, was another chairman of the old school. His glowing countenace shone like a friendly beacon through the clouds of tobacco smoke which curled round his chair, and his rich, mellow voice was suggestive of unlimited 'mountain dew.' He could sing a comic song with excellent effect, and was great in rustic ditties. Mr Gus Leach also filled the chair here for a number of years after parting with the Foresters', of which he was for some time proprietor. He is at the present time owner of an admirably conducted establishment at Hoxton, managed by his son. The present chairman at the Middlesex is Mr R. D. Lincoln, a gentleman who fulfils the arduous and exacting duties of his office with conspicuous ability.

Visitors to the Winchester in the sixties will recollect old Tom Norris, who for a long period was chairman at this establishment. Norris used to sit on a chair placed on the stage. A curtain was drawn round him, which he could withdraw when necessary. But he usually sat enthroned and screened like some precious statue of Buddha. At Deacon's, Mr Fred Williams, the excellent sketch artiste, filled the chair for a couple of years, and, according to his own account, sowed the seeds of the chronic rheumatism from which he still suffers. At this establishment Mr Sam Sutton was chairman—and a good chairman too—for a period extending over twelve years. He at present fills a similar position at the Marylebone. Mr Sutton is one of those old music-hall hands who has learnt the alphabet of the variety stage from Alpha to Omega. Early in the seventies he was chairman at the Swiss Cottage, a sort of free-and-easy situated close to Victoria Park, where Charles Coborn made his start singing songs *à la* Arthur Lloyd. At this period Harry Rickards, who now owns one of the principal halls in Sydney, was proprietor, or part proprietor, of this establishment. After quitting the Swiss Cottage, where he had remained for about two years, Sutton started as a descriptive and characteristic vocalist at the Three Colts, a regular music hall, situated nearly opposite the first-named house. Among other well-known artistes who appeared at this hall from

time to time may be mentioned George Leybourne, Charles Coborn, Harry Anderson and Fred Lay, whose father-in-law was proprietor of this hall for a short time. Mr Sutton's great effort was a fire scena, which was put on with special scenery at the Garrick Theatre, and was also staged at Astley's, Sadlers' Wells, and the Grecian. This popular vocalist also filled the chair at the Regent Music Hall in the Mile End Road, when Richards was proprietor, and occupied a similar position at the Regent Music Hall at Westminster, during the proprietorship of Kesterton, a gentleman who was at the same time actively engaged in the pickling business. Mr W. B. Fair, of 'Tommy Make Room for Your Uncle' notoriety, filled the chair at the Marylebone for several years under the late Mr Botting, and was also for a couple of years manager and chairman at the Standard, and likewise occupied for a time the same position at the Royal, Holborn. Fair's great song brought him into sudden prominence. He sang it for a period of ten years, being frequently engaged at as many as six halls a night. With the money he made over this lucky hit he purchased the Winchester Music Hall, of which he was the last proprietor, from Mr Preece. The speculation, however, proved unfortunate, and Mr Fair lost a considerable sum over the business.

Another good chairman at the Standard was Ralph Edgar, who occupied the post for some time.

The most remarkable personage, however, who ever filled the chair here was George Thurgood, whose musical accomplishments were really marvellous. Thurgood would fill the place of any absent member of the orchestra at a moment's notice, and was equally at home with the trombone, the cornet, the violin, or the big drum. 'Baron' Courtney, before referred to in these pages, and until recently chairman at the South London, a post which he occupied for upwards of fifteen years was another worthy member of his class.

The chair of the London Pavilion has from time to time been filled by some worthy wielders of the hammer, Mr Russell Grover, a man of considerable musical attainments, and of whom we have had frequent occasion to refer to in the course of this history, heading the list. Grover was followed by the late Harry Cavendish, who could also sing a capital song, and was a rare favourite with the patrons of this hall as well as with the profession of which he was so worthy a representative. Harry Cavendish was followed by another Harry, to wit, Harry Vernon, who enjoys the distinction of having been the last chairman at this hall prior to the abolition of the office. Mr Vernon was previously for two years chairman at the Royal under Mr Sweasey's and Purkiss's proprietorship, and was accustomed to contribute the first turn. Occasionally, however, Harry Cavendish, then manager at this hall, would take

the place of his *confrère* and sing a couple of the good old English ditties he knew so well how to render. While Vernon was chairman at the Royal he had presented to him a handsome symbol of office in the shape of an ivory hammer. This souvenir was somehow mislaid or lost, but, by a strange coincidence, some short while ago attracted the attention of Mr Brill, the present proprietor of the hall, who found it exposed for sale. He promptly purchased it and restored it to the original owner—a graceful act, which it is needless to say was greatly appreciated by Mr Vernon. This gentleman has been connected with the music-hall profession for a period extending over thirty years. At the age of eight he played at the old Victoria under the late Henry Forrester's management, and subsequently appeared in such extremes of the histrionic gamut as tragedy, burlesque, comedy and pantomime, besides appearing at most of the metropolitan music halls in both sentimental and comic vocalism. His speciality, however, has been the 'show' line, and in the capacity of showman he has introduced a number of interesting subjects to the public. Among others he has 'lectured' Jem Mace, Pooley Mace, Beach the Sculler, Farini's Live Whale, and the Giant Ulreck.

At Collins's Mr John Read has occupied the chair for many years, and is one of the oldest members of his class still living.

Mr Tom Tinsley, the jovial chairman at Gatti's, Charing Cross, has done much to restore the waning glories of his office, and there are few men more deservedly popular than this excellent good fellow. Before 'passing the chair,' Mr Tinsley won some distinction for himself as a comic singer. His sturdy, thick-set figure earned for him the sobriquet of 'young John Bull.' Starting in the provinces, he worked his way up to town, where he was discovered by Mr Fred Gilbert, the agent, who speedily procured him an engagement at Weston's and Harwood's, thus enabling him to try his luck before typical East and West End audiences on the same evening. Mr Harry Evans was one of the earliest chairmen at this popular hall. He was here during the life time of the late Carlo Gatti, the founder, with whom he remained for fifteen years at the kindred establishment in the Westminster Bridge Road. Mr Fred Law and the late Mr W. H. Barry were also prominent and popular chairmen here. The last-named gentleman recently died very suddenly while returning home in a tramcar from one of the metropolitan hospitals, at which he was being treated as an out patient.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MODERN VARIETY STAGE

A New Era—The Theatres of Varieties—The 'Upper Crust'—Distinguished Patrons—The Empire, Leicester Square—Savile House—An Historic Spot—Its Changes—The Empire Promenade and the County Council—Mrs Ormiston Chant—'Prudes on the Prowl'—Litigation—Verdict of the Public—The Trocadero—The Old Argyll Rooms—R. Bignell—Sam Adams—H. J. Didcott and Chevalier—Death of Sam Adams—Sketch of His Career—The Tivoli—Charles Morton again—Angelo Asher—Vernon Dowsett—The Palace—Grand Opera—Sir Augustus Harris—'G. A. S.'—Changes in the Directorate—The New Olympic—Wilson Barrett—Wilmot and 'Barnum's Beauty'—Two Houses a Night—The London—Mr Barnes—Sadlers' Wells—Its Associations—Grimaldi and Phelps—'Hot Codlins' and Hamlet—The West London—The Old Marylebone—Bailey and Oliver—The Grand Hall, Clapham.

THE opening of the new Pavilion in 1884 may be said to have inaugurated a fresh area in music-hall history. It marked the final and complete severance of the variety stage from its old associations of the tavern and the concert saloon from the sphere of which it had, year by year, been gradually but perceptibly departing. Hitherto the halls had borne unmistakable evidence of their origin, but the last vestiges of their old connections were now thrown aside, and they emerged in all the splendour

of their new born glory. The highest efforts of the architect, the designer and the decorator were enlisted in their service, and the gaudy and tawdry music hall of the past gave place to the resplendent 'theatre of varieties' of the present day, with its classic exterior of marble and freestone, its lavishly-appointed auditorium and its elegant and luxurious foyers and promenades brilliantly illuminated by myriad electric lights. Hitherto the halls had been almost exclusively patronised by a class composed mainly, if not exclusively, of the lower and middle grade of society, that huge section of the public comprehensively summed up in the term 'the people.' Now, however, wealth, fashions and *ton* became attracted to these handsome 'Palaces' of amusement, and in the grand saloon of the West End halls the most prominent and distinguished representative of art, literature and the law mingled nightly with city financiers, lights of the sporting and dramatic world, and a very liberal sprinkling of the 'upper crust,' as represented by the golden youth of the period.

