VI

THE ABBÉ FRANZ LISZT

On 14th April 1886 Abbé Liszt came to the Lyceum to see *Faust* and to stay to supper in the Beefsteak Room. He was then the guest of Mr. Littleton, staying at his house at Sydenham. At that time musical London made such a rush for the old man that it was absolutely necessary to guard him when he came to the theatre. All the real music lovers of the younger generation wanted to see him, for they had not had opportunity before and were not likely to have it again. He was then seventy-five years of age and had practically given up playing inasmuch as he only played to please himself or his friends. That night he was accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Littleton together with the sons and daughters-in-law of the latter, and by Stavenhagen his pupil, and Madame Muncacksy. As it was necessary to keep away all who might intrude upon him—enthusiasts, interviewers, cranks, autograph-fiends, notoriety seekers who would like to be seen in his box—we arranged a sort of fortress for him. Next to the royal box on the grand tier O.P. was another box separated only by a partition, part of which could be taken down. This box was on the outside from the proscenium. We had the door of this box screwed up so that entrance to it could only be had through the royal box. Liszt sat here with some of the others unassailable, as one of the Mr. Littletons kept the key of the other box and none could obtain entrance without permission.

There was an interesting party at supper in the Beefsteak Room, amongst them, in addition to the party at the play, the following: Ellen Terry, Professor Max Müller, Lord and Lady Wharncliffe, Sir Alexander and Lady Mackenzie, Sir Alfred Cooper, Walter Bach and Miss Bach, Sir Morell Mackenzie, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Littleton, Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Littleton, Mr. and Mrs. William Beatty Kingston, and the Misses Casella.

Liszt sat on the right hand of Ellen Terry who faced Irving. From where I sat at the end of the table I could not but notice the quite extraordinary resemblance in the profiles of the two men. After supper Irving went round and sat next him, and the likeness became a theme of comment from all present. Irving was then forty-eight years of age; but he looked still a young man, with 335raven-black hair and face without a line. His neck was then without a line or mark of age. Liszt, on the other hand, looked older than his age. His stooping shoulders and long white hair made him seem of patriarchal age. Nevertheless the likeness of the two men was remarkable.

Stavenhagen played, but as it was thought by all that Liszt must be too tired after a long day no opening was made for him, much as all longed to hear him. The party did not break up till four o'clock in the morning. The note in my diary runs:

"Liszt fine face—leonine—several large pimples—prominent chin of old man—long white hair down on shoulders—all call him 'Master'—must have had great strength in youth. Very sweet and simple in manner. H. I. and he very much alike—seemed old friends as they talked animatedly though knowing but a few words of each other's language—but using much expression and gesticulation. It was most interesting."

The next day Irving and my wife and I, together with some others, lunched with the Baroness Burdett-Coutts in Stratton Street to meet Liszt. After lunch there was a considerable gathering of friends asked to meet him. Lady Burdett-Coutts very thoughtfully had the pianos removed from the drawing-rooms, lest their presence might seem as though he were expected to play. After a while he noticed the absence and said to his hostess:

"I see you have no pianos in these rooms!" She answered frankly that she had them removed so that he would not be tempted to play unless he wished to do so.

"But I would like some music!" he said, and then went on:

"I have no doubt but there is a piano in the house, and that it could be brought here easily!" It was not long before the servants brought into the great drawing-room a grand piano worthy of even his hands. Then Antoinette Sterling sang some ballads in her own delightful way. The contralto tones went straight to one's heart.

"Now I will play!" said Liszt. And he did.

It was magnificent and never to be forgotten.

VII

GOUNOD

Gounod came, as far as I know, but once to the Lyceum. That was during the first week of the season—6th September, 1882–during 336the continuance of the run of *Romeo and Juliet*. He came round to Irving's dressing-room at the end of the third act and sat all the time of the wait chatting. Gounod was a man who seemed to speak fully formed thoughts. It was not in any way that there was about his speech any appearance of formality or premeditation. He seemed to speak right out of his heart; but his habit or method was such that his words had a power of exact conveyance of the thoughts. One might have stenographed every sentence he spoke, and when reproduced it would require no alteration. Form and structure and choice of words were all complete.

After chatting a while Irving was loth to let him go. When the call-boy announced the beginning of Act IV.—in which act Irving had no part—he asked Gounod to stay on with him. So also at the beginning of Act V. When he had to go on the stage for the Apothecary scene, he asked me to stay with Gounod till he came back—I had been in the dressing-room all the time. Whilst Irving was away Gounod and I chatted; several things he said have always remained with me.

He was saying something about some “great man” when he suddenly stopped and, after a slight pause, said:

“But after all there is no really ‘great’ man! There are men through whom great things are spoken!”

I asked him what in his estimation were the best words to which he had composed music. He answered almost at once, without hesitation:

“‘Oh that we two were maying!’ I can never think of those words without emotion! How can one help it?” He spoke the last verse of the poem from *The Saint’s Tragedy*:

“Oh! that we two lay sleeping

In our nest in the churchyard sod,

With our limbs at rest on the quiet earth’s breast,

And our souls at home with God.”

As he spoke, the emotion seemed to master him more and more; at the last line the tears were running down his cheeks. He spoke with an extraordinary concentration and emphasis. It was hard to believe that he was not singing, for the effect of his speaking the words of Charles Kingsley’s song was the same. His speech seemed like—was music.

Later on I asked him who in his opinion was the best composer. 337“Present company, of course, excepted!” I added, whereat he smiled. After a moment’s thought he answered:

“Mendelssohn! Mendelssohn is the best!” Then after another but shorter pause: “But there is only one Mozart!”

VIII

SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who was one of the oldest and closest of Irving’s friends, had much to do with him in his productions. He composed the music for *Ravenswood* and *Coriolanus*. At Irving’s burial in Westminster Abbey a part of the latter, the *Marcia Funèbre*, was played whilst the coffin was being borne from the choir to the grave.

In addition to these important works, Mackenzie wrote the music for *Manfred*, which Irving intended at one time to produce. He was also engaged on the music for *Richard II.*, a large part of which was completed when the play was abandoned owing to Irving's serious illness in 1898.

Mackenzie in an "interview" shortly after Irving's death, told a pretty story of how the end of *Ravenswood* had been changed. Irving had arranged that the last scene should be the waste of quicksand, wherein Edgar was lost, seen in the cold glare of moonlight—suggestive of misery. When, however, he heard the music—of which the finale is the *love motive* in a triumphant burst—he seemed much struck by it. He said nothing at the time, but the next morning the composer received a letter thanking him for the hint and adding:

"And the moonlight on the sea I shall change to the rising sun."

LXI
LUDWIG BARNAY

I

When in 1881 the Meiningen Company came to London to play in Drury Lane Theatre at least one German player came with them who, though for patriotic reasons he played with the Company, had not belonged to it. This was Ludwig Barnay. By a happy chance I met him very soon after his arrival and we became friends. He was then able to speak but very little English. Like all Magyars, however, he was a good linguist, and before a fortnight was over he spoke the language so well that only an occasional word or phrase spoken to or by him brought out his ignorance.

At their first meeting Irving and he became friends; they "took" to each other in a really remarkable way. Barnay had come to see the play then running, *Hamlet*, and between the acts came round to Irving's dressing-room. By this time he spoke English quite well; when he lacked a word he unconsciously showed his scholarship by trying it in the Greek. Irving after a few minutes forgot that he was a foreigner and began to use his words in the *argot* of his own calling. For instance, talking of the difficulty of getting some actors to study their parts properly, he said:

"The worst of it is they won't take the trouble even to learn their words, and when the time comes they begin to "fluff." To "fluff" means in the language of the theatre to be uncertain, inexact, imperfect. This was too much for the poor foreigner, who up to then had understood everything perfectly. He raised his hands—palm outwards, the wrists first and then the fingers straightening—as he said in quite a piteous tone:

“Flof!—Fluoof—Fluff! Alas! I know him not!”

II

A very delightful gathering about that time—one which became remarkable in its way—was a supper given by Toole at the Adelphi 339Hotel on 1st July. Amongst the guests were Irving, Barnay, McCullough, Lawrence Barrett, Wilson Barrett, Leopold Teller. After supper some one—I think it was Irving—said something on the subject of State subsidy for theatres. It was an interesting theme to such a company, and, as the gathering was by its items really international, every one wanted to hear what every one else said. So the conversational torch went round the table—like the sun, or the wine. There were all sorts and varieties of opinion, for each said what was in his heart. When it came to Barnay’s turn he electrified us all. He did not say much, but it was all to the point and spoken in a way which left no doubt as to his own sincerity. He finished up:

“Yes, these are all good—to some. The subsidy in France; the system of the Hof and the Stadt Theatres in Germany; the help and control in Austria which brings the chosen actors into the State service. But”—and here his eyes flashed, his nostrils quivered, and his face was lit with enthusiasm—“your English freedom is worth them all!” Then, springing to his feet, he raised his glass and cried in a voice that rang like a trumpet:

“Freiheit!”

III

Before the production of *Faust* in 1885 Irving took a party, including Mr. and Mrs. Comyns Carr and Ellen Terry, to Nürnberg and Rothenburg to study the ground. On the way home they went to Berlin. There Barnay gave two special performances in his own theatre, the Berliner. The bill of the play is in its way historical; the names of the honoured guests were starred. The performances were of *Julius Cæsar* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

IV

The Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, to whose theatre the Meiningen Company belonged, sent to Irving an Order of his own Court. Later on, however, when he had seen Irving play and had met him, he said that the Order sent him was not good enough for so distinguished a man. He accordingly bestowed on him—with the consent and co-operation of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh)—the Order of the Komthur Cross of the Second Class of the Ducal Saxon Ernestine House Order—a distinction, I believe, of high local 340dignity, carrying with it something in the shape of knighthood. Irving wore the Collar of the Order on the night of 25th May 1897 when the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen came to supper with him in the Beefsteak Room—the only time I think when he wore the insignia of this special honour.

Irving's first meeting with the Grand Duke was preceded by an odd circumstance. This was on the evening of 28th May 1885.

I was passing across the stage between the acts when I saw a stranger—a tall, distinguished-looking old gentleman. I bowed and told him that no one was allowed on the stage without special permission. He bowed in return, and said:

"I thought that permission would have been accorded to me!"

"The rule," said I, "is inviolable. I fear I must ask you to come with me to the auditorium. This will put us right; and then I can take any message you wish to Mr. Irving."

"May I tell you who I am?" he asked.

"I am sorry," I said, "but I fear I cannot ask you till we are outside. You see, I am the person responsible for carrying out the rules of the theatre. And no matter who it may be I have to do the duty which I have undertaken."

"You are quite right!… I shall come with pleasure!" he said with very grave and sweet politeness. When we had passed through the iron door—which had chanced to be open, and so he had found his way in—I said as nicely as I could, for his fine manner and his diction and his willingness to obey orders charmed me:

"I trust you will pardon me, sir, in case my request to leave the stage may have seemed too imperative or in any way wanting in courtesy. But duty is duty. Now will you kindly give me your name and I will go at once and ask Mr. Irving's permission to bring you on the stage, and to see him if you will!"

"I thank you, sir!" he said; "I am the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. I am very pleased with your courtesy; and to see that you carry out orders so firmly and so urbanely. You are quite right! It is what I like to see. I wish my people would always do the same!"

LXII
CONSTANT COQUELIN (AINÉ)

Irving and Coquelin first met on the night of April 19, 1888. The occasion was a supper given for the purpose by M. L. Mayer, the impresario of French artists in London, at his house in Berners Street. Previous to this there had been a certain amount of friction between the two men. Coquelin had written an article in *Harper's Magazine* for May 1897 on "Acting and Actors." In his article he made certain comments on Irving which were—using the word in its etymological meaning—not impertinent, but were most decidedly wanting in delicacy of feeling towards a fellow artist.

Irving replied to the article in an "Actor's Note" in the *Nineteenth Century* for June of the same year. His article was rather a caustic one, and in it he did not spare the player, turned critic of his fellow players.

To the "not impertinent" comments on his own method he merely alluded in a phrase of deprecation of such comments being made by one player on another. But of the theory advanced by Coquelin, in which he supported the views of Diderot, he offered a direct negative, commenting freely himself on such old-fashioned heresies.

It is but right to mention that when, some two years later, Coquelin re-published his article, with some changes and embellishments, in the *Revue Illustrée*, December 1889, under the title, "L'Art du Comédien," he left out entirely the part relating to Irving.

When the two men met at Mayer's they at once became friends. The very fact of having crossed swords brought to each a measure of respect to the other. At first the conversation was distinctly on the militant side, the batteries being masked. The others who were present, including Toole, Coquelin fils, and Sir Squire (then Mr.) Bancroft, had each a word to say at times. Irving, secure in his intellectual position with regard to the theory of acting, was most hearty in his manner and used his rapier with sweet dexterity. 342Toole, who had his own grievance: that Coquelin, an artist of first-class position, late a Sociétaire of the Comédie-Française, should accept fee or emolument for private performances—a thing not usual to high-grade players of the British stage—limited himself to asking Coquelin in extremely bad French if it was possible that this was true. At that time Coquelin did not speak much English, though he attained quite a proficiency in it before long.

In a very short time the supper party at Mayer's subsided into gentle and complete harmony. The actors began to understand each other, and from that moment became friends. Coquelin gave imitations of certain French actors, amongst them Frédéric Le Maître and Mounet-Sully. The performance was a strange comment on his own theory that an actor in portraying a character must in the so doing divest himself of his own identity, and quite justified Irving's remark in his "note":

"Indeed it is strange to find an actor, with an individuality so marked as that of M. Coquelin, taking it for granted that his identity can be entirely lost."

To us whilst his imitations were remarkably clever, there was no possibility of forgetting for an instant that the exponent was Coquelin. Why should we? If an actor entirely loses his own identity the larger measure of his possible charm is gone!

I find this note in my diary regarding Coquelin on that night of Mayer's supper:

"He is a fine actor; essentially a Comedian!"

LXIII

SARAH BERNHARDT

When Irving and Sarah Bernhardt met there already was that predisposition towards friendship which true artists must feel towards those who work greatly in their own craft. When the Comédie-Française came to London in 1879 and played at the Gaiety Theatre, Irving went to one of the *matinées* and was immensely struck by Sarah Bernhardt's genius. He was taken round on the stage and introduced to the various members of the Company; but he did not have in that short season any opportunities of furthering friendships. That was a busy season for every one, both the London players and the foreigners. We were playing *répertoire* and changing the bill every few nights; the rehearsals were endless. So too with the strangers; they had a great list of plays to get through, and they also were rehearsing all day. When they could the various members of the French Company came to the Lyceum, where they were always made welcome. Indeed, all through his management Irving made it an imperative rule that his fellow artists should when possible be made welcome at his theatre. Little people as well as great people, all were welcome. In those early days the same rule of hospitality did not hold with the Comédie-Française; actors had to go like any one else—on a "specie basis." Even Irving who had thrown his own theatre open to his French fellow artists had to pay for his own box at the Gaiety. When, however, Jules Claretie became Director of the Théâtre Français he changed all that, absolutely.