To the new order of variety halls belong, with various others, the palatial Empire in Leicester Square, the Trocadero (now unfortunately gone over to the majority), the Tivoli in the Strand, and the Palace in Cambridge Circus. Prior to the erection of these establishments, however, there arose, in the region of Westminster, a huge building devoted more or less, but if anything rather more than less to entertain-

ments of the variety order. This was the Royal Aquarium, erected on the north side of Tothill Street by a public company, with Mr De Pinna at its head. Captain Molesworth afterwards became managing director, and at the present time Mr Joshia Ritchie occupies with ability that position. It was built in 1875-6 from the design of Mr Bedborough, in the classical style, and constructed of red brick and Portland stone, with an arched roof of glass similar in general plan to that of the Crystal Palace, from which, however, it differs widely in details. It is two storeys in height, and contains in the basement a great central tank of salt and fresh water, holding no less than six hundred gallons. On the ground floor at the eastern end is a large vestibule or ante-chamber leading to the central hall or promenade, and containing a series of table tanks for the reception of fish of the 'small fry' order. The main attraction here, however, is neither whale nor zoophyte, but the admirable variety and special shows which take place at stated periods throughout the day and evening—Pongo, the 'missing link'; Succi, the fasting man; Zazel, and a whole race of giants, pigmies, monstrosities and other novelties have long vied with the leading variety stars in capping the list of special and peculiar attractions to be seen here at all seasons of the year. But all other quondam attractions at the Aquarium have been eclipsed by the success of Zæo, the handsome lady whose graceful and

daring gymnastic feats caused a great excitement in 1890 and 1891. This performer secured much advertisement by the absurd action of certain members of the then newly formed London County Council.

The Empire Theatre of Varieties opened its doors on December 21st, 1887, occupying the ground once covered by Savile House. The Empire, like its neighbouring rival, the Alhambra, has an interesting and variegated past. Savile House, after passing through many fluctuations of fortune, during which it had been a royal residence, an exhibition gallery and a species of *café chantant*, was destroyed by fire in March 1865. On the day succeeding this event an offer was made for the site, with a view to erecting a theatre upon it, by Mr John Hollingshead, supported by the late Dion Boucicault and others. The owners, however, according to the first-mentioned gentleman, were too exacting, and the place remained in ruins for about fourteen years, when the Denmark Theatre was projected. A similar project was the Alcazar Theatre of Mr Alexander Henderson. After this the place was handed over to a French panorama Company, who erected a circular building and exhibited a picture of Balaclava. Then followed the Pandora, another theatrical project which did not reach the completed stage, although the building of the theatre was actually begun. Mr Nicols, the well-known proprietor of the *Café Royal*, however,

now came on the scene as mortgagee in possession, and in due course the Empire Theatre, promoted by a Limited Liability Company, came into existence. Mr D. Nicols is one of the principal directors of this establishment, and his co-directors are Mr Hector Tennent, Mr Walter Dickson, Mr J. C. Collier, and Mr George Edwardes. Sir Augustus Harris, it should be mentioned, was one of the organisers of the present Empire, the staff of which comprises Mr H. J. Hitchens (who has been manager of the theatre ever since its foundation), Mr C. D. Slater, the courteous and genial acting manager, and Mr Conlan the secretary.

The Empire commenced its career as a theatre proper, in which character it produced the comic opera of *Chilperic*, several Gaiety burlesques, the ballet of *Coppelia*, and the grand English opera *The Lady of the Locket*.

Its career as a theatre, however, was as unprosperous as its subsequent record as a variety house has been the reverse. The ballets and spectacular pieces produced here have been particularly popular and successful, and the shareholders' dividend has shown each year a progressively gratifying result. One of the distinguishing features of this house has been its magnificent promenade, which, just before the licensing sessions of 1894, attracted the attention of Mrs Ormiston Chant and several other ladies and gentlemen, who opposed the licence on the ground that this particular part of the house

was made a rendezvous for the purposes of solicitation by women of an improper character. The County Council therefore refused to grant the licence, except on the condition of the abolition of the offending feature, and the partitioning off of the refreshment bars. The directors appealed against this decision, and raised a technical issue in one of the superior courts, which ruled that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, the Council had exceeded their jurisdiction. The majority of the press and public on that occasion sided with the Empire management, and Mrs Chant and her friends came in for a considerable amount of popular opprobrium. The comic papers made abundant capital out of the subject, and this worthy lady, whose conduct, however ill-advised, was undoubtedly inspired by the worthiest motives, found herself satirised in the form of grotesque pictorial sketches, rhyming lampoons, and in the following November had the distinction of figuring as one of the principal 'guys' of the year.

The Trocadero, in Windmill Street, Piccadilly, was erected on the site of the old Argyll Rooms, a famous casino, which lost its music and dancing licence on the 30th of November 1878. Mr Richard Bignell, the proprietor of the former assembly rooms, was the first proprietor of this handsome little hall, which he ran with varying success down to the date of his death. In July 1889 the late Mr Sam Adams, in partnership with Mr C. J. Bayliss,

took over the hall. The venture, however, did not prove so prosperous as was anticipated, nor was the partnership so amicable as could have been desired. Accordingly, on the 23d of July 1893, the property was submitted to auction at the Mason's Hall Tavern in Basinghall Street, coming under the hammer of Messrs Henshaw, Beard & Watts, the well-known auctioneers. The bidding, which started at £7500 slowly reached £9500, and the reserve price of £10,000 not having been attained, the lot was called in. Subsequently the property was disposed of to Mr H. J. Didcott, by whom it was opened in October 1893, and who for some time ran the hall in conjunction with Mr Albert Chevalier, 'the Costers' Laureate' of course filling the somnolent office of sleeping partner. The hall, nevertheless, again closed its doors in 1894, and at the time of writing it is contemplated converting it into a superior class restaurant, when 'entertainment,' in the original sense of the word, will be supplied to hungry mortals in search of gastronomic fare.

The Trocadero was the last enterprise of poor Sam Adams, who, after a varied and eventful career, expired of pneumonia at his residence in St John's Road, Brixton, at ten o'clock on the morning of June 1st, 1893. This popular gentleman, who had played so prominent a part in the making of music-hall history, was born at Hertford in October 1835. His father was a member of the

firm of Adams & Company, the well-known bankers of Ware and Hertford, and was in addition one of the largest malsters in the country. It was in the latter line that Mr Sam Adams began his career, and gained the knowledge of business which stood him in such good stead in after years. As previously detailed, it was at the Philharmonic that he first blossomed into music-hall proprietorship, and after disposing of this house in 1870 to Mr Charles Head, he came further west, and joined Mr J. S. Sweasey at the Royal. He remained at this establishment till 1878, when he moved to the London Pavilion as manager for Mr Loibl—a position which he continued to occupy under Mr Villiers until the rebuilding of the new Pavilion. He then returned to the Royal, in which he held one half share: Mr Purkiss possessing the other moiety. This partnership continued for a year, when the partners sold the business to the Limited Liability Company which preceded the present proprietorate. Mr Sam Adams was retained as managing director down to February 1889, when, in consequence of a difference with his fellow-directors, he resigned his position. Mr Adams was buried in the pretty little cemetery at Norwood, a very large and representative circle of professional and private friends accompanying the body to its last resting-place. Mr Adams's daughter, Miss Ada Blanche, and his son, Mr Bert Adams, are both members of the profession which their father served so well and so long,

and among which it is safe to say he had not a single enemy.

The year 1890 saw the erection in the Strand, on the site of the Tivoli Lager Beer Restaurant and several adjoining premises, of the Tivoli Music Hall, now one of the most conspicuous features of that historic thoroughfare. In spite of its excellent situation, however, and the heavy expenditure of capital which had been made by the Company, the Tivoli earned but small dividends for its shareholders until the management was placed in the hands of Mr Charles Morton, who, to use a city phrase, speedily 'pulled' the concern through. This was the turn of the tide of its fortune, happily taken at the flood, and since that time it has ranked high in the favour and patronage of London audiences. Mr Angelo Asher has been the musical director of the Tivoli since its re-opening, and nightly sways with his *bâton* one of the most efficient orchestras in town.

In August 1893, Mr Vernon Dowsett, an able and experienced administrator, succeeded Mr Morton as manager, the last-named gentleman having resigned in order to take up a similar position at the Palace Theatre of Varieties, Cambridge Circus, the failing fortunes of which he had been called in to revive.

The Palace Theatre was originally built by Mr D'Oyly Carte for the purpose of grand English opera, and its opening night, on the 11th December

1892, will be memorable as the occasion of the production of *Ivanhoe*, an opera by Sir Arthur Sullivan, founded on Sir Walter Scott's popular romance of that name. This was the first operatic collaboration that Sir Arthur had undertaken since his regrettable split with 'W. S.,' and occasioned great interest. This splendid building was destined by fate to quite a different end to that contemplated by its original promoters, and after several futile attempts to woo the fickle goddess, it was ultimately handed over to a reorganised Company, with Sir Augustus Harris and Mr George Augustus Sala at the helm. This Company was at first hardly more prosperous than its predecessor, and was compelled to undergo reconstruction and a complete change of policy, in the course of which Sir Augustus retired from the directorate, before it succeeded in gaining any hold upon the great body of the public. Under the shrewd and discerning management of Mr Morton, however, it immediately began to make headway in public favour, and is at present admittedly one of the largest, finest and most flourishing variety theatres in the west end.

On the 4th of December 1890, the New Olympic Theatre was opened by Mr Wilson Barrett and Mr Wilmot, as lessees, and dedicated with the usual flourish of trumpets to the service of Melpomene. The house, however, which had arisen out of the ashes of the old Olympic, and was therefore rich

in memories of Vestris, Robson and other histrionic associations, was compelled to meet the changed requirements of the time, and after the failures of several successive theatrical ventures, the place was converted into a music hall, and on August 7th, 1893, within the portals of the temple sacred to her more serious sister, Terpsichore now reigned supreme. This state of affairs continued, however, but for a period of three months, and on the 30th of the October following the house was again closed. After a further interval of theatrical enterprise it was once more converted into a variety establishment on the 'two houses a night' principle by Messrs Belmont & Wilmot. In this form it was opened in 1894, but at the time of writing it is again devoted to the service of the legitimate drama.

Of the suburban halls there are two or three that should be mentioned. The present Parthenon, at Greenwich, now owned and managed by Mr Hurley, was originally opened on October 28th, 1871, by Mr C. S. Crowder. Then there is the Varieties at Hammersmith, of which Mr Acton Phillips and his son are the proprietors; and the Peckham Varieties, better known as Lovejoy's, after the name of its popular proprietor.

In December 1892, the London Music Hall, Shoreditch, was opened by Mr Barnes, the former manager of Collins's, and a new and important addition was made to the long list of variety establishments in the east end.

The fashion of converting unsuccessful theatres into popular music halls had not ran its day, and in November 1893, the old Sadlers' Wells Theatre, where Grimaldi had sung 'Hot Codlins' and 'Tippettywitchet,' and Phelps impersonated the immortal creations of the 'divine Will,' was given up to the service of song and dance. Mr George Belmont, who rejoices in the cognomen of 'Barnum's Beauty,' and whose skill in the compilation of alliterative advertisements is simply marvellous, rules the destinies of this establishment in its present form.

Another London theatre which within recent times has been converted into the ubiquitous variety theatre—drama, pantomime, comedy, ballet, farce, and varieties—is the old Marylebone—originally the Pavilion Theatre in Church Street, Edgware Road. Under the style of the West London, this establishment, newly decorated and upholstered, was opened on Saturday the 1st of April 1893 by Messrs Bailey & Oliver, the former a gentleman who had long filled the position of chairman and manager at the neighbouring Metropolitan. The latest addition to metropolitan halls has been the Grand, in the vicinity of Clapham Junction, which was opened under the proprietorship of a small syndicate of well-known music-hall gentlemen in November 1894, and which has so far met with a gratifying reception from residents in the surrounding districts.

CHAPTER XIV

LEGISLATURE AND THE HALLS

The Law and the Halls—An Arid but Important Subject—The Magistrate—The First Licensing Body—25 George II.—No Matinées—The Theatres Registry Act—Stage Plays—A Bone of Contention—Trade Rivalry—*Hodge-Podge*—The Alhambra and the Act—*Where's the Police?*—The Committee of 1866—Its Resolutions—Sundry Acts—The County Council—The Committee of 1892—*Qui Bono?*

EXCEPT to the favoured few, legal matters possess little or no attraction, and many who have accompanied the writers in their historical peregrinations so far will perhaps feel inclined to follow the example of certain committee gentlemen, and take the present chapter as 'read.' But, as Mr Paulton sings, 'there are others.' To music-hall proprietors, managers and artistes—and especially to sketch artistes—the subject is endowed with special and peculiar interest. A work of the present scope, moreover, would hardly be complete did it not deal in a more or less exhaustive manner with the important and active relations which exist between the legislature and the halls. In treating on this necessarily arid subject, however, the writers will

endeavour to be as explicit and succinct as the matter will allow. If they fail in the latter respect, however, they will have the satisfaction of knowing that they err in excellent company, for on this same subject the learned pundits who make our laws and the bewigged gentlemen who expound them are, to use a convenient colloquialism, altogether at 'sixes and sevens.' It is, indeed, a tangled skein to unravel, and one from the meshes of which it is not easy to extricate oneself with either credit or satisfaction.

The music halls originally derived their privileges from the magistrates acting under the 25 of George II., a statute which was passed in the year 1751 to enable this body to license houses for music, dancing and public entertainments after five o'clock P.M. Under this Act, the magistrates had power to take away the licence for ever of any establishment opening its doors for a public entertainment before that hour, and it was not until the year 1866 that the Lord Chamberlain, acting under the powers reserved in the Act of George II., at the instigation of the proprietors of the concert-rooms and similar places, granted special permission for the performance of matinées.

The next enactment affecting the variety stage was the passing of the Theatres Registry Act, 1843, 6 and 7 Victoria. Under this Act no theatre within the metropolis was permitted to put on a stage play which was defined to include a tragedy, farce,

opera, burletta, prelude, interlude, pantomime, or other entertainment of the style, or any part thereof, without being first duly licensed by the Lord Chamberlain. This clause has been a bone of contention between theatrical proprietors and the proprietors of music halls ever since the Act was placed upon the Statute Book, and has given rise to interminable litigation and undying controversy between these two classes of public entertainers. Under this Act a dramatic performance—or anything which can be construed into the nature of a dramatic performance on the music-hall stage—renders the proprietor liable to be mulcted in a penalty of £20 per night, and lays at the same time each individual performer open to a similarly heavy fine.

Theatrical proprietors have been particularly jealous of their privileges in this respect, and although within recent years they have, under compulsion of public and official opinion, displayed a greater tolerance towards their rivals, the latter are still amenable to the Act in question, and at the present day there is hardly a music hall the programme at which does not contain one or two features which only need the usual formal information to be laid against the proprietor to inflict upon the latter the drastic penalties imposed by the statute. In the earlier days of music-hall history, however, the same sullen leniency was not affected, and the law reports at that time bristle with actions

instigated and carried on in a spirit of petty jealousy and competitive spite.

As an instance, culled from among many others which occurred in various parts of the metropolis and provinces, may be cited the case of Mr Charles Morton and his shadow pantomime.