The next year, 1880, Sarah Bernhardt was playing for a short time in London—this time her own venture—again at the Gaiety. Irving took a box for her benefit, a *matinée* on 16th June. Loveday and I went with him. The bill was *Jean Marie*, the fourth act of *La*

Rome vaincue, and the fifth act of *Hernani*. Irving was charmed with her playing in *Jean Marie*, which is a one-act piece with the same note of sentiment in it as that of the song "Auld Robin Gray." He was also struck with her extraordinary tragic force in *La Rome vaincue*.

344On Saturday night, 3rd July of that year, 1880, Sarah Bernhardt came to supper in the Beefsteak Room. The two other guests were both friends of hers, Bastien Lepage the painter, and Libbotton the violoncellist. This was a night of extraordinary interest. Irving and Sarah Bernhardt were both at their best and spoke quite freely on all subjects concerning their art which came on the *tapis*. Irving was eager to know the opinion of one so familiar with the working of the French stage and yet so daring and original in her own life and artistic method. When they touched on the subject of the value of subsidy she grew excited and spoke of the value of freedom and independence:

"What use," she said, "subsidy when a French actress cannot live on the salary, at even the Comédie-Française!"

On the subject of tradition in art her manner was more pronounced. She railed against tradition on the stage—as distinguished from the guiding memory and record of great effective work. Her face lit up and her eyes blazed; she smote her clenched hand heavily on the table, as, after a fierce diatribe against the cramping tendency of an artificial method relentlessly enforced, she hurled out:

"A bas la tradition!"

Then the change to her softer moods was remarkable. She was a being of incarnate grace, with a soft undertone of voice as wooing as the cooing of pigeons. As I looked at her—this was my first opportunity of seeing her close at hand—all the wondrous charm which Bastien Lepage had embodied in his picture of her seemed at full tide. This picture of Bastien Lepage—that wherein she is seated holding a distaff—was exhibited in a silver frame at the first exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery and met with universal admiration. With the original before one and the memory of her wonderful playing ever fresh in one's mind it was not possible not to be struck with her serpentine grace. I said to Bastien Lepage in such French as I could manage:

"In that great picture you seemed to get the true Sarah. You have painted her as a serpent with all a serpent's grace!" He seemed much interested and asked me how I made that out. Again, as well as I could I explained that all the lines of the picture were curved—there was not a single straight line in the drawing or shading. He seemed more than pleased and asked me to go on. I said that it had seemed to me that he had painted all the shadows in a scheme of yellow, shading them to represent in a subtle way the scales of the serpent skin.

345He suddenly took me by both hands and shook them hard—I thought for a moment that he was going to kiss me. Then he patted me on the shoulder, and suddenly shot out the big wide cuff then in vogue in Parisian dress, and taking a pencil from his pocket drew the picture in little, showing every line as serpentine, and suggesting the shadows with little curved and shaded lines. Then he shook hands again.

I have regretted ever since that I did not ask him to cut off that cuff and give it to me! It was an artistic treasure!

In some of the discussions on art that evening he too got excited. I remember once the violent way in which he spoke of his own dominant note:

“Je suis un ré-a-liste!” As he spoke his voice rose and quivered with that “brool” that marks strong emotion. The short hair of his bulled head actually seemed to bristle like the hair of an excited cat. He rose and brought down his raised clenched fist on the table with a mighty thump. One could realise him at that moment as a possible leader of an *émeute*. One seemed to see him amid a whirl of drifting powder-smoke waving a red flag over the top of a barricade.

Another thing which Bastien Lepage said that night has always remained in my memory. It is so comprehensive that its meaning may be widely applied:

“In an original artist the faults are brothers to the qualities!”

We sat late that night. It was five o’clock when we broke up, and the high sun was streaming into our eyes as we left the building. Many a night after that, Sarah Bernhardt spent pleasant hours at the Lyceum—pleasant to all concerned. She grew to *love* the acting of Irving and of Ellen Terry, and whenever she had an opportunity she would hurry in by the stage door and take a seat in the wings. Several times when she arrived in London from Paris she would hurry straight from the station to the theatre and see all that was possible of the play. It was a delight and a pride to both Irving and Miss Terry when she came; and whenever she could do so she would stop to supper. Those nights were delightful. Sometimes some of her comrades would come with her. Marius, Garnier, Darmont or Damala. The last time the latter—to whom she was then married—came he looked like a dead man. I sat next him at supper, and the idea that he was dead was strong on me. I think he had taken some mighty dose of opium, for he moved and spoke 346like a man in a dream. His eyes, staring out of his white, waxen face, seemed hardly the eyes of the living.

Sarah Bernhardt was always charming and fresh and natural. Every good and fine instinct of her nature seemed to be at the full when she was amongst artistic comrades whom she liked and admired. She inspired every one else and seemed to shed a sort of intellectual sunshine around her.

347

LXIV
GENEVIÈVE WARD

I

On the evening of Thursday, 20th November 1873, I strolled into the Theatre Royal, Dublin, to see what was on. I had been then for two years a dramatic critic, and was fairly well used to the routine of things. There was a very poor house indeed; in that huge theatre the few hundreds scattered about were like the plums in a fo’c’sle duff. The play was Legouve’s *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, a somewhat machine-made play of the old school. The lady who played Adrienne interested me at once; she was like a triton amongst minnows. She was very handsome; of a rich dark beauty, with clear-cut classical features, black hair, and great eyes that now and again flashed fire. I sat in growing admiration of her powers. Though there was a trace here and there of something which I thought amateurish she was so masterful, so dominating in other ways that I could not understand it. At the end of the second act I went into the lobby to ask the attendants if they could tell me anything about her as the name on the bill was entirely new to me. None of them, however, could enlighten me on any point except that she had appeared on Monday in *Lucrezia Borgia*; and that the business was very bad.

When the grand scene of the play came—that between the actress and her rival, the Princesse de Bouillon—the audience was all afire. Their enthusiasm and the sound of it recalled the description of Edmund Kean’s appearance at Drury Lane. I went round on the stage and saw John Harris the manager. I asked him who was the woman who was playing and where did she come from.

“She has no right to be playing to an audience like that!” I said pointing at the curtain which lay between us and the auditorium.

“I quite agree with you!” he answered. “She is fine; isn’t she? I saw her play in Manchester and at once offered her the date here 348which was vacant.” Just then she came upon the stage and he introduced me to her. When the play was over I went home and wrote my criticism, which duly appeared in the *Irish Echo* next evening.

That engagement of nine days was a series of *débuts*. In addition to *Adrienne Lecouvreur* she appeared in *Medea*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *The Actress of Padua*, the "sleep-walking" scene of *Macbeth*, *The Honeymoon*. In one and all she showed great power and greater promise. It is a satisfactory memory to me to find, after her career has been made and her retirement—all too soon—effected after more than thirty years of stage success, in my diary of 29th November 1873—the last night of her engagement—

("Mem. will be a great actress").

I was reintroduced to her—this time by a personal friend—and there and then began a close friendship which has never faltered, which has been one of the delights of my life and which will I trust remain as warm as it is now till the death of either of us shall cut it short.

II

Geneviève Ward, both in the choice of her plays and in her manner of playing, followed at that time the "old" school. I had a good opportunity of judging the excellence of her method, for that very year, 1873, after an absence of fifteen years, Madame Ristori had visited Dublin. She was then in her very prime; an actress of amazing power and finish. She had played *Medea*, *Mary Stuart*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Marie Antoinette*. Her method was of course the "Italian," of which she was the finest living exponent—probably the finest that ever had been. Her speech was a series of cadences; the voice rose and fell in waves—sometimes ripples, sometimes billows—but always modified with such exquisite precision as not to attract special attention to the rhythmic quality. Its effect was entirely unconscious. Indeed it was a method which in time could, and did, become of itself mechanical—like breathing—so that it did not in the least degree interfere even with the volcanic expression of passion. The study was of youth and at the beginning of art; but when the method was once formed nature could express herself in it as unfettered as in any other medium. Years afterwards Miss Ward showed me one of Ristori's promptbooks; and I could not but be struck with the accentuation. 349Indeed the marking above the syllables ran in such unbroken line as to look like musical scoring.

Miss Ward was a friend of the great Italian and had learned most of her art from her. She was a fine linguist, speaking French, Italian and Spanish as easily as her own tongue. At that time Ristori, who was in private life La Comtessa Campramican del Grillo, lived in her husband's ancestral home in Rome, and Miss Ward often stayed with her. Miss Ward in her private life was also a Countess, having whilst a very young girl married a Russian, Count de Gerbel of Nicolaeiff. The marriage was a romance as marked as anything that could appear on the stage. In 1855 at Nice Count de Gerbel had met and fallen in love with her and proposed marriage. She was willing and they were duly married at the Consulate at Nice, the marriage in the Russian church was to follow in Paris. But the Count was not of chivalrous nature. In time his fancy veered round to some other quarter, and he declared that by a trick of Russian law which does not acknowledge the marriage of a Russian until the ceremony in the Russian church has been performed, the marriage which had taken place was not legal. His wife and her father and mother, however, were not those to pass such a despicable act. With her mother she appealed to the Czar, who having heard the story was furiously indignant. Being an autocrat, he took his own course. He summoned his vassal Count de Gerbel to go to Warsaw, where he was to carry out the orders which would be declared to him. There in due time he appeared. The altar was set for marriage and before it stood the injured lady, her father, Colonel Ward, and her mother. Her father was armed, for the occasion was to them one of grim import. De Gerbel yielded to the mandate of his Czar, and the marriage—with all needful safeguards this time—was duly effected. Then the injured Countess bowed to him and moved away with her own kin. At the church door husband and wife parted, never to meet again.

III

In her first youth Miss Ward was a singer and had great success in Grand Opera. But overwork in Cuba strained her voice. It was thought that this might militate against great and final success; so, bowing to the inevitable, she with her usual courage forsook the lyric for the dramatic stage. It was when she had 350prepared herself for the latter and was ready to make her new venture that I first saw her.

IV

During the holiday season of 1879, whilst Irving was yachting in the Mediterranean, Miss Ward rented the Lyceum for a short season commencing 2nd August. By the contract Irving had agreed to find, in addition to the theatre, the heads of departments, box-office and the usual working staff at an inclusive rent, as he wished to keep all his people together. So I had to remain in London to look after these matters. Miss Ward asked me to be manager for her also; but I said I could not do so as a matter of business as it might be possible that her interests and Irving’s might clash; but that I would do all I could.

She opened in a play called *Zillah* written by her friend Palgrave Simpson and another. It was put in preparation some time before and was carefully rehearsed. My own work kept me so busy that I did not have any time to see the rehearsals till the night before the performance when the dress rehearsal was held. That rehearsal was one which I shall never forget. It was too late to say anything—there was no time then to make any radical change; and so I held my peace.

The play was of the oldest-fashioned and worst type of “Adelphi” drama! It was machine-made and heartless and tiresome to the last degree, and in addition the language was turgid beyond belief. It was an absolute failure, and was taken off after a few nights. *Lucrezia Borgia* was put up whilst a new play should be got ready. She had not made arrangements for a second new play, so we all undertook to do what we could to find a suitable play, a new one. Miss Ward gave me a great parcel of plays sent to her at various times. I came on one play which at once arrested my attention. As I shortly afterwards learned, it was one which had been hawked about unsuccessfully. So soon as I had read it I sent word to Miss Ward that I thought, with a little alteration in the first act, it would make a great success. Miss Ward’s judgment agreed with my own. She knew the author, Hermann Merivale, and wrote to him to see her. He came to the Lyceum that night. He came in a hurry, passing through London; she saw him a few minutes after and the agreement was verbally made.

351The play was produced on August 21—within a fortnight of the time of its discovery. It was an enormous success, and ran the whole time of her tenancy—indeed a week longer than had been decided on as Irving was loth to disturb the successful run.

The play was *Forget me not*, by Hermann Merivale and F. C. Grove. Miss Ward played it continuously for *ten years* and made a fortune with it.

V

Miss Geneviève Ward played in four of Irving’s great productions, of course always as a special engagement. The first was *Becket*, in which she “created” the part of Queen Eleanor—by old custom, to “create” a stage part is to play it first in London; the second was Morgan Le Fay in *King Arthur*; the third the Queen in *Cymbeline*; and the fourth Queen Margaret in *Richard III*. In all these parts she was exceedingly good.

With regard to the last-named play, there was one of the few instances in which Irving was open to correction with regard to emphasis of a word. In Act IV. scene 3, of his acting version—Act IV. scene 4, of the original play—the last two lines of Queen Margaret’s speech to Queen Elizabeth before her exit:

“Bettering thy loss makes the bad-causer worse;

Revolving this will teach thee how to curse!”

When Miss Ward spoke the last line she emphasised the word *this*—
“Revolving *this* will teach thee how to curse!” Irving said the emphasised word should be teach—“Revolving this will *teach* thee how to curse!”

They each stuck to their own opinion; but at the last rehearsal he came to her and said:

“You are quite right, Miss Ward, your reading is quite correct.” I daresay he had not considered the reading when arranging the play. As a matter of fact in his original arrangement of the play, at his first production of it under Mrs. Bateman in 1877, Queen Margaret was not in the scene at all. In the new version he had restored her to the scene as he wished to “fatten” Miss Ward’s part and so add to the strength of the play. Miss Ward was always a particularly *strong* actress, good at invective, and as the play had no part for Ellen Terry he wished to give it all the other help he could.

VI

Miss Ward has one great stage gift which is not given to many: her eyes can blaze. I can only recall two other actresses who had the same quality in good degree: Mdlle. Schneider, who forty years ago played the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein in Offenbach’s Opera; and Christine Nilsson. The latter I saw in London in 1867, and from where I sat—high up in the seat just in front of the gallery—I could note the starry splendour of her blue eyes. Ten years later, in *Lohengrin* at Her Majesty’s Opera House, I noticed the same—this time from the stalls. And yet once again when I sat opposite her at supper on the night of her retirement, June 20, 1888. The supper party was a small one, given by Mr. and Mrs. Brydges-Willyams at 9 Upper Brook Street. Irving was there and Ellen Terry, Lord Burnham and Miss Matilda Levy—brother and sister of our hostess—Count Miranda, to whom Nilsson was afterwards married, and his daughter, my wife and myself.

Nilsson came in from her triumph at the Albert Hall, blazing with jewels. She wore that night only those that had been given to her by Kings and Queens—and other varieties of monarchs.

LXV
JOHN LAWRENCE TOOLE

I

The friendship between Henry Irving and John Lawrence Toole began in Edinburgh in 1857. Toole was the elder and had already won for himself the position of a local semi-star. The chances of distinction come to the "Low" comedian quicker than to the exponent of Tragedy or "High" Comedy, and Toole had commenced his stage experience at almost as early an age as Irving—eighteen. On 20th June 1894, during a Benefit at the Lyceum for the Southwark Eye Hospital, at which he did the wonderfully droll character sketch, "Trying a Magistrate," he told me that forty-five years before, Charles Dickens had heard him do the sketch and advised him to go on the stage. Wisely he had taken the advice; from the very start he had an exceptionally prosperous career.

He, the kindliest and most genial soul on earth, became a fast friend with the proud, shy, ambitious young beginner, eight years his junior. From the first he seemed to believe in Irving, and predicted for him a great career. To this end he contributed all through his life. When he toured on his own account he took Irving with him, giving him a star place in his bill, and an opportunity of exhibiting his own special tragic power in a recital of *The Dream of Eugene Aram*.