On the 2nd of February 1865, Mr Robert applied at the Lambeth Police Court, before the Honourable G. C. Norton, for a summons against the Oxford and Canterbury Music Hall Company, Limited, for a violation of the Act 6-7 Victoria, chap. 68, in performing the shadow pantomime *Hodge-Podge*, or *Butterfly's Christmas Party*, a sketch presented at the Canterbury Hall. The application, which was made on behalf of the proprietors of Her Majesty's Theatre, Drury Lane, the Lyceum, the Haymarket, Adelphi, Astley's and the Olympic, although taken out by Mr Chatterton on behalf of his brother lessees, ended in a decision for the defendant with mitigated damages, and Mr Morton was obliged to withdraw the pantomime sketch, which the magistrate himself admitted was an admirable, and morally speaking, irreproachable performance.

With the ballet taken from *L'Enfant Prodigue*, and produced at the Alhambra about the same time, the subject was again raised, and excited the combined opposition of metropolitan managers, conspicuous amongst whom were the late Benjamin Webster and Horace Wigan. The burning

question was by no means satisfactorily solved. It was held that the ballet was not proved to be a 'stage play' within the meaning of the Act, a decision due in all probability, such is the subtlety of the law, to the word *divertissement* having been appended to the description of the ballet. The Alhambra management, however, with Mr John Hollingshead—'practical John'—at its head decided to test the business further. A pantomimic sketch entitled, not inappropriately, *Where's the Police?* was produced, with Messrs D'Auban, Warde, F. Evans, Miss Warde and Mrs Evans in the *rôle* of harlequin, columbine, pantaloon, clown and sprite. The inevitable summons was issued, and the case was in due course heard at Marlborough Street. The decision of the magistrates, however, was this time against the management, who appealed to the Judge at Quarter Sessions, when the appeal was dismissed, and the full penalty, amounting to £240 and costs, inflicted.

These and many similar cases gave rise to an agitation which resulted in the first parliamentary committee on the subject. This committee began its sittings on Tuesday, March 13th, 1866, the sessions extending to the 4th of the May following. Mr Goschen occupied the chair, and among the members of the committee were Lord Eustace Cecil, Lord Ernest Bruce, Sir Arthur Buller, and Colonel Sturt. The witnesses called were

Frederick Strange of the Alhambra, Frederick Stanley of the Oxford and Canterbury, Benjamin Webster, Buxton, Dion Boucicault, Shirley Brookes, Horace Wigan, Tom Taylor, Nelson, and John Hollingshead.

After many adjourned deliberations, the committee adopted and recommended to the consideration of the House of Commons the following resolutions :—

As to the metropolis.

(1.) That the present system of double jurisdiction, under which theatres are licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, and music halls and other places of public entertainment by the magistrates, is inconvenient and unsatisfactory.

(2.) That the power of licensing of 'any house, room, garden, or other places occupied for public dancing, music or other public entertainment of the like kind,' hitherto vested in the magistrates by the Act 25 George II. c. 36, sections 2 and 3, be transferred to the same authority which may be empowered to grant licences to theatres, so that the entire regulation of theatres, music halls and other places of public entertainment be placed under one authority.

(3.) That such power of licensing could not be efficiently exercised by a subordinate authority, and that it is therefore desirable that it should be placed in the hands of an officer of high position and dignity.

(4.) That it is desirable that the department of the Lord Chamberlain be so organised as to be able to deal with all such places of public entertainment within the metropolis.

(5.) That it is desirable that any Act of Parliament dealing with the licensing of theatres, music halls and other places of entertainment should render compulsory the inspection and survey of such places as regards the stability of structure, due security against fire, ventilation and facility of ingress and egress, and that the authority to whom the licensing may be entrusted be required to form regulations from time to time for ensuring the safety and accommodation of the public, which regulations should receive the sanction of the Secretary of State, and be laid upon the table of the House of Commons.

(6.) That apart from the question whether an identical form of licence should or should not be given to theatres and music halls, it is not desirable to continue the restric-

tions which prevent music halls from giving theatrical entertainments.

(7.) That there should be different forms of licence, (1) where intoxicating drinks, refreshments and tobacco may be consumed in the auditorium of the building; (2) where intoxicating drinks, refreshments and tobacco may not be consumed.

(8.) That the control which the Lord Chamberlain now exercises over the performances in theatres should be extended to other places of entertainment for which licences may be required.

(9.) That the censorship of plays has worked satisfactorily, and that it is not desirable that it should be discontinued. On the contrary, that it should be extended as far as practicable to the performances in music halls and other places of public entertainment.

(10.) That it is desirable that when application is made for a licence for a theatre, music hall, or other similar place of entertainment, the applicant should be required to furnish such security as shall be satisfactory to the licensing authority, not exceeding £ , and satisfactory evidence as to their respectability, as to the fitness of the building for which it is intended, and as

to the convenience of the site; and that in the event of such evidence being satisfactory, the licence should be granted without reference to any question of competition with other establishments.

(11.) That the decision of the Lord Chamberlain should be subject to an appeal to the Home Secretary as far as the original granting of the licence is concerned.

(12.) That the provisions for enforcing the proper working of the Act of 25 George II. c. 36, relative to the licensing of music halls are insufficient and unsatisfactory, as there is no legal authority under which the police can take direct proceedings against unlicensed houses in which music and dancing are going on, although they are empowered to deal summarily with the cases of unlicensed theatrical entertainments.

(13.) That it is desirable to repeat the 7th clause of the Act 5 and 6 William IV. c. 39, which empowers the Excise to grant beer and spirit licences to all buildings licensed by the Lord Chamberlain or the Justices.

As far as relates to the country.

(14.) That it is desirable that the licensing of a new theatre should be by the Lord

Chamberlain instead of as heretofore by the magistrates, but that the powers now exercised by the magistrates, both as regards the renewal of licences and as regards regulations, should continue in force.

(15.) That it is desirable that the proprietors of music halls and other similar places should be required to apply to the magistrates for licences under the same or similar provisions to those which may be indicated relative to similar places of entertainment in the metropolis.

(16.) That the 2nd section of the Act 6 and 7 Victoria, c. 68, relative to the censorship of plays intended to be produced or acted for hire in any theatre in Great Britain continue in force, and that such censorship be extended as far as practicable to music halls and other places of public entertainment throughout Great Britain.

The Metropolis Management and Building Act Amendments Act, 1878, provided, with respect to new theatres and places of public entertainment, that the Metropolitan Board of Works might frame such regulations as to position and structure as might be necessary for the protection of the public frequenting the same against danger from fire, and it was made unlawful for any person to open a new

theatre or place of entertainment until the Board had granted a certificate that the building was in accordance with the regulations. The Act further directed with respect to theatres and music halls which were in existence at the passing of the Act, that if the Board were of opinion that any building was so defective in its structure that there was special danger from fire, the Board might, with the consent of the Lord Chamberlain in the case of theatres under his jurisdiction, and of the Secretary of State in other cases, require the owner to make such alterations in the building as might be necessary to remove the defect, provided that such defect could be remedied in a moderate expenditure. Additional powers of control were also given to the Board by the 45th section of the Various Powers Act of 1882. In 1888 the powers vested in justices as regards theatres and music halls were by the Local Government Act of that year transferred to the County Council.

The County Council has, strange to say, never been particularly well disposed towards the halls, and the latter very soon found out that in the Council they had to deal with a fresh and powerful enemy. The position taken up by the County Council in regard to sketches and other matters led to a fresh agitation on the part of the artistes particularly concerned, and on the 2d of June 1892 another select committee of the House of Commons sat to consider the matter. Among the

witnesses called on this occasion were Messrs James Lawrence Graydon, George Conquest, John Hare, Edward Terry, Lionel Brough, John Hollingshead, Henry Newson-Smith, William Archer, Arthur Swanborough and Clement Scott.

This committee advocated arbitration on appeal from the licensing body to a standing arbitrator permanently attached to Her Majesty's Office of Works, and under the general direction of the First Commissioner, who should be answerable to Parliament for his action. It also considered that the County Council should have a staff of fit and proper persons to act as inspectors of the safety of places of public entertainment. It did not, however, concur in the recommendation of the Council, that the latter should be the licensing authority for all theatres within the administrative county of London, but recommended the extinction of the Lord Chamberlain's authority to licence all those theatres within the county of London which are now outside the limit of his jurisdiction.

But the committee did not see its way to endorse the resolutions adopted by the County Council, that the latter should have power to summon witnesses on oath, and that the ordinary privilege of a court of law should attach to their proceedings. It decided, however, in favour of three species of licence, one for theatres proper, where smoking and drinking would not be permitted in the auditorium, one for those music

halls which are now sometimes called theatres of varieties, and one for concert and dancing-rooms. It also recommended that all licences should be granted on the same day, and that the licensing authority should have power to grant occasional licences.

In spite of these special committees the old Act of George II. still remains unrepealed in all its hideous incongruity, and the only benefits that have resulted so far from these prolonged commissions have been a couple of ponderous, albeit interesting, Blue Books.

CHAPTER XV

POPULAR ARTISTES OF TO-DAY

Diversity of the Profession—Difficulty of Classification—Anecdote in Point—The Conjurer and the Compiler—The Comic Vocalist—Dan Leno—His Quaint Characterisations and Patter—Herbert Campbell—Tom Costello—Harry Randall—James Fawn—Tom Bass—Charles Coborn—J. C. Rich — Little Tich — Descriptive Singers — Arthur Coombes — Leo Dryden — Alf Chester—George Leyton —Charles Godfrey — His Dramatic Ability — Humble Beginning — 15s. to £100 a Week — His First Success — *On Guard*—Arthur Roberts—Arthur Corney —Austin Rudd—Chirgwin—'The White-Eyed Kaffir' — Negro Entertainers — Eugene Stratton — 'The Whistling Coon' — Brown, Newland and Leclerq — R. G. Knowles—Fish and Warren—Albert Chevalier—Gus Elen—Other 'Stars'—The Ventriloquist—Lieutenant Cole—Mimics—Medley to Cissie Loftus—Sketch Artistes —Fred Williams — Keegan and Elvin — Acrobats and Troupes—Pantomimists — Paul Martinetti — The Boisset Troupe—Serio-Comics—Marie Lloyd—Jenny Hill—Katie Lawrence—Nellie Richards—Ada Reeve—Lottie Collins —Harriet Vernon—Dancers—Ida Heath—Marie Leyton —Loie Fuller.

THE apparently endless diversity of talent to be found within the ranks of the music-hall profession to-day is one of its most prominent and peculiar features.

It is a variety world in all sooth, and the intrepid individual who would attempt to classify

its members according to their special *genre* would have before him a task, the limit and complexity of which it would not be easy to estimate.

There is a story told of an earnest and conscientious young man who was instructed by a firm of theatrical publishers to compile a directory of music-hall artistes, with a special section for each line of business. It took him a long time to master the nice distinctions existing between 'vocal' comedians, 'characteristic' artistes, and 'actor' vocalists, and when he had overcome that difficulty he had to contend with a whole host of bewildering 'specialities,' including 'funambulists,' 'eccentrics,' 'knockabouts,' 'high-kickers,' and others who, in very despair of acquiring a suitable designation, styled themselves 'nondescripts.' He struggled on manfully with the work, however, until a professor of legerdemain whom he had inadvertently described as a conjurer, instead of 'prestidigitateur and illusionist' withdrew his advertisement. Then the publishers wrote a snubbing letter to the compiler, who finally threw up the work in despair.

But although in its very nature the general form of music-hall entertainment is necessarily hetrogeneous, and subject to complete and continuous changes, there is one particular feature which varies only in kind and degree, and that is its comic vocalism. This has ever constituted the main strength and attraction of its programme, and the position of a comic singer in consequence

is usually one of considerable prominence and importance.

In this connection the name of Mr Dan Leno at once suggests itself. Mr Leno is an artiste, who, in his own peculiar line, is inimitable. His quaint conception of character, sly humour, and inexhaustible flow of funny patter are all his own, and his appearance before the footlights is invariably the signal for general and irrepressible laughter on the part of his audiences.

Mr Herbert Campbell, whose real name by-the-way is Story, and who commenced his career at small temperance halls in Clerkenwell, is another popular favourite, and a genuine possessor of the *vis comica*. His name has for many years been familiar to London audiences, and his distinctly comic creations are as varied as they are numerous. Mr Tom Costello, Mr Harry Randall, Mr James Fawn, Mr Tom Bass, Mr Charles Coborn and Mr J. C. Rich are other artistes in the same line who have won distinction for themselves by sheer force of artistic merit. In the same category too must be mentioned Mr Charles Bignell, Mr Arthur Lennard, Mr Harry Pleon, Mr Tom Leamore and Mr Arthur Rigby. 'Little Tich,' despite his diminutive stature, is one of the drollest artistes on the music-hall stage, and is in receipt of one of the largest salaries ever paid in the profession. Among descriptive vocalists Mr Arthur Coombes, Mr Leo Dryden, Mr Alf Chester and Mr George

Leyton occupy conspicuous positions, but the originator and foremost exponent of the dramatic scena is undoubtedly Mr Charles Godfrey, whose patriotic and sentimental songs are rendered with a dramatic force and treatment rarely met with on the boards of the variety stage. Mr Godfrey is a sympathetic and conscientious artiste, and all his vocal and histrionic efforts bear the stamp of high conceptive power, combined with a keen knowledge of life and character. Like many other members of his calling, Mr Godfrey began his career at the lowest rung of the professional ladder, with a weekly salary of fifteen shillings. For this handsome stipend, which he received at the Elephant and Castle Theatre, he played as many as thirteen parts a week, besides officiating as super and ballet-master. During his conection with the music-hall stage he has received as much as £100 for the same period. Mr Godfrey was not long in making his way to the front. The first of his many successful monologues was *On Guard*, which he produced at the Paragon with the most beautiful and elaborate stage effects which had so far been attempted. Since then he has entertained London and provincial audiences with a long list of similar dramatic scenas, the most notable of which has been the *Seven Ages of Man*, *The Golden Wedding*, *After the Ball*, *Nelson*, and *The Armada*.

Among eccentric vocalists Mr Arthur Roberts

has so far been unexcelled, but this gentleman has now seceded from the halls to the more congenial sphere of comic opera and burlesque. Among artistes of the same school may be mentioned Mr Arthur Corney and Mr Austin Rudd. Mr George Robey, Mr George Beauchamp, Mr Will Crackles, Mr Charles Deane and Mr Jake Graham are each eccentric and character vocalists of creative ability.

The operatic element which still lingers in latter day programmes is worthily represented by such able vocalists as Miss Lucy Clarke, Miss Lillian Alexander, Miss Elsa Joel, Mr Frank Celli and Mr Leo Stormont. Chirgwin, who likewise rejoices in the additional cognomen of the 'White-eyed Kaffir,' is an entertainer whose style is absolutely unique. He is an accomplished musician, and master of a fund of extempore drollery. His white eye, by the way, was suggested by quite a chance circumstance. Going on to perform one evening he happened to rub one of his optics, and thus accidentally to remove the 'make up' from this part of his physiognomy. The effect was so funny that the audience at once burst into a roar of laughter, and from that time to the present Mr Chirgwin has retained his white eye as a peculiar feature of his make-up. Other popular Ethiopian entertainers of the present are of course Mr Eugene Stratton, 'the Whistling Coon,' Mr Sam Redfern, and those droll sketch artistes, Brown, Newland and Leclerq. Mr R. G. Knowles, 'the very

peculiar American comedian' as he describes himself, is a welcome addition from the transatlantic variety stage, as are those talented duologuists Miss Marguerite Fish and Mr Charles Warren. Mr Albert Chevalier and Mr Gus Elen are unrivalled in their artistic and sympathetic delineations of cockney and coster character, and many of their ditties are as familiar in the drawing-rooms of Belgravia as in the humbler parlours of the East End. Mr George Macdermott, the last of the lion comiques, whose celebrated 'Scamp' and 'Jingo' songs at one time set the town by the ears, Mr J. H. Milburn, Mr Harry Rickards, Mr Walter Munroe, Mr J. W. Rowley and Mr T. W. Barrett belong to an older school of vocalists, which can still, in many respects, maintain its own with the younger generation of singers.