To the last day of Irving's life the friendship of the two men each for the other never flagged or faltered. Such a thing as jealousy of the other never entered into the heart of either. Toole simply venerated his friend and enjoyed his triumph more than he did his own. He would not hear without protest any one speak of Irving except in a becoming way; and there was nothing which Toole possessed which he would not have shared with Irving. When one entertained, there was always a place for the other; whoever had the good fortune to become a friend of either found his friendship doubled at once. The two men seemed to 354supplement each other's natures. Each had, in his own way and of its own kind, a great sense of humour. Toole's genial, ebullient, pronounced; Irving's saturnine, keen, and suggestive. Both had—each again in his own way—a very remarkable seriousness. Those who only saw Toole in his inimitable pranks knew little how keenly the man felt emotion; how unwavering he was in his sense of duty; how earnest in his work. With Irving the humour was a fixed quantity, which all through his life kept its relative proportion to his seriousness; but Toole, being a low comedian, and perhaps because of it, seemed at times vastly different in his hours of work and relaxation. For it is a strange thing that the conditions of emotion are such that what is work in one case is rest in another, and *vice versa*; the serious man finds ease in relaxation, the humorous man seeks in quietude his rest from the stress of laughter. In their younger days and up to middle life the two men had indulged in harmless pranks. They both loved a joke and would take any pains to compass it. The tricks they played together would fill a volume. Of course from their protean powers of expressing themselves and in merging their identities actors have rare opportunities of consummating jokes. Moreover they are in the habit of working together, and two or three men who understand each other’s methods can go far to sway the unwary how they will.

II

One of the practical jokes of Toole and Irving is almost classical. One Sunday when they both happened to be playing at Liverpool at the same time they went to dine at an old inn at Wavertree celebrated for the excellence of its hospitality. They had a good dinner and a good bottle of port and sat late. When most of the guests in the hotel had gone to bed and when the time necessary for their own departure was drawing nigh, they rang and told the waiter to get the bill. When he had gone for it they took all the silver off the table—they had fine old silver in the inn—and placed it in the garden on which the room opened. Then they turned out the gas and got under the table. Hearing no answer to his repeated knocking the waiter opened the door. When he saw the lights out, the window opened, and the guests—and the silver—gone he cried out:

“Done! They have bolted with the silver.” Then he ran down the passage crying out: “Thieves, thieves!”

355The instant he was gone the two men came from under the table, closed the door, lit the gas, and took in the silver which they replaced on the table. Presently a wild rush of persons came down the passage and burst into the room: the landlord and his family, servants of the house, guests *en deshabille*—most of them carrying pokers and other impromptu weapons. They found the two gentlemen sitting quietly smoking their cigars. As they stood amazed Irving said in his quiet, well-bred voice:

“Do you always come in like this when gentlemen are having their dinner here?”

Toole would even play pranks on Irving, these generally taking the form of some sort of gift. For instance, he once sent Irving on his birthday what he called in his letter “a miniature which he had picked up!” It came in a furniture van, an enormous portrait of an actor, painted nearly a hundred years before; it was so large that it would not fit in any room of the theatre and had to be put in a high passage. Again, when he was in Australia he sent to Irving, timed so that it would arrive at Christmas, a present of two frozen sheep and a live kangaroo. These arrived at Irving’s rooms in Grafton Street. He had them housed at the Lyceum for the night, and next day sent the sheep to gladden the hearts—and anatomies—of the Costermongers’ Club at Chicksand Street, Mile End, New Town. The kangaroo was sent with a donation to the Zoological Society as a contribution from "J. L. Toole and Henry Irving." A brass plate was fixed over the cage by the Society.

Toole loved to make beautiful presents to Irving. Amongst them was a splendid gilt silver claret jug; several silver cups and bowls, the trophy designed by Flaxman which was presented to Macready in 1818—a magnificent piece of jeweller's work; a "grangerised" edition of Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*—unique in its richness of material and its fine workmanship—which he had bought in Paris for £500.

III

When Toole and Irving were separated they were in constant communication by letter, telegram or cable. No birthday of the other passed without a visit if near enough, or a letter or telegram if apart, and there was always a basket of flowers each to each. For a dozen years before Irving's death Toole had been in bad health, growing worse and worse as the years went on. He grew very feeble and very, very sad. But without fail Irving used to go 356to see him whenever he had an opportunity. At his house in Maida Vale, at Margate, or at Brighton, in which latter place he mainly lived for years past, Irving would go to him and spend all the hours he could command. Even though the width of the world separated them, the two men seemed to have, day by day, exact cognisance of the whereabouts and doings of the other, and not a week but the cables were flashing between them.

Poor Toole had one by one lost all his immediate family—son, wife, daughter; and his tie to life was in great part the love to and from his friend. He used to think of him unceasingly. Wherever he was, Toole's wire would come unfailingly making for good luck and remembrance. He would keep the flowers that Irving sent to him till they faded and dropped away; even then the baskets and bare stalks were kept in his room.

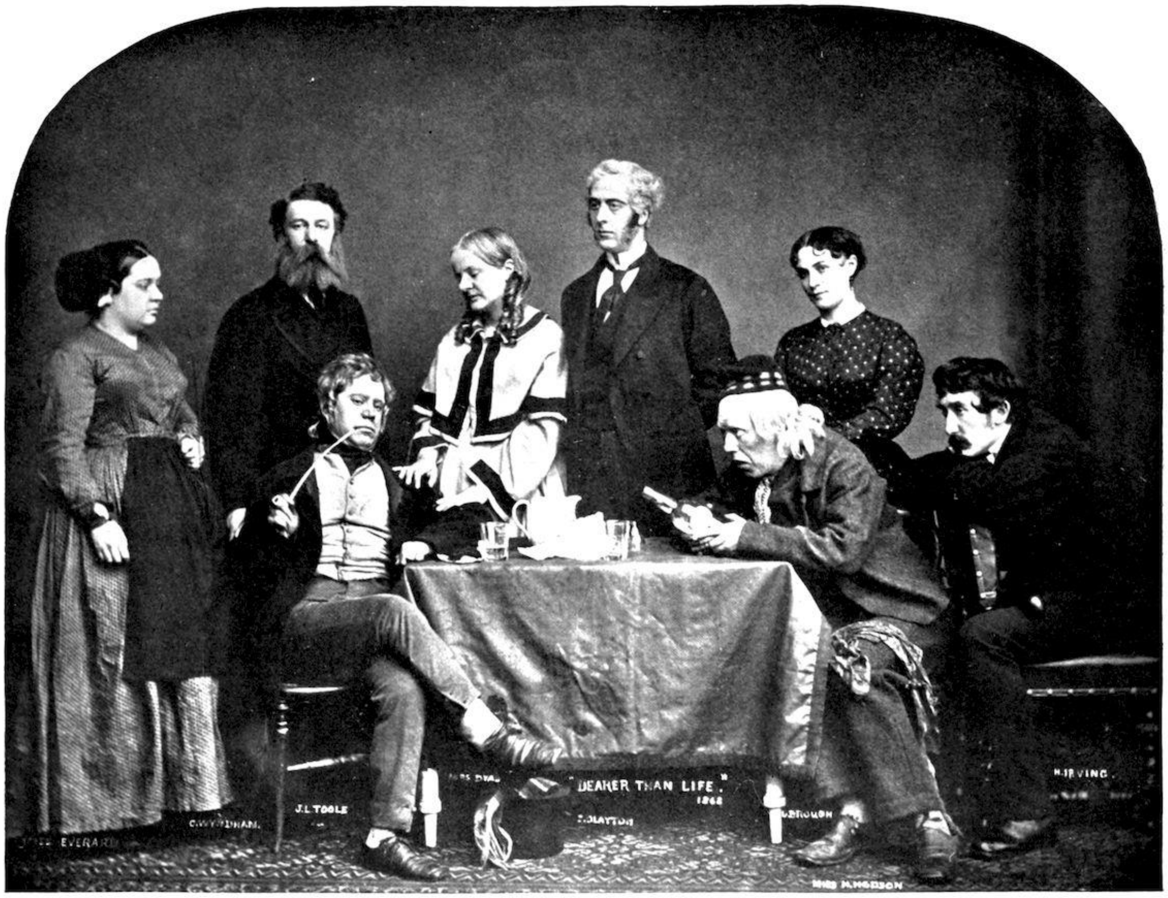
No one appreciated more than Toole the finest of Irving's work. For instance, when he saw him play *King Lear* he was touched to his heart's core, and his artistic admiration was boundless. I supped with him that night after the play, and he said to me:

"*King Lear* is the finest thing of Irving's life—or of any one else's."

When Toole was going to Australia there were many farewell gatherings to wish him God-speed. Some of them were great and elaborate affairs, but the last of all was reserved for Irving, when Toole, with some old friends, supped in the Beefsteak Room. When Irving proposed his old friend's health—a rare function indeed in that room—he never spoke more beautifully in his life. His little speech was packed with pathos, and so great was his own emotion that at moments he was obliged to pause to pull himself together.

IV

Toole and I were very close friends ever since I knew him first in the early seventies. I shared with him many delightful hours. And when sorrow came to him I was able to give him sympathy and such comfort as could be from my presence. I was with him at the funeral of his son and then of his wife. When his daughter died in Edinburgh, where he was then playing, I went up to him and stayed with him. We brought her body back to London and I went with him to her grave. With me he was always affectionate, always sympathetic, always merry when there was no cause for gloom, always grave and earnest when such were becoming. I have been with him on endless occasions when his merriment and geniality simply bubbled over. Unless some sorrow sat heavily on him he was always full of merriment which evidenced itself in the quaintest and most unexpected ways.



THE CAST OF “DEARER THAN LIFE,” 1868

357One evening, for instance, we were walking together along the western end of Pall Mall. When we came near Marlborough House, where on either side of the gateway stood a Guardsman on sentry, he winked at me and took from his pocket a letter which he had ready for post. Then when we came up close to the nearest soldier he moved cautiously in a semi-blind manner and peering out tried to put the letter in the breast of the scarlet tunic as though mistaking the soldier for a postal pillar-box. The soldier remained upright and stolid, and did not move a muscle. Toole was equally surprised and pleased when from the Guardsman's moveless lips came the words:

"It's all right, Mr. Toole! I hope you're well, sir?"

Another time I was staying with him at the Granville at Ramsgate, and on the Sunday afternoon we drove out to Kingsgate. Lionel Brough was another of the party. As we passed a coastguard station we stopped opposite a very handsome, spruce, and dandified coastguard. The two men greeted him, but his manner was somewhat haughty. Whereupon the two actors without leaving their seats proceeded to dance a hornpipe. That is they seemed, from the waist up, to be dancing that lively measure. Their arms and hands took motion as though in a real dance and their bodies swayed with appropriate movement. The little holiday crowd looked on delighted, and even the haughty sailor found it too much. He unbent and, smiling, danced also in very graceful fashion.

V

Again at another time we found ourselves in Canterbury, where Toole amused himself for a whole afternoon by spreading a report that the Government were going to move the Cathedral from Canterbury to Margate, giving as a reason that the latter place was so much larger. Strange to say that there were some who believed it. Toole worked systematically. He went into barbers' shops—three of them in turn, and in each got shaved. As I wore a beard I had to be content with having my hair cut; it came out pretty short in the end. As he underwent the shaving operation he brought conversation round to the subject of the moving of the Cathedral. 358Then we went into shops without end where he bought all sorts of things—collars, braces, socks, caps, fruits and spice for making puddings, children's toys, arrowroot, ginger wine, little shawls, sewing cotton, emery paper, hair oil, goloshes, corn plasters—there was no end to the variety of his purchases, each of which was an opening for some fresh variant of the coming change.

At one other visit to Canterbury we came across in the ancient Cathedral an insolent verger. Toole, who was, for all his fun, a man of reverent nature, was as usual with him grave and composed in the church. The verger, taking him for some stranger of the *bourgeois* class, thought him a fit subject to impress. When Toole spoke of the new Dean who had been lately appointed the man said in a flippant way:

“We don’t care much for him. We don’t think we’ll keep him!”

This was enough for Toole. He looked over at me in a way I understood and forthwith began to ask questions:

“Did you, may I ask, sir, preach this morning?”

“No. Not this morning. I don’t preach this week.” We knew then that that verger was to be “had on toast.” Toole went on:

“Do you preach on next Sunday, sir? I should like to hear you.”

“Well, no! I don’t think I’ll preach on Sunday.”

“Will you preach the Sunday after?”

“Perhaps.”

“May I ask, sir, are you the Dean?”

“No. I am not the Dean!” His manner implied that he was something more.

“Are you the Sub-Dean?”

“Not the Sub-Dean.” His answers were getting short.

“Are you what they call a Canon?”

“No, I should not exactly call myself a Canon.”

“Are you a minor Canon?”

“No!”

“Are you a precentor?”

“Not exactly that.”

“Are you in the choir?”

“No.”

“May I ask you what you are then, sir?”—this was said with great deference. The man, cornered at last, thought it best to speak the truth, so he answered:

359“I am what they call a ‘verger!’”

“Quite so!” said Toole gravely; “I thought you were only a servant by the insolent way you spoke of your superiors!”

The remainder of that personal conduction was made in silence.

VI

On one occasion when Toole was taking the waters at Homburg, King Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, was there. He had a breakfast party to which he had asked Toole and also Sir George Lewis and Sir Squire Bancroft. In the course of conversation his Royal Highness asked Bancroft where he was going after Homburg. The answer was that he was going to Maloya in Switzerland. Then turning to Toole he asked him:

“Are you going to Maloya also, Mr. Toole?” In reply Toole said, as he bowed and pointed to the great solicitor:

“No, sir, Ma-loya (my lawyer) is here!”

I remember one Derby day, 1893, when we were both in the party to which Mr. Knox D’Arcy extended the hospitality of his own stand next to that of the Jockey Club—a hospitality which I may say was boundless and complete. When I arrived the racing was just beginning, and the course was crowded by the moving mass seeking outlets before the cordon of police with their rope. As I got close to the stand I heard a voice that I knew coming from the wicket-gate, which was surrounded with a seething mass of humanity of all kinds pushing and struggling to get close.

“Walk this way, ladies and gentlemen! Walk this way! get tickets here. Only one shilling, including lunch. Walk this way!”

A somewhat similar joke on his part was on board a steamer on Lake Lucerne, when he was there with Irving. He went quietly to one end of the steamer and cried out in a loud voice: “Cook’s tourists, this way. Sandwich and glass of sherry provided free!” Then, slipping over to the other end of the boat as the crowd began to rush for the free lunch, he again made proclamation: “Gaze’s party, this way. Brandy and soda, hard-boiled eggs, and butterscotch provided free!” Again he disappeared before the crowd could assemble.

A favourite joke of his when playing Paul Pry was to find out what friends of his were in the house and then to have their names put upon the blackboard at the inn with scores against them of 360gigantic amount. This was a never-stale source of surprise and delight to the children of his friends. He loved all children, and next to his own, the children of his friends. For each of such there was always a box of chocolates. He kept a supply in his dressing-room, and I never knew the child of a friend to go away empty-handed. With such a love in his heart was it strange that in his own bad time, when his sadness was just beginning to take hold on his very heart's core, he loved to think much of those old friends who had loved his own children who had gone?