The ventriloquist is a popular favourite with music-hall audiences, and finds admirable representatives in Lieutenant Walter Cole with his merry folks, Mr F. W. Millis, Lieutenant Travis and Mr Vento. Closely allied with this division of the fraternity are the mimics, among whom Mr Medley, Mr Kenway, Charles Compton and Mr Arthur Faber are conspicuous examples. Within recent years several lady artistes have tested their powers in this direction, among the first being Miss Collie Conway, whose novel innovation at once brought this talented young artiste into prominence. The phenomenal success in the same sphere of Miss

Cissie Loftus, who followed, is too well known to call for more than passing mention. Since the last-mentioned young lady's romantic elopement, two other lady mimics, Miss Millie Lindon and Miss Marie Dainton, have come to the front and are winning new laurels by their clever impersonations. Closely allied to the two preceding divisions are the illusionists, of whom Mr Carl Hertz, Mr Charles Morritt and M. Servais le Roy are among the most clever and original.

The dramatic sketch, however unpopular it may be with theatrical proprietors, is highly appreciated by the patrons of the halls, and finds employment for a large number of clever comedians. Among the latter may be enumerated Mr Fred Williams and Mr E. W. Barwick, Messrs Keegan and Elvin, H. D. Burton, Mr Brian M'Culloch, and Mr Wal Pink, in addition to the Collinson and the Brown and Kelly Combinations.

Acrobats and troupes find a large amount of support at the halls, where the marvellous Craggs, the Frantz Family, the Selbinis and the Three Delevines are familiar and popular performers. In this connection may be mentioned those clever pantomimists Mr Paul Martinetti, Mr George Lupino, Sells and Young, and the Boisset Troupe.

Musical performances also figure prominently in modern music-hall programmes, and among this class of artistes the Jees, the Florador Troupe, the

Musical Palmers, Virto and the Brewster Combination take prominent rank.

Lady variety entertainers are represented by a very large and talented contingent, and to attempt to enumerate with anything like detail the many serio-comics, sisters, dancers, male impersonators, and ballad and character vocalists would be well nigh impossible within the confined compass of a single chapter. Among representative lady artistes, however, must be mentioned Miss Marie Lloyd, whose brightness and piquant vivacity are apparently unexcelled, Miss Jenny Hill, Miss Katie Lawrence, Miss Nellie Richards, Miss Ada Reeve, Miss Lottie Collins (of 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' fame), Miss Fanny Leslie, Miss Lily Burnand, Miss Harriett Vernon, Miss Ada Lundberg, Miss Florence Levey, Miss Minnie Cunningham, Miss Kate James, Miss Bessie Bellwood, Miss Marie Loftus and Miss Bessie Bonehill (the latter a clever male impersonator) have also each won distinction in their own particular line; while among the dancing girls, Miss Ida Heath, Miss Marie Leyton, Miss Loïe Fuller, Miss Nellie Navette, Miss Kate Seymour and Miss Clara Wieland are worthy of special mention.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PROVINCIAL VARIETY STAGE

Rise of the Provincial Music Halls—Free-and-Easies—An Illustration—First Halls in the Country—The Rodney—The Youdon—The Star, Bolton—Increase of Halls—Parthenon Rooms, Liverpool—Tableaux Vivants—Sample of Programme—Two Houses a Night—The Alhambra, Liverpool—History of Hull Music Halls—Springethorpe's—Jenny Hill's Proprietorship—Leotard Bosco—H. T. Downs—The Alhambra and Pavilion—Chief Provincial Halls of Twenty Years Ago—London 'Stars' not on Bills—Own Concert Parties—The 'Catch Clubs'—Their System—Circuits Past and Present—Moss and Thornton, Livermore and Stoll's Tours—H. E. Moss's Enterprise—Empire, Edinburgh—Empire, Newcastle—Empire, Birmingham—Dan Lowrey and His Ventures—Palace, Manchester—Salaries paid to Artistes in the Country—£150 a Week—Repaid to Proprietors by the Public—A Clause in the Contracts.

THE rise of the music halls in the country has been, if less rapid and more gradual, equally as effective as that of the metropolitan temples devoted to variety. The present palaces which have arisen in nearly every one of the leading cities of the United Kingdom sprang originally, just as did those of London, from the taproom of the public house. These rooms were generally known as 'free-and-easies' and they did not belie their title.

Admission was 'free gratis and for nothing,' and as a natural consequence the salaries artistes received were proportionately low. The sort of places which even in quite recent years are common in country towns of the smaller class is illustrated in the following incident which occurred to a now prominent performer whose name is well known in professional circles. It happened that this gentleman was, at the time in question, in very shallow water, and having what is technically known as 'a week out,' he accepted the advice of a friend to write to the proprietor of a little hall, in a neighbouring town, for an engagement. He did so, and his terms were accepted. On the Monday morning the vocalist set out on 'Shanks' pony,' the only mode of travelling he could afford, and eventually arrived at what he found to be a very small town. Inquiry led him to the —— Inn, in front of which was standing the worthy Boniface. 'Is this the Grand Music Hall?' quoth our friend. 'Ay, it be. Beest thou one of those singing folk.' 'I am,' was the brief answer. The host then led the performer to a small tap-room. The artiste surveyed it carefully, but saw not a ghost of a platform, so meekly inquired if the proprietor had forgotten to provide one. 'Oh, no,' was the reply, followed by the command to a servant near by to bring in the stage! The latter, when brought in, was found to be a few planks nailed upon four barrels. The vocalist, who tells

the tale, says that after he had done his performance on the first night, the proprietor came round and told him that he thought that in future he had better stand on the floor while he sang, as his voice was so powerful that he was afraid of the roof falling in.

But to return to our *moutons*. These 'free-and-easies,' together with the saloons, formed the only species of entertainment of the variety order which could be found within the length and breadth of the land, with the exception, of course, of London, until early in the forties, when three notable establishments opened the way for the newer order of things. These halls were the Rodney at Birmingham; Youdon's Alexandra at Sheffield, and the Star at Bolton. At these places a very moderate sum was charged by way of admission, and they were at once largely patronised, as the performers engaged were of considerably greater talent than those appearing at the establishments which still continued in the older groove.

A start having been made in the right direction, the example of the enterprising organisers was speedily emulated, and kindred places of entertainment sprang up all over the country, such principal cities as Liverpool, Manchester and others having later in the same decade quite a number of music halls which had a just and legitimate right to the title.

As an example of the entertainment proffered

to the public in those days is appended a bill of the Panthenon Rooms in Liverpool, as it was called in those days, but which now is known as the Panthenon Music Hall. This is of special interest, as it gives evident proof that the idea of tableaux vivants, which has had such a 'boom' recently, and which, after all is said and done, is little more than a revised and more artistic form of the old 'Poses Plastiques,' is no new thing, but only a revival of the popular craze of the days of our fathers.

PARTHENON ROOMS,

Great Charlotte Street, Six Doors from Ranelagh Street.

MODELS OF ART,

Tableaux Vivants, and Poses Plastiques.

The Proprietor has the pleasure to announce to his Friends and the Public the complete success of this truly Classic Exhibition; and, in order to merit the patronage with which this Establishment has, since its opening, been honoured, begs to announce it will be his constant study to produce a

SUCCESSION OF NOVELTIES

Of a superior character, which, he trusts, will meet with their universal approbation.

THE SPLENDID DECORATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS,

From Authentic Sources, are Entirely New.

MR JOHN REED,

The Old Favourite Comic Vocalist.

MISS M. BAXTER,

The Celebrated Sentimental Singer, from the London and Glasgow Concerts.

Programme of Tableaux and Songs for Monday, May 20th, 1850, and during the Week

Comic Song, . 'Mr Brown and Mrs Black,' . . Mr REED
Song, ... 'Single Gentlemen,' . . Miss BAXTER
Comic Song, . 'Don't be Foolish, Joe,' . . Mr REED
Song, 'I Hear Them Speak of My Fatherland,' Miss BAXTER

Tableau—Jeptha's Rash Vow.

SACRED HISTORY.

Comic Song, . . 'The Review,' . . . Mr REED

Tableau—The Sultan's Favourite Returning from the Bath.