VII

Somehow his mirth never lessened his pathos. His acting—his whole life—has been a sort of proof that the two can coexist. His Caleb Plummer was never a whit less moving because his audience laughed through their tears. It may be his art became typified in his life.

When Irving died I telegraphed the same night to Frank Arlton, Toole's nephew, who during all his long illness had given him the most tender care. I feared that if I did not send such warning some well-intentioned blunderer might give him a terrible shock. Arlton acted most prudently, and broke the sad news himself at a favourable opportunity the next day. When poor Toole heard it his remark was one of infinite pathos:

"Then let me die too!"

Such a wish is in itself an epitaph of lasting honour.

VIII

Toole's belief and sympathy and help were of infinite service to the friend whom he loved. Comfort and confidence and assistance all in one. And it is hardly too much to say that Irving could never have done what he did, and in the way he did it, without the countenance and help of his old friend. Irving always, ever since I knew him, liked to associate Toole with himself in everything; and to me who know all that was between them it is but just—as well as the carrying out of my dear friend's wishes—that in this book their names shall be associated as closely as I can achieve by the Dedication. Shortly before his last illness I went down to Brighton to see him and to ask formally his permission to this end. He seemed greatly moved by it. Later on I sent the 361proof of the page containing it, asking Arlton to show it to him if he thought it advisable. Toole had then partially recovered from the attack and occasionally saw friends and was interested in what went on. Arlton's letter to me described the effect:

"I gave him your message last night, and I fear I did unwisely, as nurse says he has been talking all night about Sir Henry and books."

That visit to Brighton was the last time I saw Toole. He was then very low in health and spirits. He could hardly move or see; his voice was very feeble and one had to speak close and clearly that he might hear well. But his intellect was as clear as ever, and he spoke of many old friends. I spent the day with him; after lunch I walked by his bathchair to the end of the Madeira Walk. There we stayed a while, and when my time for leaving came, I told him—but not before. In his late years Toole could not bear the idea of any one whom he loved leaving him, even for a time. We used therefore to say no word of parting till the moment came. When he held out his poor, thin, trembling hand to me he said with an infinite pathos whose memory moves me still:

“Bram, we have often parted—but this time is the last. I shall never see you again! Won’t you let me kiss you, dear!”

LXVI
ELLEN TERRY

I

The first time I saw Ellen Terry was on the forenoon of Monday, December 23, 1878. The place was the passage-way which led from the stage of the Lyceum to the office, a somewhat dark passage under the staircase leading to the two “star” dressing-rooms up the stage on the O.P. side. But not even the darkness of that December day could shut out the radiant beauty of the woman to whom Irving, who was walking with her, introduced me. Her face was full of colour and animation, either of which would have made her beautiful. In addition was the fine form, the easy rhythmic swing, the large, graceful, goddess-like way in which she moved. I knew of her of course—all the world did then though not so well as afterwards; and she knew of me already, so that we met as friends. I had for some years known Charles Wardell, the actor playing under the name of Charles Kelly, to whom she had not long before been married. Kelly had in his professional visits to Dublin been several times in my lodgings, and as I had reason to believe that he had a high opinion of me I felt from Ellen Terry’s gracious and warm manner of recognition that she accepted me as a friend. That belief has been fully justified by a close friendship, unshaken to the extent of a hair’s breadth through all the work and worry—the triumphs and gloom—the sunshine and showers—storm and trial and stress of twenty-seven years of the comradeship of work together.

Irving had engaged her entirely on the strength of the reputation which she had already made in *Olivia* and the other plays which had gone before it. He had not seen her play since the days of the Queen’s Theatre, Long Acre, 1867–8, when they had played together in *The Taming of the Shrew*, she being the Katherine to his Petruchio. He had not thought very much of her playing in those days. Long after she had made many great successes at the Lyceum, in speaking of the early days he said to me:

363“She was always bright and lively, and full of fun. She had a distinct charm; but as an artist was rather on the hoydenish side!”

From the moment, however, that she began to rehearse at the Lyceum his admiration for her became unbounded. Many and many a time have I heard him descant on her power. It was a favourite theme of his. He said that her pathos was “nature helped by genius,” and that she had a “gift of pathos.” He knew well the value of her playing both to himself and the public, and for the early years of his management plays were put on in which she would have suitable parts. *Iolanthe* was put on for her, likewise *The Cup*, *The Belle’s Stratagem*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *Olivia*. Synorix was not a part for the sake of which Irving would have produced *The Cup*; neither Romeo nor Benedick is a part such as he would have chosen for himself. Neither Malvolio nor Dr. Primrose was seemingly a great *rôle* for a man who had been accustomed for years to “carry the play on his back.”

II

I think that Ellen Terry fascinated every one who ever met her—men, women and children, it was all the same. I have heard the evidences of this fascination in many ways from all sorts of persons in all sorts of places. One of them in especial lingers in my mind: perhaps this is because I belong to a nationality to whose children “blarney” is supposed to be a heritage.

On the afternoon of Sunday, November 25, 1883, we had travelled from New York to Philadelphia, paying our first visit to the Quaker City. Irving and I were staying at the Belle Vue Hotel; there, too, Ellen Terry took up her quarters. I dined with Irving, and we were smoking after dinner when a card and a message came up. The card was that of the Hon. Benjamin H. Brewster, then Attorney-General of the United States. The message was to the effect that he had broken his journey for a few hours on his way to Washington for the purpose of meeting Mr. Irving, and begging that he would waive ceremony and see him. Of course, Irving was very pleased, and the Attorney-General came up. He was a clever-looking, powerfully built man, but his face was badly scarred. In his boyhood he had, I believe, fallen into the fire. Until one knew him and came under the magic of his voice, and tongue, his appearance was apt to concern one over-much. He 364was quaint in his dress, wearing frills on shirt-front and cuffs. He was of an Irish family which had sent very prominent men to the Bar; a namesake of his was a leading counsel in my own youth. Irving and I were delighted with him. After an hour or so he asked if it were possible that he might see Miss Terry. Irving thought she would be very pleased. In compliance with the Attorney-General’s request she came down to Irving’s room and was most sweet and gracious to the stranger. After a while she went away; he prepared to go also, for his train was nearly due. When Ellen Terry had left the room he turned to us and said, with all that conviction of truth which makes “blarney” so effective:

“What a creature! what a Queen! She smote me with the sword of her beauty, and I arose her Knight!”

III

Ellen Terry had no sooner come into the Lyceum than all in the place were her devoted servants. Irving was only too glad to let her genius and her art have full swing; and it was a pleasure to all to carry out her wishes. As a member of a company she was always simply ideal. She encouraged the young, helped every one, and was not only a “fair” but a “generous” actor. These terms imply much on the stage, where it is possible, without breaking any rule, to gain all the advantage to the detriment of other players. To Ellen Terry such a thing was impossible; she not only gave to every one acting with her all the opportunities that their parts afforded, but made opportunities for them. For instance, it is always an advantage for an actor to stand in or near the centre of the stage and well down to the footlights. In old days such a place was the right of the most important actor; a right which was always claimed. But Ellen Terry would when occasion served stand up stage or down as might be suitable to the person speaking. And when her own words had been spoken she would devote her whole powers to helping the work of her comrades on the stage. These seemingly little things count for much in the summing up of years, and it is no wonder that Ellen Terry as an artist is, and always has been, loved. From the first, to her as an artist always has been given the supreme respect which she had justly won. No one ever cavilled, no one ever challenged, no one ever found fault. All sought her companionship, her advice, her assistance. She moved through the world of 365the theatre like embodied sunshine. Her personal triumphs were a source of joy to all; of envy to none.

She seems to have the happy faculty of spinning gaiety out of the very air; and adds always to the sum of human happiness.

IV

Her performance of Ophelia alone would have insured her a record for greatness; Irving never ceased expatiating on it. I well remember one night in 1879—it was after a third performance of *Hamlet*—when he took supper with my wife and me. He talked all the time of Ellen Terry’s wonderful performance. One thing which he said fixed itself in my mind:

“How Shakespeare must have dreamed when he was able to write a part like Ophelia, knowing that it would have to be played by a boy! Conceive his delight and gratitude if he could but have seen Ellen Terry in it!”

Indeed it was a delight to any one even to see her. No one who had seen it can forget the picture that she made in the Fourth Act when she came in holding a great bunch—an armful—of flowers; lilies and other gracious flowers and all those that are given in the text. For my own part, every Ophelia whom I have seen since then has suffered by the comparison.

Ellen Terry loves flowers, and in her playing likes to have them on the stage with her when suitable. Irving was always most particular with regard to her having exactly what she wanted. The Property Master had strict orders to have the necessary flowers, no matter what the cost. Other players could, and had to, put up with clever imitations; but Ellen Terry always had real flowers. I have known when the rule was carried through under extreme difficulties. This was during the week after the blizzard at New York in March 1888 when such luxuries were at famine price. She had as Margaret her bunch of roses every night. I bought them one day myself for the purpose when the blooms were five dollars each.

V

Ellen Terry’s art is wonderfully true. She has not only the instinct of truth but the ability to reproduce it in the different perspective of the stage. There must always be some grand artistic qualities, quite apart from personal charm, to render any 366actress worthy of universal recognition. To those who have seen Ellen Terry no explanation is needed. She is artist to her finger-tips. The rules which Taine applies to Art in general, and to plastic art in particular, apply in especial degree to an artist of the Stage. That which he calls “selective” power, a natural force, is ever a ruling factor in the creation of character.

The finer and more evanescent evidences of individuality must to a large extent be momentary. No true artist ever plays the same part alike on different repetitions. The occasion; the variation of temperament, even of temperature; the emotional characteristic of the audience; the quickening or dulling of the ruling sentiment of the day or hour—each and all of these insensibly, if not consciously, can regulate the pressure in the temperamental barometer. When to the gift of logical power of understanding causes and effects there is added that of instinctively thinking and doing the right thing, then the great artist is revealed. It is, perhaps, this instinctive power which is the basis of creative art; the power of the poet as distinguished from that of the workman. Then comes a nicely balanced judgment of the selective faculty.

There are always many ways of doing the same thing. One, of course, must be best; though others may come very close to it in merit.

Ellen Terry has the faculty of reaching the best. When one sees any other actress essay a part in which she has won applause, the actuality seems but dull beside the memory. As the object of stage work is “seeming” not “being,” the effort to appear real transcends reality—with the art of stage perspective added.

VI

When Ellen Terry has taken hold of a character it becomes, whilst her thoughts are on it, a part of her own nature. In fact, her own nature

“is subdued

To what it works in, like the dyer’s hand.”

Her intuition—which in a woman is quicker than a man’s reason—not only avoids error from the very inception of her work, but brings her unerringly by the quickest road to the best end. In the studying of her own parts and the arranging of her own business of them she had always had a free hand with Irving. At the Lyceum she was consulted about everything; and the dispositions 367of other persons and things were made to fit into her arrangements. I can only recall one instance when her wishes were not exactly carried out. This was at the end of the church scene of *Much Ado About Nothing* which in the Lyceum version finished the Fourth Act—the scene of the Prison which in Shakespeare ends the act having been transferred to the beginning of the last act. Here Beatrice has pledged Benedick to kill Claudio. Her newly accepted lover finishes the scene: “Go, comfort your cousin; I must say, she is dead; and so, farewell.” Irving thought that the last words should be a little more operative with regard to the coming portion of the play; and so insisted in putting in the “gag” which was often in use:

Beatrice. “Benedick, kill Claudio!”

Benedick. “As sure as I’m alive I will!”

Against this Ellen Terry protested, almost to tears. She thought that every word of Shakespeare was sacred; to add to them was wrong. Still Irving was obdurate; and she finally yielded to his wishes.

To my own mind Irving was right. He too held every word of Shakespeare in reverence; but modern conditions, which require the shortening of plays, necessitate now and again the concentration of ideas—the emphasis of purposes. The words of the “tag” which he and Ellen Terry spoke, and the extraordinary forceful way they spoke them, heightened the effect. By carrying on the idea of the audience to an immediate and definite purpose they increased the “tug” of the play.

It may be interesting to note that this introduction was not, so far as I remember, commented on by any of the critics. It was not printed in the acting version, but the words were spoken—and there was no possibility of their not being heard—on every performance of the run of two hundred nights. Where there are so many Shakespeareans looking keenly for errors of text, it was odd such an addition should have passed without comment!

VII

The sincerity of Ellen Terry’s nature finds expression in her art. In all my long experience of her I never knew her to strike a wrong note. Doubtless she has her faults. She is a woman; and 368perfection must not be expected even in the finishing work of Creation.

But whatever faults she may have are altogether those of the individual human being, not of the artist. As the latter she had achieved perfection even when I first saw her in 1878.

The mind which balances truly each item, each evidence of character submitted to it by nature, experience or the dramatist, is the true source of art. Without it perfection must be a hazard; when there are many roads to choose from, the traveller may chance to blunder into the right one, but the doing so is the work of luck not art. But when day after day, week after week, year after year one *always* takes the right road, chance or fortune cannot be regarded as the dominating cause. The sincerity of art has many means of expression; but even of these some are more subtle than others. Such exposition demands mind, and the exercise of mind; we may, I think, take it that intention requires intellectual effort both for its conception and execution—the wish and the attempt to turn desire into force. The carrying out of intention requires fresh mental effort. And such must be primarily based on a knowledge of the powers and facts at command. Thus it is that the actor must understand himself; the task is even more difficult when the actor is a woman whose nature, therefore, in its manifestations is continually changing. But this very changeableness has in it the elements of force and charm. Out of the kaleidoscope come glimpses of new things which have only to be recorded and remembered in order to become knowledge. In the variety of emotions is a pauseless attractiveness which does not admit of weariness. Nature was good to Ellen Terry in the equipment for her work. Her personality, enriched by the gifts showered upon her, is a very treasure-house of art.

No other woman of her time has shown such abounding and abiding charm; such matchless mirthfulness; pathos so deep.

VIII

As to the stage characters which she has made her own it would be impossible to say enough. Any one of them is worthy of an exhaustive study. In the early days of her acting, which began when her years were but few, stage art was in a poor way. The old style of acting, eminently suitable to the age in which it had been evolved, was still in vogue, though the conditions of the great 369world without were changing. “The Drama’s laws the Drama’s patrons give” is a truth told with poetic comprehensiveness; what the public wants, the actors must in reason supply. But that age—when railways were still new, when telegraphs were hoped for; when such knowledge as that of the influence of worms on the outer layer of the structure of the world was being investigated, and when the existence of bacteria was becoming a conclusion rather than a guess—did not mean to be satisfied with an old-world, unnatural expression of human feeling seemingly based on a belief that passions were single and crude and that they swept aside the manifold complications of life. Ellen Terry belongs to the age of investigation. She is of those who brought in the new school of natural acting. It is true that she had learned and benefited by the teaching and experience of the old school. The lessons which Mrs. Charles Kean had so patiently taught her gave her boldness and breadth, and made for the realisation of poetic atmosphere and that perspective of the stage which is so much stronger than that of real life. But the work which she did in the new school came from herself. Here it was that her manifold gifts and charms found means of expression—of working out her purpose in relation to the characters which she undertook. If I had myself to put into a phrase the contribution to art-progress which Ellen Terry’s work has been, I should say that it was the recognition of freedom of effort. She enlarged the bounds of art from those of convention to those of nature; and in doing so gave fuller scope to natural power. Since she set the way many another actress has arrived at the full success possible to the range of her gifts who otherwise would have been early strangled in the meshes of convention. The general effect of this has been to raise the art as well as widening it. The natural style does not allow of falsity or grossness; in the light which is common to all who understand, either by instinct or education, these stand out as faults or excrescences. In this “natural” method also individual force counts for its worth and the characteristic notes of sex are marked. For instance, I have heard—for unfortunately I never saw the piece—that when long ago she played *The Wandering Heir* her charm of sex was paramount; she played a girl masquerading as a boy so delightfully because she was so complete a woman. In her, womanhood is paramount. She has to the full in her nature whatever quality it is that corresponds to what we call “virility” in a man.