COMPOSITION.

Song, . 'The Peace of the Valley is fled,' . Miss BAXTER

Tableau—Brutus Ordering the Execution of his Son.

IN TWO TABLEAUX.

ROMAN HISTORY.

Comic Song, . . 'Pity the Sorrows,' . . . Mr REED

Tableau—Diana Preparing for the Chase.

A. COOPER, R.A.

Song, . . 'I Strive to Forget Thee,' . Miss BAXTER

Tableau—A Bacchanalian Procession.

FROM THE BORGHESE VASE.

ANTIQUE.

Lady Godiva, in character, ... Mr REED

Tableau—Daughters of the Deep.

COMPOSITION.

Song, . . 'Who'll Buy my Heart,' . Miss BAXTER

Tableau—Greeks Surprised by the Enemy.

COMPOSITION.

Comic Song, . . 'Ruined Cobbler,' . . Mr REED
Tableau—Lute Player.
PRAIDER.

Song, . 'Come and let us be happy together,' Miss BAXTER
Tableau—Amazons' Triumph.
A. COOPER, R.A.

Comic Song, ... Mr REED
Tableau—The Grecian's Daughter.
GRECIAN HISTORY.

Doors open at Half-past 6 o'clock, to commence at 7, and the Performances will be one continued routine of Tableaux and Songs.

This style of performance continued the standing dish at provincial halls without any special development until the commencement of the sixties, when a novelty in the fare provided was introduced. This was the two-houses-a-night principle, a system not unknown in the metropolis. It proved naturally of pecuniary advantage to proprietors, as it caused the salary list to be lessened, while at the same time it allowed double the number of visitors to be admitted, even if the prices were on a lower scale. The Alhambra Music Hall in Liverpool was one of the earliest ventures of this description, and within a very brief period it was extended to halls in other cities, and even to the present time is very frequently to be met with. Artistes grumble at the custom, for they argue that they have to do double the work and only receive half as much again in salary. But

some proprietors have found they cannot run their halls on a profit on the other line, and so the performers have simply to grin and bear it.

The history of the music halls in Hull—the fourth city in the kingdom—may be briefly cited here, as it will serve as an example of the gradual rise which, at the same period, was taking place all over the country.

Early in the sixties the Mechanics' Hall, in Grimston Street, was occupied by Springethorpe's Waxworks, at which, as an additional attraction, a few performers were engaged to sing a song or two, and dance a step or so. A number of proprietors took possession of this hall, among others Burton, Wood, etc., but with varying success. In connection with the Mechanics'—or, as it came to be called, Springethorpe's—it is interesting to note that for the brief period of one week Miss Jenny Hill was the proprietress, but even her vitality could not put a spark of life into the business. It was not until Mr Leotard Bosco took possession that the hall began to show anything in the way of tangible receipts, but, being brim-full of business tact, this gentleman raised the hall high in the estimation of the townsfolk, and it speedily became a success. Mr Bosco took into partnership after a while Mr H. T. Downs, who, since the former quitted the ancient port, has continued to rule over its destinies. The hall is at present known as the Empire,

but at one period of its chequered existence was called the Star. The other hall in this town is the Alhambra, now owned by Mr Phillips. It has also been the cause of severe losses to many enterprising caterers in its time. There was also a place of entertainment known as the Pavilion in Carr Lane, but this proved so unsuccessful that it was ultimately pulled down, and on its site is now erected the handsome Grosvenor Hotel. At a 'free-and-easy' in this town, known as Harriday's, called 'The Golden Cross,' Miss Nelly Moon made her first appearance, in the year 1863.

As in Hull, so in other towns, music halls increased very rapidly in number, but all did not meet with the same success.

Coming nearer to the present day, we find twenty years ago that the chief resort of the variety order in Birmingham was Day's Concert Hall, while at Manchester there were in friendly rivalry the Gaiety, the Alexandra, the Canterbury, the People's, which to-day is a thriving and prosperous concern, and the Royal Grecian, at which Mr Peter Conroy, now musical director of the London Canterbury, used to wield the *bâton*. The Star Music Hall in Liverpool was at this time one of the best of the many halls great and small within the city on the Mersey.

The principal hall of that day in Edinburgh was Moss's Music Hall, previously known as

Levey's. At Belfast, the leading haunts were the Alhambra and the Colosseum. Glasgow was well provided for by the Scotia, the Britannia and Brown's. Bradford boasted of the Star and Pullan's, Hanley did not deem two variety houses unnecessary, and at Dublin Mr West was host of the Old Griffin, while 'Jude's' establishment was a celebrated institution. At Southampton Gordon's Theatre of Varieties did well, and Stocktonites revelled in the attractions provided at the local Star. There was Thornton's Music Hall at Leeds, Jeffrey's at Jarrow, Ned Hammond's at Huddersfield, and Mr and Mrs Sweeney's at Leicester, which was afterwards owned for a while by Mr Sam Torr and then by Paul. This establishment is now known as the Empire. Mr and Mrs White, the duettists, took over the music hall at Huddersfield; Bagnall & Blakey had the Oxford Music Hall at Newcastle; the Folly, Manchester, was opened by Mr Cambridge, and afterwards run by Mr Garcia.

No one in looking over the programmes of that period can fail to note that the principal 'stars' of the metropolis, or at least the majority of them, are conspicuous only by their absence, it being the custom in those days for the most popular artistes to tour the country with their own companies. Thus, one heard of Vance's Concert Party; Mr and Mrs Henri Clarke with their musical entertainment, *The World we live in;*

Mr Jolly Nash and Party, and so on. It is rather interesting and also curious to note that after the system of artistes touring with their own companies had quite become out-of-date and almost forgotten, it should so recently have become once again the vogue, and there is more than a probability that every year will find the custom increasing in popularity.

In dealing with the subject of the provincial variety stage, mention must not be omitted of the Catch Clubs, which at one time were as numerous as they were prosperous. Of these institutions there are but few remaining, the best known being the Dover Catch Club. These harmonic gatherings were conducted in a manner peculiar to themselves. Several local men of affluence each winter agreed to subscribe a certain sum, which was devoted to paying artistes, the hiring of a hall for a series of concerts, and for other incidental expenses. These clubs used not to engage many performers, but those retained were always well-known and popular personages. At least one if not two were always engaged from London to sing the songs that were their most successful and that were 'the talk of the town' as the saying is. And the managers of these C. C.'s thought nothing of paying large sums to induce artistes to go down for just one night or for a couple of evenings every now and then throughout the season. From these institutions

it may be said sprang up the present smoking concert, which is such an established institution during the winter season in London, and which must necessarily have a baneful effect on the pockets of music-hall proprietors.

Another not uninteresting feature in the development of the provincial variety stage is the revival, though in a different form it is true, of the 'circuit' system. In the days of the past it was customary for those artistes who sought for —and very often found—fame and fortune in the provinces to appear at the halls in certain towns which were all near to one another, and this used to be known as the circuit system, and although nowadays not called by the same appellation, the principle involved is the same. The Moss and Thornton tour, the Livermore tour and the Stoll tour are nothing else than 'circuits,' though the towns visited in the two first instances may be many miles from one another.

The provincial cities, however, as in most other things, followed in the wake of London, and did not become possessed of such magnificent palaces as some of the theatres of varieties which are now rapidly springing up everywhere in the country until less than five years ago. But since then it has been found that by the aid of Limited Liability Companies, these mighty structures, with their exquisite decorations in the highest style of art, with their grand staircases, their electric lights,

and their commodious and supremely comfortable auditoriums, can be erected, and that they will pay so handsomely as to render the dividends to the lucky shareholders, in the language of a well-known advertisement, both 'grateful and comforting.'

The honour of introducing this liberal-minded policy in the provinces belongs without doubt to Mr H. E. Moss, who is the head and corner stone of the Moss & Thornton firm. This gentleman has a keen eye to business, and is a shrewd, calculating manager, who thoroughly knows the provinces and what the audiences there require. Mr Moss's first great undertaking in this direction was the Empire, Edinburgh, which, though it had, and even now continues to have, no licence for drinking, has proved a wonderful success. The Empire, Newcastle—one of the prettiest halls in the country—was the next effort of this gentleman's ingenuity, and this proving equally as successful as the other, a third town was 'struck,' and on the site of the old Days' Concert Hall, at Birmingham, was erected and opened, in the May of 1894, another Empire, which is flourishing mightily, and which is on a par as far as handsomeness of decoration and elegance of design with any theatre of variety in the metropolis itself.

The celebrated firm of Moss & Thornton, in certain of whose enterprises Mr Kirk is a partner, controls no less than seven halls, viz. :—the Empire, Edinburgh ; the Empire, Birmingham ; the Empire,

Newcastle; the Scotia and the Gaiety, Glasgow; the Varieties, South Shields; and the New Alhambra, West Hartlepool, several of which establishments are now owned by Limited Companies. In addition to this large number yet another is in course of erection, to be called the Empire, which is Sheffield.

Next in importance to the above *entrepreneurs* as purveyors of variety fare to our provincial cousins are the Livermore Brothers, who have halls which are being carried on satisfactorily in Newcastle, Bristol, Sunderland and Aberdeen.

Mr Oswald Stoll, as well as being an agent, is also proprietor of halls at Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, each of which he has christened by the 'mascottic' name of Empire.

Another celebrated and experienced provincial prince of caterers is Mr Dan Lowrey, who has for so many years been proprietor of the Star Music Hall, Dublin, in which city he has myriads of friends, as is shown by the magnificent presentation of plate made to him in the year 1894. Not content with one successful property, which he sold in 1893 to a Limited Company, Mr Lowrey has just recently — December — opened an Empire at Belfast, which is built and decorated in the very best and most up-to-date style, and is proving, as was expected, a great and a genuine success. This popular gentleman has intentions of erecting similar palaces at Cork and Londonderry, so that ere long the

people of the Emerald Isle will not be able to say, with reference to their music halls, that the latter are 'another injustice to Ireland.'

Of other theatres of varieties, we would briefly mention the handsome Palace Theatre at Manchester, of which, by order of a Puritanical magistracy, the licence for drinking has repeatedly been refused; and the Empire, Bristol, which has up to now not proved a success, and is therefore closed. It will be opened shortly, however, by a Limited Company, in conjunction with the Pavilion at Bath.

The progressive policy is evidently strong within the hearts of the leading music-hall managers in the provinces, and every year will see new palaces erected on a scale of lavish splendour and liberality—a state of affairs equally beneficial to artistes as it is to the proprietors.

The salaries that are paid to artistes at provincial halls are comparatively fabulous: for whereas, if a performer working in London is appearing at four halls, each of which pays him £10 to £15 a week, the country manager would have to pay—and does pay—such an artiste £60 and £70 a week, and the former has no brother proprietor to share the outlay with him.

The writers know of a proprietor of a large hall in the north who told them recently that he did not want small turns, he could get them any time. What he wanted to compete against the strong

opposition in his town were 'stars,' and he promptly offered £100 a week for two weeks for a certain popular serio, and £125 a week for one comedian, and £150 for another. This will show the enormous prices that, chiefly owing to competition, have to be paid by provincial proprietors. It also shows very clearly, that if they can afford to grant such salaries to the best artistes, they must know that the public of their town or towns will respond in sufficiently large numbers to recompense them for the gigantic outlay. In order, very naturally, to guard against contingencies arising in the contracts made between proprietor and artiste, the latter is bound not to appear for a certain time before and after the engagement at any other hall in that town. This is, in the opinion of the writers, only a just and reasonable condition used by managers for their own protection.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

Survey of the Variety Stage—Its Early Struggles and Final Triumph—Its Opponents and Critics—Its Shortcomings—The Cause—The Music Hall and the Theatre—The Relations of the Two—The Variety Stage of the Future—Its Prospects—Apology for the Present History—Acknowledgment of Indebtedness—Finis.

IN the preceding chapters the writers have endeavoured to trace the rise, progress and gradual development of the variety stage from its rude beginning in the saw-dusted parlour of the obscure tavern and the harmonic supper-rooms of the night hostelries of sixty years ago, down to the prominent and prosperous position which it holds among places of popular entertainment at the present day. They have followed its history from the day of small things and lowly environments to the hour of its triumph, when, like the prodigal son, it has cast off its garments of sorrow, and, robed in rich vestments, has sat down to the feast of the fatted calf. It has passed, like many other popular institutions, through many gradations, has endured much obloquy and long and persistent

persecution, but though smitten hip and thigh, and sorely tried by many public and private enemies, it has managed to live down opposition of the fiercest and most virulent description, and in many cases, too, it is consoling to record, it has contrived to outlive its opponents. There are, however, still many who regard the variety stage with no friendly eye—Puritanism in the dotage of the century dies hard—but where it has one enemy it has countless friends. The music hall, indeed, has ever been beloved of the populace, and the public, for whom it caters and upon whose suffrage it solely and wholly exists, have ever been its best and constant friends, standing by it through thick and through thin, and never, whatever else its Pecksniffian censors might do, deserting it in the hour of its need. To-day it stands upon a solid and enduring foundation, and if assailable, and yet assailed by the scattered forces of its olden foes, still continues practically and placidly impregnable. There have been periods in its history, no doubt, when the tone of music-hall entertainments was both corrupt and degenerate, when the ribald song and the obscene jest polluted the ears and defiled the morals of the audience, when no decent woman, and no self-respecting man might be seen without shame within the four walls of a temple of Terpsichore. But the same might be said of the stage of the Restoration, or of a still earlier and more robust period. But the cause is to

be found without rather than within. The variety stage, like its elder sister, is peculiarly sensitive to the tone and spirit of the times of which it is at once the mirror and the record. But *tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*, as the old and oft-quoted adage has it, and the modern music hall presents a programme which is as pure and irreproachable in tone as, and in many cases still more so, than that provided by the legitimate stage itself. Indeed, the relation of the two is as close as it is intimate. Every year a multitude of variety artistes—the flowers of the profession usually—are attracted to the theatres, whose flickering fortunes they are called in to revive, and where they at once fill leading and distinguished positions, and year by year there has been an exodus of clever actors and actresses to the variety halls, to which they are attracted by the handsomer emoluments, the readier recognition, and the more substantial rewards which it holds out to genuine and legitimate talent of every style and degree. Critics may carp, therefore, and prudes may prowl to their hearts content, but facts are proverbially stubborn things, and there is no contesting the fact that the position occupied by the variety stage to-day is as conspicuous everywhere as it is unique. Neither drama nor opera has had erected to its service more numerous or more palatial temples, and neither branches of art can count so many pro-

fessors and supporters as those devoted to the cause of this peculiar and popular form of entertainment. But if the music hall has a glowing and interesting past, it has a still more golden and attractive future.

Keeping, as before, in close and sympathetic touch with the great, beating heart of the people and enlisting in its service, as its sphere of usefulness extends and broadens, the active and artistic co-operation of the best authors, the best artistes and the keenest intelligence of its day, it will necessarily yield still better and brighter results, and the cultured audience of the twentieth century—when, melancholy prospect! the present writers have been gathered to their fathers—may sit through a programme in which the Shakespeares and the Henry Irvings of the future may collaborate to glorify and adorn. But, as the novelist is wont to say, we anticipate. The writers have finished their self-set task and have no further right to the reader's indulgence.

In a work of the present kind it would perhaps be impossible to avoid some degree of error and inaccuracy. They may fairly say, however, that they have conscientiously endeavoured to make the book as free, as far as possible, from blemishes and defects of every description. And in this connection they desire to thank publicly and personally the many friends, both professional and private, who from time to time in the course of their

task have rendered them so much valuable assistance and advice, which in every case has been as sincerely appreciated as it has been freely and generously accorded. Lack of space prevents them mentioning in detail the names of the many talented artistes, managers, chairmen, proprietors and littérateurs who have thus aided them in the present history, while it would be unjust as well as invidious to make exceptions. With these few farewell words, the writers take their reluctant leave of a work which has involved them in many months of arduous research, and many hours of exacting toil, but which has been to them ever and through all—a labour of love.

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The variety stage