Her influence on her art has been so marked that one can see in 370the younger generation of women players how in their efforts to understand her methods they have unconsciously held her identity as their objective. In a number of them this appears as a sort of mild imitation. It was the same thing with the school of Irving. Trying to follow in his footsteps they have achieved something of his identity; generally those little personal traits or habits catching to the eye, which some call faults, others idiosyncrasies.

The advantages which both Irving and Ellen Terry gave to dramatic art will be even more marked in the future than it is at the present; though the credit to them of its doing will be less conspicuous than it is now. Already the thoughtful work has been done; the principles have been tested and accepted, and the teaching has reached its synthetic stage.

IX

Naturally the years that went to the doing of this fine art work threw the two players together in a remarkable way, and made for an artistic comradeship which, so far as I know, has had no equal in their own branch of art. It began with Irving’s management at the end of 1878 and lasted as a working reality for twenty-four years. At the Prince’s Theatre, Bristol, on the last night of the Provincial Tour of 1902, December 13, she played for the last time under his management. Some months later, July 14, 1903, they played again in the same piece *The Merchant of Venice* at Drury Lane for the benefit of the Actors’ Association. This occasion has become a memorable one; it was the last time when they played together.

Their cause of separation was in no wise any form of disagreement. It was simply effluxion of time. To the last hour of Irving’s life the brotherly affection between them remained undimmed. Naturally when these two great powers who had worked together in the public eye for nearly a quarter of a century separated Curiosity began to search for causes, and her handmaid Gossip proclaimed what she alleged to be them. Let me tell the simple truth and so set the matter right:

In the course of their long artistic co-operation Irving had produced twenty-seven plays in which they had acted together. In nineteen of these Ellen Terry had played young parts, which naturally in the course of so many years became unsuitable. Indeed the first person to find fault with them was Ellen Terry herself, 371who, with her keen uncompromising critical faculty always awake to the purposes of her work, realised the wisdom of abandonment long before the public had ever such a thought. There remained, therefore, for their mutual use but eight plays of the *répertoire*—the finished work of so many years. Of these, two, *Macbeth* and *Henry VIII.*, had been destroyed by fire, and the expense of reproducing them adequately for only occasional presentation was prohibitive. Two others, *Coriolanus* and *Peter the Great*, were not popular. *Robespierre* had had its day, a long run to the full extent of its excellence. There remained, therefore, but three: *Charles I.*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Madame Sans-Gêne*. The last of these had not proved a very great success in England; in America it had been done to death. For *Charles I.*, by its very sadness and its dramatic scope, the audience could only be drawn from a limited class. So that there remained for practical purposes of continuous playing only *The Merchant of Venice*. There was one other play in which, though her part was a young one, Ellen Terry could always play, *Much Ado About Nothing*. But then Irving had grown too old for Benedick, and so for his purposes the play was past.

Ellen Terry did not care—and rightly enough—to play only once or twice a week as Portia—or in *Nance Oldfield*, given with *The Bells*—whilst there was so much excellent work, in all ways suitable to her personality and her years, to be done. Ordinarily one would not allude to these matters; ladies have by right no date. But when a lady's Jubilee on the Stage has been a completed fact, to whose paramount success the whole world has rung, there is no need for misleading reticence.

The mere fact of their ceasing to play together did not bring to a close the long artistic comradeship of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. To the very last the kindly interest in each other's work and the affection between them never ceased or even slackened. Whatever one did the other followed with eager anxiety. Right up to the hour of his death Irving was interested in all that she did. On that last sad evening, even whilst anxiety for the coming changes in his own work was looming over him, he spoke to me in his dressing-room about her health and her work. He spoke feelingly and sympathetically, and with confidence and affection; just as he had always done during the long period of their working together. He had written to her himself in the same vein. In his letter he had told her what a delight it would be to him to hear her Lecture on "The Letters in Shakespeare's Plays."

X

For my own part I have no words at command adequate to tell the kindly feeling which I have always had for the delightful creature—to express my reverence and regard and love for her enchanting personality. From the very first she took me into the inner heart of her friendship; unconsciously I was given the *rôle* of “big brother.” Nay, she found a name for me which was all her own and which one would think to be the least appropriate to a man of my inches. When I would ask her about some social duty which it was necessary for her to attend to—some important person to receive, some special entertainment to attend—she would make what nurses call a “wry face”; then she would ask:

“Bram, is this earnest?”

“Yes!” I would reply. “Honest injun!” She would smile and pout together as she would reply:

“All right, mama!” Then I knew that she was going to play that part as nicely as it could be played by any human being. Indeed it was hardly “playing a part” for she was genuinely glad to meet cordiality with equal feeling. It was only the beginning and the publicity that she disliked.

It is hard to believe that half a century has elapsed since Ellen Terry went timidly through her first part on the stage. The slim child dragging the odd-looking go-cart, which the early daguerreotype recorded as Mamilius in Charles Kean’s production of *A Winter’s Tale*, has been so long a force of womanly charm and radiant beauty—an actress of such incomparable excellence that in her art as in our memories she almost stands alone—great amongst the great.

Ellen Terry is a great actress, the greatest of her time; and she will have her niche in history. She is loved by every one who ever knew her. Her presence is a charm, her friendship a delight; her memory will be a national as well as a personal possession.

LXVII

FRESH HONOURS IN DUBLIN

When we visited Dublin in the tour of 1894 there were some memorable experiences. Ever since 1876 my native city had a warm place in Irving’s heart. And very justly so, for it had showered upon him love and honour. This time there were two occasions which should not be forgotten.

The first was a public Reception at the Mansion House given by the then Lord Mayor, Valentine Dillon, a friend of my own boyhood. This took place on Thursday, November 29, and was in truth an affair of national importance. At that time the long-continued feuds between Conservatives and Liberals, Home Rulers and Unionists, Catholics and Protestants, which had marked with extra virulence—for they had been long existent—the past decades, were still operative. Still, improvement was in the air; only opportunity was wanting to give it expression.

The beneficent occasion came in that Reception. Irving and Ellen Terry were delightfully popular personalities. They had no politics, and what religion either professed was not even considered; their artistic excellence shadowed all else. Lord Mayor Dillon was a man with broad views of life and of the dignity of the position which he held for, I think, the third time. He cast very wide the net of his hospitable intent. He asked every one who was of account in any way; and all came. Some three thousand persons had been bidden and there was a full tally of guests. When once they had actually met in a common cause, one and all seemed to take the opportunity of showing that the hatchet had been buried. Men who had not spoken for years—who had not looked at each other save with the eyes of animosity, seemed glad to mingle on something of the old terms—to renew old friendships and long-severed acquaintanceship.

Irving and Ellen Terry, with some of us lesser lights supporting them, stood on the daïs beside the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress; and I can bear witness that not one who passed went without a handshake from both. It was a serious physical effort. To shake hands with some thousands of persons would tax the 374strongest. Irving went through it with all the direct simplicity of his nature. Ellen Terry, having to supplement nature with art, rested at times her right hand and shook with the left with such cunning dexterity that no one was a whit the wiser. One and all went away from that hospitable and friendly gathering in a happy frame of mind. Dublin was a gainer by that wave of beneficent sympathy.

Two days later, on the last night of the engagement, Saturday, December 1, there was another and even more remarkable function. This was the presentation of a Public Address on the stage after the play. This Address was no ordinary one. It was signed by all the great public officials, both of the city and of the country:

The Lord Mayor, the High Sheriff, the Lord Chancellor, the Commander of the Forces, the Lord Chief Justice, all the Judges, all the City Members of Parliament, the Provost of Dublin University, the President of the College of Surgeons, the President of the College of Physicians, all the Public Officials, and by a host of Leading Citizens.

When the curtain drew up the great body of the Committee, numbering about sixty, stood behind the Lord Mayor on one side of the stage. On the other Irving, with close behind him Ellen Terry, whom I had the honour of escorting, and all the other members of the Company. The Lord Mayor read the Address, which was conceived in love and honour and born in noble and touching words. In replying for himself and

Miss Terry, Irving was much touched, and had to make an effort to speak at all. There was a lofty look in his eyes which spoke for the sincerity of the words which he used in his reply:

“Now when your great University has accepted me to the brotherhood of her sons, and when your city and nation have taken me to your hearts, I feel that the cup of a player’s honour is full to the brim.”

I have not often seen him moved so much as he was that night. His speech and movement were only controlled by his strong will and the habit of self-repression.

Within and without the theatre was a scene of wild enthusiasm not to be forgotten. I have been witness of many scenes of wild generosity but none to surpass that night.

Irving was always anxious that others should rejoice in some form with his own rejoicing. Before leaving Dublin he placed in the hands of the Lord Mayor a cheque for a hundred guineas for his disposal to the use of the poor.

LXVIII
PERFORMANCES AT SANDRINGHAM AND WINDSOR

I
SANDRINGHAM, 1889.

In April 1889 the Prince of Wales had the honour of entertaining the Queen at Sandringham. He wished that she should see Irving and Ellen Terry, neither of whom she had seen play. Accordingly it was arranged that on April 26 the Lyceum would be closed for the evening and that a performance should be given in Sandringham in a little theatre specially built in the great drawing-room. For this theatre Irving had got Walter Hann to paint an act drop; scenery of a suitable size was prepared by Hawes Craven—an exceedingly fine piece of miniature stage work. The Bill fixed was: *The Bells*, and the Trial Scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, the combination of which pieces would, the Prince thought, show both the players at their best.

The drawing-room looked very beautiful, the white walls showing up the many stands of magnificent weapons and armour; greenery and flowers were everywhere. There was a large gathering in the drawing-room of not only the house guests but local personages; the big music gallery at the back was full of tenants and servants. The Queen had kindly expressed her wish that the audience should do just as they wished as to applauding, and I must say that I have never seen or heard a more enthusiastic audience within the bounds of decorum.

The Queen sat in the centre in front with the Prince of Wales on her right and the Princess on her left, and the others of the family beside them. Next came the guests in their degrees. The doorway was crowded with the servants—the Queen's all in black and the Prince's in Royal scarlet liveries. Her Majesty seemed greatly pleased. It had been arranged that Irving and Ellen Terry were to join the Prince and Princess at supper. The Queen 376would not wait up, but was to retire at once. However, just as the players were removing their war-paint, Her Majesty sent word by Sir Henry Ponsonby that she would like to speak to Mr. Irving and Miss Terry. Irving was in the act of removing his "make-up" as Shylock, which was a job requiring some little time. He was extraordinarily quick both as to dressing and undressing; but the "priming" of earth on which stage paint is laid, grease, paint, and lampblack and spirit-gum take some little time to remove, even before the stage of soap-and-water is reached. Portia, however, is a part which does not soil, and as to mere dressing, Ellen Terry can simply fly. She knew that Irving would be at least a few minutes, and it is not good form to keep a Queen waiting. Within a minute she was tearing down the passage, with her dresser running close behind her and fastening up the back of her frock as she went. At the doorway she threw over her shoulders the scarf which was a part of her dress and sailed into the room with a grand courtesy. Within a very few minutes Irving in immaculate evening dress followed.

Irving and Ellen Terry supped with the Royal guests. For the rest of the Company supper was prepared in the Conservatory. The heads of departments and workmen were entertained in the Housekeeper's room or the Servants' Hall according to their degrees. Irving had with his usual wish to save trouble arranged for supper for all the party on the train home. But the Prince of Wales would not hear of such a thing. He said that the players were his guests and that they must eat in his house. It had been understood that there was to be no suggestion of payment of even expenses. Irving was only too proud and happy to serve his Queen and future King in all ways of his own art to the best of his power. This arrangement was held to on every occasion on which he had the honour to give a special performance before Royalty.

At half-past two o'clock the whole Company and workmen were driven to Wolferton station where the special train was waiting. It arrived at St. Pancras a few minutes past six in the morning.

II

WINDSOR, 1893.

The performance at Windsor was in its way quite a remarkable thing. In the earlier years of her reign Queen Victoria was 377accustomed to have from time to time theatrical performances at Windsor Castle. These were generally held in the Waterloo Chamber, where a movable stage was erected on each occasion. In old days this stage was so low that once Mr. Henry Howe, who had to come up through a trap according to the action of the piece, had to crawl on his stomach under the stage to get to the appointed place. Howe was nearly eighty years of age when he told me this incident, but the memory was so strong on him that he laughed like a boy. When the Prince Consort died in 1861 all such gaieties were stopped, and for thirty-two years no play was given at Windsor. But after 1889 when the Queen did begin to resume something like the old life at Court her first effort in that direction was to command a performance by those players of the later day whom she had seen at Sandringham, whose merit was widely recognised and who had already won official recognition of another kind—the previous year the University of Dublin had given Irving a degree *Honoris Causa*. Moreover, the Queen wanted to see *Becket*, the work of her own Poet Laureate, which had created so much interest and thought.

Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, came from Windsor to see Irving at Her Majesty's wish. Irving was, of course, delighted to hold himself at the Queen's will. The only stipulation which he made was that he was to be allowed to bear the expenses of all kinds and was not to be offered fee or pay of any kind, even though such was a usual formality. For this he had a special reason; not to set himself up as an individual against the custom of the Court, but to avoid the possibility of such a *bêtise* as had in earlier years stopped the Windsor theatrical performances for a time. The way of it was this: At the commencement of the system of having such performances the Queen had left the matter in the hands of Charles Kean, then the manager of the Princess's Theatre, and acknowledged head of the theatrical calling. He and his assistants made all the necessary arrangements, taking care that the gift of the Court patronage was, as fairly as was possible, divided amongst actors both in London and throughout the provinces. This worked excellently; and there were few, if any, jealousies. Kean made all the financial arrangements and paid salaries on the scale fixed on his suggestion by the Privy Purse. Matters went along smoothly so long as Kean had control. Later on, however, this was handed over to Mr. Mitchell of Bond Street, the agent who acted for the Queen with regard to her visits to London 378theatres and other places of amusement. At last came trouble. The scale of salary fixed was, I believe—for I can only speak from hearsay—at the rate of twice the actor's earnings in the previous year. On one occasion an actor of some repute was through some incredible stupidity paid at this rate, strictly applied though the case was exceptional. He had been for years receiving a large salary, but during nearly the whole of the previous year had been ill and of course "out of work." His total earnings therefore when divided by fifty-two amounted to but a meagre weekly wage. At a nightly standard it was ridiculous. Kean would of course, as an actor, have understood this and have carried out the spirit of Her Majesty's wishes. But the man of business went "by the card," and when the comedian received the dole sent to him he was highly indignant, and determined to taste some form of satisfaction, if only of revenge for his injured feelings. Of course the Queen knew nothing of all this, and be sure she was incensed when she heard of it. The actor's form of revenge was to send the amount of salary paid to him to the police court poor-box as a contribution from himself and Queen Victoria.

I may be wrong in details of the story, for it is one of fifty years ago, but in the main it is correct. I had it from Irving and I have often heard it spoken about by old actors of the time. With such a catastrophe in his memory Irving naturally wished to be careful. He had to consider not only himself but his whole Company, hundreds of persons of all degrees. Some of them might look on the affair as an Eldorado whence should come wealth beyond the dreams of avarice and be "disgruntled" at any failure to that end. When he was himself the paymaster and shared as an individual the conditions attaching to his comrades, there could be no complaint. Henry Irving was a most loyal subject; he wished at all times to render love and honour to the Monarch, and as he was in his own way a conspicuous individual it was necessary to be careful lest his good intentions should stray.

Sir Henry Ponsonby quite understood Irving's feelings and wishes, and acceded to them. Train arrangements were to be at the expense of the Queen, who was particular that this should be the rule with all her guests. Of course Irving acquiesced. When the day—March 18, which the Queen wished—had been arranged the matter of accomplishment was left entirely in his hands. Forthwith the work of preparation began.

New scenery, exactly the same as that in use but on a smaller 379scale and better suited to its mechanism to the limited space, was painted; and with it a beautiful proscenium for the miniature theatre built up in the Waterloo Chamber. The first contingent which went to Windsor on the morning of the day of the performance numbered one hundred and seventy-eight persons.

At nine o'clock the Queen arrived, walking slowly through the long corridor. She sat, of course, in the centre of the daïs, with the Empress Frederick of Germany on her right and the Prince of Wales on her left. The room was exquisitely decorated with plants and flowers, and as it was filled with ladies and gentlemen in court dress and uniform, the effect was very fine. The play went well. The Queen had with graceful and kindly forethought given orders that all present might applaud as they would—it not having been etiquette to applaud on such occasions without Royal permission. Another piece of thoughtful kindness of Her Majesty was to have amongst the guests staying for the week-end at Windsor Lord and Lady Tennyson. The adaptation of the play to the lesser space than the Lyceum was so judiciously done that one did not notice any difference.

At the close of the performance the Queen sent for Irving and Ellen Terry and complimented them on the perfection and beauty of their playing. To Irving she said:

“It is a very noble play! What a pity that old Tennyson did not live to see it. It would have delighted him as it has delighted Us!”

She also received Geneviève Ward and William Terriss.

The Queen always wished that her guests of all degrees should be made welcome, and Sir Henry Ponsonby said that she had arranged that all the company, players and workmen of all kinds, should dine and take supper in the Castle. The dinner was less formal, but the supper was in its way a function. Four different rooms were arranged for the purpose. In the first were the acting company and higher officials to the number of about fifty. The gentlemen of the orchestra and the heads of departments in the second and third; the workmen, &c., in the fourth. At the end all drank the Queen’s health loyally.

There was an immense amount of public interest in this performance. So high it ran that all the great newspapers asked permission to be represented. This request could not be acceded to as it was a purely private affair; the utmost that could by usage be allowed was that press representatives should during the afternoon 380be allowed to see the Waterloo Chamber prepared for the performance in the evening.

Late in the afternoon I received a request from a lot of the chief papers that I should myself ask permission to send a short despatch, say some five hundred words, at the close of the performance. I took the message to Sir Henry Ponsonby, who seemed very much struck with it, as though the public importance of the event had suddenly dawned on him. He said:

“I must take this to the Queen at once and learn her wishes respecting it. The matter seems to be of much more importance than I had thought!” He came back shortly, seemingly very pleased, and said to me, speaking as he approached:

“The Queen says that she is very pleased to give permission. Mr. Bram Stoker may write whatever he pleases about the event. But he must say nothing till after the performance is all over.” Then he added, “The Queen also told me to explain that she was sending orders to have the telegraph office in the Castle kept open for your convenience till you have quite done with it. I had better explain that the telegraph office here is a private one and that the Queen pays for all telegrams. This she insists on.”

Altogether the performance was a very memorable one. It marked an epoch in the life of the great Queen—that in which she broke the long gloom of more than thirty years and began the restoration to something like the old happy life of the earlier years of her reign.

III
SANDRINGHAM, 1902

The second visit to Sandringham came thirteen years after the first, being in 1902, after the King’s accession. The occasion was that of the Kaiser’s visit. The King wished to have a surprise for him; and at the time he had his “Command” conveyed to Irving his wish was intimated that the matter should be kept absolutely secret till the event came off. This we could see was to be a difficult task; but the promise was given and kept. At the date fixed—November 14—we would be playing in Belfast, so that the task to get there and return with the loss of only one night to the audience was really a stupendous one. It would involve special arrangements with at least one shipping company and several railways. This would necessitate the fact of the journey being known 381to so many people that really secrecy seemed impossible of achievement. However the matter was undertaken and had to be done. Not a soul other than the actively engaged knew of the affair beforehand. Even Ellen Terry was purposely kept in the dark. As the only play to be given by Irving was *Waterloo* the cast was small, there being only four people in it. These with three others would comprise the party. One man had been sent to London to bring down the scene specially painted for the occasion and to see to arrangements. Mr. Ben Webster, who was to play his original part of Colonel Midwinter, was to come from London, where he was then playing. Let me say here that not the slightest whisper went forth on our side; and we were surprised to see an account of what was to be done, which evidently came from another branch of the entertainment being made ready for the King’s Imperial guest.

When we began to consider the practicability of the journey my heart sank. There seemed no way by which the out and return journeys could be done. I was for a time seriously considering the advisability of asking for a torpedo boat to run us over from Belfast, to Stranraer, Barrow, Fleetwood, or Liverpool. After a good deal of consideration, however, a journey was arranged which could only have been done by placing the whole resources of shipping and railway companies at our disposal. The *Magic*, the fastest boat of the Belfast line, was to be taken off her regular service two days before; loaded up with the best Welsh coal, and held ready at the wharf with full steam up on the evening of the journey. The railroading would be arranged from Euston.

Faust was played in Belfast on the night of November 13. As the members of the little party finished on the stage they got dressed and were driven down to the wharf. The moment the last call was given at the end of the play Irving hurried into his travelling clothes, and he and I were whirled off to the *Magic*. The instant we passed on deck the gangway plank was drawn and the ship started off full speed. Such was contrary to law, as ships should only go part speed in the Loch. But no one made objections; we were on the King's service.

We got to Liverpool at eight in the morning and found alongside the dock the special carriage, one of the Royal saloons used on the London and North-Western Railway; got on board and were whirled off to Crewe, where we caught the fast express to Rugby. There we took on a dining-car and went on to Peterborough. Here our carriage was handed over to the Great Eastern 382Company, which took us on the fast train to Lynn, and thence on a special to Wolferton.

At ten o'clock precisely, Sandringham time—which is half an hour ahead of standard time—the Kaiser and the Queen moved into the great drawing-room where the stage was fixed. Then followed the King and family, and guests. There were altogether some three hundred and fifty in the room.

As the movement to the theatre began there was—to us—an amusing episode. After our arrival, when things were being put in order for the performance, it had been discovered that kettle-drums were missing. Either they had not been sent at all or they had gone astray. At first we took it for granted that in such a scene of pomp and splendour as was around us drums and drummers would be easy to find. But it was not so. Drums were obtainable but no drummer, and there was not time to get one from the nearest town. Now the military music is necessary for the performance of *Waterloo*; the quicksteps are not only required for the Prelude but are in the structure of the piece. For the occasion of the Imperial visit, there had been brought from Vienna a celebrated string band, the conductor of high status in his art and all the components of the band fine players. But there was no drummer; and there could be even no proper rehearsal of the incidental music of the play without the drums. We were beginning to despair, when the head constable of the county who was present said that there was one man in the police of the division who was the drummer of the

Police Band of the district, and undertook to try and find him. After much telegraphing and telephoning it was found that he was out on his beat about the farthest point of his district. However, when he was located a trap with a fresh horse was sent for him. He arrived tired and foodless just before the time fixed for beginning. He was a fine performer fortunately, a master of his work, and with the score before him needed no preparation.

When the signal was given of the movement of the Royalties the Conductor took his baton, but when he looked at the score of the Prelude, which is continually changing time with the medley of the various regimental quicksteps, he said:

“I cannot play it.”

“Go on, man! Go on!” said Belmore, who was acting as stage manager.

“I cannot!” he answered; “I cannot!” and stood unmoving. Things were serious, for already the procession was formed and the 383Kaiser and the Queen were entering the room. It had been arranged that the Prelude was to play them to their seats. “Give me the stick!” said Belmore suddenly, and took the fiddle bow with which he conducted from the unresisting hand of the stranger. Of course all this was behind the scenes and amongst ourselves only. Then he began to conduct. He had never done so, but he had some knowledge of music. But the gentlemen of the band did not hesitate. They were all fine musicians and well accustomed to playing together. Probably they were not averse from showing that they could play perfectly without a conductor at all! They certainly did seem to play with especial verve. Belmore was a sight to behold. He seemed to know all the tricks of leadership, modifying or increasing tone with one hand whilst he beat time with the other; pausing dramatically with uplifted baton or beating with sudden forcefulness; screwing round with his left hand as though to twist the music into a continued unity. Anyhow it—or something—told. The music went excellently and without a hitch.

At one o’clock—half-past one Sandringham time—we drove to Wolferton; and at a quarter to seven in the morning we got to the dock at Liverpool and went aboard the *Magic* which stood ready with steam up. The tide was low, but as there was much fog in the river Mr. McDowell arranged that the dock-gates should be opened before the usual hour. We actually stirred up the mud with the screw as we passed out into the Mersey. The river was dark with thick fog and we had to find our way, inch by inch, to beyond New Brighton. We were beginning to despair of arriving at Belfast in time when we cleared the belt of fog. We came out seemingly all at once into bright sunshine which lasted all the way home. It was a delightful day and a delightful run. The sun was bright, the air fresh and bracing and the water of sapphire blue so calm that passing to the south’ard of the Isle of Man we ran between the Calf and the Hen and Chickens—the dangerous cluster of rocks lying just outside it.

We ran full tilt up Belfast Lough and arrived at the wharf at five o’clock in good time for a wash and dress for the theatre.

When Irving stepped on the stage that night he got a right hearty cheer.

That journey was in many ways a record.

LXIX

PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

I

Henry Irving had the honour of calling four Presidents of the United States by the name of friend.

The first was General Chester A. Arthur, who was in his high office in 1884 when Irving first visited Washington. The President sent to him a most kindly invitation to a Reception through Clayton McMichael, then Marshal of the district of Columbia. This was on the night of Saturday, 8th March. After the Reception he asked Irving to remain with a very few intimate friends after the rest had gone. They sat till a late—or rather an early hour.

II

Irving’s first meeting with Mr. Grover Cleveland was when the latter was President-Elect. The occasion was the *matinée* for the benefit of the Actor’s Fund at the Academy of Music in New York, December 4, 1884. Mr. Cleveland was in a box, and when Irving had with Ellen Terry played the fourth act of *The Merchant of Venice* he sent to ask if he would come to see him in his box. The occasion seemed rather peculiar as Irving thus described it to me that evening:

“When I came into the box Mr. Cleveland turned round and, seeing me, stood up and greeted me warmly. As I was thus facing the stage I could not help noticing that a man dressed exactly as I dressed Shylock, and with a wig and make-up counterparts of my own, was playing some droll antics with a pump and milk cans. The President-Elect saw, I suppose, the surprise on my face, for he turned to the stage for a moment and then, turning back to me again, said in a grave way:

"'That doesn't seem very good taste, does it!' Then leaning against the side of the box with his face to me and his back to the stage, he went on speaking about Shylock."

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III

Major McKinley was a friend before he was nominated for President. The first meeting was at New York on November 16, 1893. He came to the play with Melville Stone, a great friend of Irving's—who introduced the Player to him. The following week we all met again at supper with John Sergeant Wise. This time Joseph Jefferson was of the party. Afterwards in Cleveland Mark Hanna brought him round to see Irving in his dressing-room.

In 1899, during our visit to Washington, Irving and I called at the White House to pay our respects to the President, then in his second term of office. The officials of course recognised Sir Henry, and said that they knew the President would wish to see him. A Cabinet meeting was on, but when word was sent the President graciously sent a message asking Irving to wait as the Cabinet was nearly over and he wished to see him. We waited in the "War Room," with which Irving was immensely struck. He said it was the most wonderful piece of organisation he had ever known.

Presently word was brought that the Cabinet Council was over and would we go in. It was really an impressive sight—all the more as there was no pomp or parade of any sort. In the middle of the great room with its row of arched windows stood the President, the baldness of his domed forehead making more apparent than ever his likeness to Napoleon. Grouped round him were various chiefs of State departments, amongst them John Hay, Secretary of State; Elihu Root, Secretary for War; Charles Emory Smith, Postmaster-General, all of whom were by that time old friends. We had known them intimately since 1883–4. The President was sweetly gracious. We thought that he did not seem well in health; there was a waxen hue in his face which we did not like. The terrible labour of the Presidency—increased in his time by two wars—was undoubtedly telling on his strength. We were with him quite half an hour, a long while for such a place and time, and then came away.

At that visit to the White House we saw President McKinley for the last time. His assassination was attempted on 6th September 1901; he died on 14th.

On the 18th September Irving gave his Reading of *Becket* at Winchester for the King Alfred Millenary. He was called on 386to speak, and after speaking of King Alfred and what he had done for the making of England, he said:

"All that race which looks on King Alfred's memory as a common heritage is in bitter grief for one whom to-morrow a mourning nation is to lay to rest. President McKinley, like his predecessor of a thousand years ago, worked for all the world; and his memory shall be green for ever in the hearts of a loyal and expansive race—in the hearts of all English-speaking people."

IV

Irving's first meeting with Theodore Roosevelt was on 27th November 1895. The occasion was a luncheon party given by Seth Low, ex-Mayor of Brooklyn and then President of Columbia College. At that time Mr. Roosevelt was Commissioner of Police for the City of New York, with absolute power over the whole force. He and Irving had a chat together before lunch and again after it. For myself he was a person of extraordinary interest. After I had been introduced we had a chat. Before he left he came to me and said:

"I am holding a sort of Court of justice the day after to-morrow—a trial of the charges made against policemen during the last fortnight. Would you like to come with me; you seem to be interested in the subject?"

I went with him to an immense hall where were gathered all the complainants and all the police, with their respective witnesses. Everything was done in perfect order. The Commissioner had the list of cases before him, and when one was over, a lusty officer with a stentorian voice called out the next. Those interested in each case had been already grouped, so that when the case was announced the whole body thus segregated moved up in front of the table. The method was simple. The case was stated as briefly as possible—the Commissioner saw to that; the witnesses for the prosecution gave their evidence and were now and again asked a question from the Bench. Then the defendant had his say and produced his witnesses, if any; again came an occasional searching question from the Commissioner, who when he had satisfied himself as to the justice of the case would smite the table with his hand and order on the next case. While the little crowd was changing places he would write a few words on 387the paper before him—judgment and perhaps sentence in one. The Commissioner was incarnate justice, and his judgments were given with a direct simplicity and brevity which were very remarkable. Each one would take only a few minutes; sometimes as few as two or three, never more than about twelve or fifteen. As there were very many cases brevity was a necessity.

Now and then in a case very difficult of conclusion Mr. Roosevelt, when he had written his decision, would turn to me and say:

"What do you think of that?" I would answer to the best of my own opinion. Then he would turn up the paper, lying face down, and show me what had been his own decision. As in every such case it was exactly what I had said, I thought—naturally—that he was very just.

I came away from the Court with a very profound belief in Mr. Roosevelt. I wrote afterwards in my diary:

"Must be President some day. A man you can't cajole, can't frighten, can't buy."

On December 28, 1903, Irving commenced a week's engagement at Washington. On the morning of Friday, January 1, 1904, he received a letter from the President saying that he was that day holding his New Year's Reception and that he would be very pleased if he would come. Sir Henry would be expected to come by the private entrance with the Ambassadors. It was such a letter as to make its recipient feel proud—so courteous, so full of fine feeling and genuine hospitality—so significant of his liking and respect.

We went in by the private entrance at the back, and were brought up at once. At his Reception the President stood a little inside the doorway on the right and shook hands with every one who came—no light task in itself as there were on the queue for the reception a good many thousands of persons, male and female. The long line four deep extended far into the neighbouring streets, winding round the corners like a huge black snake, and disappearing in the distance. The serpentine appearance was increased by the slow movement as the crowd advanced inch by inch.

Beside the President stood Mrs. Roosevelt and beyond him all the Ministers of his Cabinet with their wives in line—all the ladies 388were in full dress. The room was in form of a segment of a circle and the crowd passed between red cords stretched across the base of the arc, the President's party being behind either cord. The President gave Irving a really cordial greeting and held him for a minute or two speaking—a long time with such a crowd waiting. He did not know that I was with Irving, but when he saw me he addressed me by name. He certainly has a royal memory! He asked us to go behind the ropes and join his family and friends. This we did. We remained there a full hour, and Irving was made much of by all.

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LXX
KNIGHTHOOD

I

Late in the afternoon of Friday, May 24, 1895, I got from Irving the following telegram:

"Could you look in at quarter to six. Something important."

When I saw him he showed me two letters which he had received. One was from the Prime Minister, the Earl of Rosebery, telling him that the Queen had conferred on him the honour of knighthood in personal recognition and for his services to art.

The other was from the Prince of Wales congratulating him on the event.

The announcement had evidently given the Actor very much pleasure; even when I saw him he was much moved.

The next day was the Queen's Birthday on which the "Honour List" was promulgated, and when it was known that Irving was so honoured the telegrams, letters and cables began to pour in from all parts of the world. For it was in its way a remarkable event. It was the first time that in any country an actor had been, *quâ* actor, honoured by the State.

It really seemed as if the whole world rejoiced at the honour to Irving. The letters and telegrams kept coming literally in hundreds during the next two days, and cables constantly arrived from America, Australia, Canada, India, and from nearly all the nations in Europe. They were bewildering. Late in the afternoon of Saturday Irving sat at his desk in the Lyceum before piles of them opened by one of the clerks. Presently he turned to me with his hand to his head and said:

"I really can't read any more of these at present. I must leave them to you, old chap. They make my head swim." Of course he did in time read them all; and sent answers too. For three days several men were at work copying out the answers as he 390sorted them out into heaps, each heap having a similar wording. It was quite impossible to send a distinctly different answer to each—and it was not necessary.

The actual knighting took place at Windsor Castle on July 18. The account of it was told by Arthur Arnold, who was knighted in the same batch, and who came very soon after Irving. He said that the Queen, who usually did not make any remark to the recipient of the honour as she laid the sword on his shoulder, said on this occasion:

"I am very, very pleased!"

II

The corollary of the honour came the next day when on the Lyceum stage a presentation was made to Irving by his fellow players. This was unique of its kind. It was an Address of Congratulation signed by every actor in the kingdom. The Address was read by Sir (then Mr.) Squire Bancroft. Irving was greatly touched by it; few things were so essentially dear to him as the approval of his fellows. The unanimity was in itself a wonder. The Address was in the shape of a volume and was contained in a beautiful casket of gold and crystal designed by Johnston Forbes-Robertson—a painter as well as a player.

III

The idea of knighthood for Irving was not new to that year, 1895. I mention this now because after his death a statement was made that he had by a lecture at the Royal Institution compelled the Government to give him knighthood. The statement was, of course, more than ridiculous. Here is what happened to my own knowledge:

In 1883, before Irving's visit to America, I was consulted, I understood on behalf of a very exalted person, by the late Sir James Mackenzie, as to whether the conferring of knighthood would be pleasing to Mr. Irving. It has never been usual to confer the honour on an unwilling recipient—any more than it has been to allow any "forcing" to be effective. I asked for a day to find out. Then I conveyed the result of my veiled inquiry into the matter. At that time Irving thought it was better that an actor, whilst actively pursuing his calling, should not be so singled out from his fellows. On my showing, the matter was not proceeded with at 391that time. From the very beginning of his management of the Lyceum he had been scrupulously particular that all the names given on the cast of the play should be printed in the same type. That rule was never altered, even after his knighthood. But as he was no longer "Mr." and would not be called by his title he thenceforth appeared as "Henry Irving." Advertisement was, of course, different as to type, but he did not use the title.

IV

But in the twelve years that had elapsed since 1883 many things had changed. Other Arts had benefited by the large measures of official recognition extended to them; and the very fact of the Art of Acting not having any official recognition was being used as an argument that it was not an art at all. Indeed his lecture at the Royal Institution, whilst it was in no way intended to "force" recognition or had no power of so doing, was taken as a manifest proof that the conferring of the honour would be regarded in a favourable light. Thus it was that in 1895 no "judicious" opinion was asked; none was necessary. The Prime Minister was assured that there could not be any *contretemps*, and even the Prince of Wales felt secure in his most gracious letter of congratulation.

I feel it too bad that one who in his days tried to live up to the ideal of discretion, and has regarded reticence as a duty rather than a motive, should have to speak openly, even after a lapse of years, on so private a matter; and I can only trust that I may be forgiven should any one with the power of forgiveness see the need of it. But such statements as those to which I have alluded are calculated to destroy all the claim of gracious courtesy—of the spontaneous kindness from which high favour springs; and it is, I think, better that I should be deemed to err than that such a misconception should be allowed to pass.

V

The King was always a most gracious and generous friend to Irving. Throughout the whole management of the Lyceum and to the time of Irving's death, King Edward, both as Prince and King, extended to him the largest measure of his approval. He gave him a position by his very courtesy and by the hospitalities which he graciously gave and accepted. When players dined with him 392the post of honour on his right hand was always given to Irving. He showed his own immediate surroundings in private as well as the world in public that he respected Irving as well as liked and admired him. He showed that he considered the Player in his own way to have brought some measure of honour to the great nation that he rules and whose countless hearts he sways.

He often honoured the Player by being his guest in the theatre. At the marriage of the present Prince of Wales he was given a place in St. James's Palace; at the Queen's funeral he was bidden to a seat in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. At the King's coronation he was amongst the guests invited to Westminster Abbey.

And, whether as Prince or King, his Most Gracious Majesty Edward VII. R. et I. had no more loyal, no more respectful, no more believing, no more loving subject than Henry Irving.

LXXI

HENRY IRVING AND UNIVERSITIES

I

DUBLIN

The first University to recognise Irving's great position was that of Dublin. In 1876 it gave him an informal Address. In 1892 it conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Literature—"Litt.D." As this was the first occasion on which a University degree was given *Honoris Causa* to an actor, *quâ* actor, it may be allowable to say something of it.

It had for a long time been the intention of the Senate to confer on him a suitable degree. The occasion came in the celebration of the Tercentenary of the University, which was founded by Queen Elizabeth.

In order to be present Irving had to go out of the bill at the Lyceum, where we were then playing *Henry VIII*. He and I travelled to Dublin by the mail of Tuesday, 5th July. We had heard that the Dublin folk and the Irish generally were very pleased that he was to receive the honour, but the first evidence we saw of it was the attitude of the chief steward on the mail boat. He could not make enough of Irving, and in his excitement confused his honours and invented new ones. He was at a loss what to call him. He tried "Docthor," but it did not seem to satisfy him. Then he tried "Sir Henry"—this was three years before he was knighted; but this also seemed inadequate. Then he tried "Docthor Sir Henry"; this seemed to meet his ideas and to it he stuck.

The function of the conferring of degrees was a most interesting one; the mere pageant of it was fine. There were representatives of nearly all the Universities of the world, each in its proper robes. As Irving passed to his place in the Examination Hall he was loudly cheered. I was, of course, not close to him; I sat with the Senate, of which I am a member. He looked noble and distinguished, and the robes seemed to suit him. His height and 394bearing and lean figure carried off the peculiarly strong mass of colour. The robes of the Dublin Doctor of Literature are scarlet robes with broad facing of deep blue, and scarlet hood with blue lining. The cap is the usual Academic "mortar-board" with long tassel. When Irving was present at the formal opening of the Royal College of Music, where all who were entitled to do so wore Academic dress, his robes stood out in startling prominence.

Of course, each recipient of a degree received an ovation, but there was none so marked as that to Irving. He went up with the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Frederic (afterwards Lord) Leighton and Mr. (now Sir) Lawrence Alma-Tadema, R.A., these three being bracketed in the agenda of the function. When the conferring of degrees was over and the assembly in the Examination Hall poured out into the quadrangle, Irving was seized by a great body of some hundreds of students and carried to the steps of the dining-hall opposite, where he was compelled to make a speech.

At the banquet that night there was something of a *faux pas*, which was later much commented on. In the toast list was one: Science, Literature and Art.

This was proposed by the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, and was responded to for Science by Lord Kelvin; for Literature by the Bishop of Derry; and for Art by Sir Frederic Leighton. The latter was, of course, quite correct, for the President of the Royal

Academy is naturally the official mouthpiece for the voice of Art in this country. The mistake was that, in speaking for Art, Sir Frederic limited himself to Painting. He spoke in reality for himself and Alma-Tadema, but ignored completely the sister Art of Acting, the chief exponent of which was a fellow recipient of the honour which he himself had received that day and who was present as a guest at the banquet. The comments of the press on the omission were marked, and the authorities of the University did not like the mistake. Leighton evidently heard of some comment on it, for a few days afterwards he wrote to Irving to explain that he did not think he was intended to reply, except for his own Art.

It was this circumstance that made up Irving’s mind to put forward on some suitable occasion the claims of his own Art to a place in the general category. The opportunity came a little more than two years afterwards at the Royal Institution. On that occasion he selected for his subject, “Acting: an Art”—the truth 395of which he proved logically and conclusively. I mention the circumstance here as his silence has been misconstrued.

II
CAMBRIDGE

The second University to honour the Player was Cambridge. The occasion was this:

He was asked by the Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Hill, to give the “Rede” Lecture for 1898. This request is, from the antiquity and record of the function, in itself an honour.

The Rede Lecture was delivered at noon in the Senate House of the University on Wednesday, 15th June, 1898, for the night of which day he had closed the Lyceum. Irving had chosen as his subject, “The Theatre in its relation to the State.” Throughout his life he always selected some subject connected with his work. His art with him was the Alpha and Omega of his endeavour. In this case he showed that, though some might regard the theatre as a mere pleasure-house, it had in truth a much more important use as a place of education.

“I claim for the theatre that it may be, and is, a potent means of teaching great truths and furthering the spread or education of the higher kind—the knowledge of the scope and working of human character.”

The lecture was beautifully and earnestly delivered and was received with very great enthusiasm. Very picturesque the lecturer looked in the rostrum in his Dublin robes. These he exchanged later in the day, when he received his Cambridge degree, D.Litt. This dress, all scarlet and red with velvet hat, looked even more picturesque than that of Dublin University.

That was an exhausting day. A journey from St. Pancras at 8.15 A.M. A visit to the Vice-Chancellor at Downing Lodge, Cambridge. The Public Lecture. Luncheon with the Vice-Chancellor in Downing Hall, with speech. The Conferring of Degree. A Garden Party at King's College. A Dinner Party in Hall given by the Master and Fellows of Trinity College to the Recipients of degrees. A Reception in the house of the Master of Trinity. And finishing up with a quiet smoke among a few friends at the rooms of Dr. Jackson.

396The next morning there was a delightful breakfast in the house of Frederick Myers—Mrs. Myers, formerly Miss Tennant, was an old friend of Irving. Lord Dufferin was the youngest of the party, despite his seventy-two years. I think the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava had the most winning manner of any man I ever met. There was a natural sweetness of the heart and an infinite humour from the head whose combination was simply irresistible. His humour was of enormous and wide-embracing range, and touched with illumination whatever subject he talked of. He and Irving had much to say to each other. The rest who were present wished to hear them both; and so there was silence when either spoke. Irving seemed quite charmed with Lord Dufferin and gave way to him altogether. The picture rises before me of the scene in the study of Frederick Myers after breakfast, well shown by the wide window opening out on the beautiful garden behind the house. Seated on the high fender with padded top, with his back to the fireplace, sat Lord Dufferin, and round him in a close circle—the young girls being the closest and looking with admiring eyes—the whole of the rest of the party. His clear, sweet, exquisitely modulated voice seemed to suit the sunshine and the universal brightness of the place. Lord Dufferin's voice seemed to rise and fall, to quicken or come slowly by a sort of selective instinct. It struck me as being naturally one of the most expressive voices I had ever heard.

That night Irving played *The Medicine Man* at the Lyceum, and I thought I detected here and there a trace of the influence of Lord Dufferin in the more winning passages of the play.

III

GLASGOW

Irving now held University degrees from Ireland and England. The Scottish degree came in another year. For a long time Professor Herbert Story, D.D., LL.D., the Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow, had a very high opinion of Henry Irving and of the good work which he had done for education and humanity. I remember well a talk which Dr. Story had with me in his study after I had lunched with him on 26th June 1896. Incidentally he mentioned that he thought his University should give Irving a degree. Two years after, 22nd October 1898, he told me that it was in contemplation to carry 397this out in the following year. In that year Professor Story was presented by the Queen to the Principalship of the University on the resignation of Dr. Caird from that high position. On the 20th July 1899, the honour was actually completed when Irving was invested with his degree of LL.D.

That was, I think, the only honourable occasion of Irving's life since 1878 at which I was not present. But it was quite impossible; I was then in bed with a bad attack of pneumonia. I had been looking forward to the occasion, for Principal Story and his wife and daughters were friends of mine as well as of Irving. I read, however, of the heartiness of his reception, both in the Bute Hall, where the degrees were conferred, and by the great mass of students without.

IV
OXFORD

On Sunday, 7th March 1886, Irving and I went to Oxford to stay with W. L. Courtney, then a Don of New College. For some years the two men had been close friends and Courtney, whenever he was in London, would come to supper in the Beefsteak Room. This Oxford visit was arranged for some time, for Courtney was anxious to have Irving meet some of the Heads of Colleges. The dinner was naturally a formal one, for in Oxford a very strict order of precedence rules. The Vice-Chancellor of the University—Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol College—was there; also the Master of University, the President of Magdalen, and the Warden of Merton, the last three with their wives. Professor Max Müller was also a guest, his wife and daughter completed the party of fourteen. Jowett was in great form that evening. He was always a good and original talker, but he seemed on that evening to be on his mettle. During dinner one of the ladies sounded to Irving the praises of the Ober-Ammergau play, its fine effects, its deep moral teaching, and so forth. Irving listened attentively, and presently said quietly:

"If it is so good they ought to bring it to the Crystal Palace." The lady was quite shocked, and turning to the Vice-Chancellor said:

"Oh, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, do you hear what Mr. Irving says: 'That the Ober-Ammergau play should be brought to the Crystal Palace!'" The pause round the table was marked. All wanted 398eagerly to hear what the Vice-Chancellor, who in those days ruled Oxford, would say to such a startling proposition. His answer startled them afresh when it came:

"Why not!"

The result of the *rapprochement* which Courtney had so kindly effected was that Irving was asked to give an Address at the University. He, of course, assented to the honourable request, and the date was fixed for Saturday, 26th June. The subject which he chose for the discourse was "English Actors: their Characteristics and their Methods."

On arriving at Oxford on the day he and I went at once with W. L. Courtney, who had met us at the station, to the New Examination Hall, where the Address was to be given. Irving always liked to see beforehand the place in which he was to act or speak. From there we drove to Balliol, where we were staying with the Master. At half-past nine o'clock we went to the hall with him. The great hall was crowded to suffocation with an immense audience, and the reception was warm in the extreme. The discourse was received with rapt attention pointed with applause; and the conclusion was followed by a salvo of cheers. Then came the presentation of an Address, made by the Vice-Chancellor in a delightful, carefully-worded speech. Amongst other things Dr. Jowett said:

"I express ... our admiration of him for the great services which he has rendered to the world and to society by improving and elevating the stage...."

Then after explaining the views of Plato on whose work he was so supreme an authority, regarding the rhapsodist, and of Socrates on the same subject, and following up the views of the latter with regard to the good company he kept, he went on:

"The drama is the only form of literature which is not dead, but alive, and is always being brought to life again and again by the genius of the actor.... The indirect influence of the theatre is very great, and tends to permeate all classes of society, so that the condition of the stage is not a bad index or test of a nation's character. And those who, regardless of their own pecuniary loss or gain, have brought back Shakespeare to the English stage, who have restored his plays to their original form, who have quickened in the English people the love of his writings and the feelings of his greatness may be truly considered national benefactors."

399Surely a noble tribute this from a man of such personal and official distinction to the worth of the drama, the stage, and the great actor to whom his praise was given.

Breakfast next morning was another pleasant function, at which all the house-party were present. The "Master," as Dr. Jowett was called, was in great form. I remember his quoting a remark of Tennyson's:

"I would rather get six months than put two S'S together in verse!"

V
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

In 1894 Manchester had no University exclusively its own. Its College, Owens College, was chartered by the Queen in 1880 and it was afterwards grouped with the Colleges of Liverpool and Leeds in the Victoria University. It was not till 1904 that it became a University by itself.

Before the time of visiting Manchester, on his tour of 1894, Irving was asked to give a lecture to the Owens College Literary Society. To this he acceded, and chose as his subject “The Character of Macbeth.”

His reason for the choice was that he had wished to make, under important conditions, a reply to some of the criticisms with which he had been assailed on his reproduction of Shakespeare’s play in 1888, but a suitable opportunity had not up to then appeared. Some of these criticisms had been ridiculous, some puerile, some even infantile. I remember Irving telling me that one ingenuous gentleman had gone so far as to suggest that the Messenger who in Act. I. scene 5 announces to Lady Macbeth the coming of the King, should have a bad cold. His contention having been that Lady Macbeth says in her soliloquy:

“The raven himself is hoarse

That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

Under my battlements.”

The delay in his answer to the various feeble or foolish things spoken of his work did not detract from its power. His reasoning on the character from the text and from a study of the authorities which Shakespeare had evidently had before him when he wrote, was absolutely masterly. I venture to say that no student of the 400play can form any kind of correct estimate of Macbeth’s character without reading it.

The lecture was given on the afternoon of Tuesday, 11th December, in the Chemical Theatre, the largest hall then appertaining to the College and holding some eight hundred persons. That the student element manifested itself in no uncertain way is shown by the note in my diary:

“H. I. got enormous reception. Cheers were startling! On leaving, students wanted to take out horses and draw carriage, but wiser counsels prevailed.”

VI
HARVARD

a

Irving gave addresses at Harvard on two separate occasions.

The first was on 30th March 1885, on which occasion he took as his subject “The Art of Acting.”

We were then playing in New York, but as Irving had promised to come to Boston for the occasion, we left on Sunday afternoon. Several friends came with us, amongst whom was William Winter, of the New York *Tribune*. The train, on which we had a special carriage, was met at Worcester by a deputation of Harvard students, who travelled back with us to Boston. The address was given on the Monday evening, 30th, in the Sanders Theatre, a beautifully proportioned hall of octagon shape, which though looking not large yet held on that occasion over two thousand people. The crowd was so great at the doors both inside and outside that when we arrived at half-past seven we could not get in. Finally we had to be taken in through the trap-door to the coal cellar, from which by devious ways we were escorted to the platform. The Address was received enthusiastically. My note says:

“Went well. H.I. looked very distinguished.”

That was in reality a mild putting of the fact. Distinguished was hardly an adequate adjective. Even from that sea of fine intellectual heads his noble face shone out like a star.

We were all to sup with the President of the College, Mr. Elliot; but when the time of departure came we could not find Winter. We searched for him high and low, but without avail. 401As a large party was waiting at the President’s house we had to make up our minds to go without him. I had, however, one more last look and found him. He was in the coal cellar, which was about the only quiet place in the building. He sat on a heap of coal; on the ground beside him was a lighted candle stuck in the neck of a bottle which he had somehow requisitioned. When I came upon him he was writing furiously—if so rude a word may be applied to an art so gentle. He glanced up, when I spoke, with an appealing look and, with raised hand, said with passionate entreaty:

“Bram, for God’s sake!”—I understood, and left him, having secured from a local fireman the promise of unfaltering obedience to my instructions to wait and take him to the carriage which we left for him. I also left a telegraph messenger on guard, for I saw that he was writing on telegraph “flimsy.”

Any one who will take the trouble to look up the file of the New York *Tribune* of the following day—March 31, 1885—will read as fine a piece of descriptive criticism as can well be. I hope that such an one when he finishes the article will spare time for a glance, from the eye of imagination, at the silent figure phrasing it in the gloom of the coal cellar.

b

Irving's second address at Harvard was nine years later. On that occasion his subject was: "The Value of Individuality," and the address was given in the afternoon—the place being the same, the Sanders Theatre. There was again a great audience and a repetition of the old enthusiasm.

That night the Tremont Theatre in Boston, where we were playing, saw an occasion unique to the place, though not to the actor. The University had proclaimed a "Harvard Night," and the house was packed with College men, from President to jib. At the end of the performance—*Nance Oldfield* and *The Bells*—the students presented to Irving a gold medal commemorative of the occasion.

I may perhaps, before leaving the subject of Harvard University, mention a somewhat startling circumstance. It had become a custom during our visit to Boston for a lot of Harvard students to act as "supers" in our plays. There seemed to be a brisk demand for opportunities and the local super-master grew rich on options. When we played *King Arthur* in 1895 there were many of these gentlemen who wore armour—the beautiful armour designed by 402Burne-Jones. The biggest of the men available were chosen for this service, and there were certainly some splendidly stalwart young men amongst them. A few of them got "sky-larking" amongst themselves on the stage before the curtain went up. Sky-larking in full armour is a hazardous thing both to oneself and to others, and a blow struck in fun with the unaccustomed weight of plate armour behind it had an unexpected result, for the stricken man was knocked head over heels senseless just as Irving had come on the stage to see that all was correct for the coming scene—"The Great Hall of Camelot." He reprimanded the super shortly and told him that if he undertook duties he should respect them, and himself, in performing them gravely. Imagine his surprise when in the morning he received a bellicose cartel from the offended young man challenging him to mortal combat. Irving, who took all things as they were meant, understood that the man was a gentleman who considered himself wronged and wrote him a pleasant letter in which he explained the necessity of taking gravely the work which others considered grave. The young man *was* a gentleman, and wrote a handsome apology for his misconduct on the stage and explained that he had had no intention of either breaking rules or hurting any one else.

And so on that occasion no blood was shed.

VII

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Owens College, Manchester, blossoming into Manchester University, had a parallel in the growth of Columbia University, New York. In 1895 when, at the request of its President, Seth Low, Irving delivered the address on “Macbeth,” which he had delivered in Manchester, it was still merely a College though the matter of its coming development was then at hand. Before our next visit to America in 1899 the whole new University of Columbia had been built and equipped.

Irving’s address was given in the Library, the largest hall in the old building, which had been somewhat dismantled for the purpose. It held some fifteen hundred persons. The occasion was Irving’s first experience of the New York College cry, which has a startling effect when enunciated in unison by a thousand lusty throats. When he entered the Library with the President, the cheering 403began and soon formulated itself into this special concourse of sounds. At the close of the address, which went extremely well, the enthusiastic cheering was repeated.

VIII

CHICAGO UNIVERSITY

Irving addressed the University of Chicago twice.

The first was on 17th March 1896, when he repeated his lecture on “Macbeth.” The second on April 25, 1900, when he repeated the lecture which he had given in 1895 at the Royal Institution: “Acting: an Art.” Both addresses were given in the Kent Hall, which was on each occasion crowded to excess.

The University of Chicago might well be taken as an illustration of the rapid growth possible in America. In the fall of 1893 the ground on which it stands was a section of the World’s Fair, what was called “The Midway Pleasaunce.” In the spring of 1896, less than two years and a half, the University was built, organised and furnished with students to its full capacity.

IX

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

The last address which Irving gave in America was at Princeton University, where on March 19, 1902, he read a paper on the subject of “Shakespeare and Bacon,” an eloquent and logical defence of Shakespeare against his detractors.

X

LEARNED BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS

The following is a list of various addresses given by Irving at Institutions and before learned Bodies other than Universities:

“The Stage.” Perry Bar Institute, near Birmingham, 6th March 1878.

“The Stage as it is.” Philosophical Institute, Edinburgh, 8th November 1881.

“Shakespeare and Goethe.” Goethe Society, New York, 15th March 1888. (*Given at Madison Square Theatre.*)

404“Hamlet.” Literary and Scientific Institute, Wolverhampton, 18th February 1890. (*This was given at the Agricultural Hall.*)

“The Art of Acting.” Philosophical Institute, Edinburgh, 9th November 1891. (*This was given in the Music Hall.*)

“Shakespeare as a Playwright.” Twentieth Century Club, Chicago, 2nd November 1893. (*Given in the private theatre in the house of Mr. George Pullman.*)

“Municipal Theatres.” Literary Institute, Walsall, 26th September, 1894. (*Given in the Grand Theatre.*)

“Acting: an Art.” Royal Institution, London, 1st February 1895.

“Macbeth.” Contemporary Club, Philadelphia, 17th April 1886. (*Given at the New Art Gallery.*) Also at the Catholic Social Union, London, 17th May 1898. (*Given at the house of Cardinal Vaughan.*)

“Actors and Acting.” Liberal Club, Buffalo, 4th February 1902.

405

LXXII
ADVENTURES

I
OVER A MINE-BED

On 9th August 1880 Irving and I went for a short holiday together. The heat in London was very great. We began at Southsea, where we stopped at the Pier Hotel; that evening after dinner in the afternoon we got a sail-boat and went over to Ryde, returning by moonlight. The next day we walked on the Esplanade. Southsea was very full, and along the sea front a vast crowd of people moved in endless procession. Every one seemed to know my companion, and he became surrounded with a crowd which, though the composing individuals changed, never left him. At last he got tired of shaking hands and answering endless commonplace questions. In a momentary pause he said to me:

“I can’t stand any more of this. Let’s get a boat and have a sail. We can get quiet that way anyhow!”

We went down on the beach and picked out a likely looking boat that was ready launched. The boatman was very deaf, but as he seemed also dumb we regarded him as a find. He hoisted his sail and we began to steal away from shore. Behind us was a lot of shouting, and many people ran down on the beach gesticulating and calling out. We could not distinguish what they said; but we were both so accustomed to hear people shouting at Irving that we took it that the present was but another instance of clamorous goodwill.

We had got away from the shore about half a mile when suddenly there was a terrific sound close to us, and the boat was thrown about just as a rat is shaken by a dog. A column of water rose some thirty yards from us and for quite half a minute the sea round us seemed to boil. The old boatman seemed very much frightened and found his voice to the extent of ejaculations of a prayerful kind, mingled with blasphemy. There seemed some excuse for him, for it was certainly very terrifying. To us, who did 406not understand, it seemed like an earthquake or a volcanic eruption of some kind. Irving, however, was quite calm; he did not seem put out at all. The only motion he made was to put on his pince-nez which had been shaken off. I am not as a rule very timorous myself.

As the sea began to resume its normal calm it presented a strange appearance. All around us were strewn floating fish, mostly belly up, the white catching the eye everywhere. There were scores—hundreds of them, all seemingly dead. We lifted a lot of them into the boat. A few did not move at all, but after a while most of them began to wriggle and flop about. These had only been stunned.

We had after the first surprise taken it for granted that the shock had been from some submarine explosion; but we were content to await developments. When the boatman began to get over his agitation, he enlightened us:

“’Tis they torpedoes; they’ve fired ’em by wire from Fort Monckton. ’Tis silly I am not to have thought on ’em an’ kept out of the way!” Then he explained that the event of the day was to be an attack on Fort Monckton—the low-lying fort which guards the mouth of the harbour at Portsmouth—by the *Glatton*, then the most up-to-date of our scientifically equipped ships. We appeared to have come right over the mine-bed. The prudent fisherman had by this time put his boat’s head against such wind as there was and began to gather up the unforeseen harvest of the sea. He was intent on this, though his hands shook and he kept looking around him apprehensively. We drifted with the tide. Presently, a little distance in front of us, another mine went off, and our friend got agitated afresh. He implored us to come away, and began to slack the sheet which he had drawn tight. Irving had lit a cigar and was calmly smoking. He had evidently taken a common-sense view of the situation.

"Why should we come away? We are, I take it, in about as safe a place as can be. The mines here have been fired and we don't know where the others are. If we go on, no matter in what direction, we shall probably come across another explosion. Let us stay where we are—and enjoy ourselves!" And stay we did and enjoyed—to a certain extent—the thunder of the cannon which later on, when the attack developed, rolled over the water and was brought to our ears, we being so close to the surface, in a way to make us feel as if each fresh explosion was close at hand.

407I think, however, that we both enjoyed the attack more that night when the actual sham battle was fought. In those days search-lights were new and rare. Both the *Glatton* and Fort Monckton were well equipped with them, and during the attack the whole sea and sky and shore were perpetually swept with the powerful rays. It was in its way a noble fight, and as then most people were ignorant of the practical working of the new scientific appliances of war, it was instructive as well as fascinating. We, who had been out in the middle of it during the day, could perhaps appreciate its possibilities better than ordinary civil folk unused to the forces and horrors of war!

II
FIRES

a

The first fire of which Irving and I were spectators together was in November 1881. We were playing at Edinburgh and stayed in the old Edinburgh Hotel opposite the Scott Memorial. The house was pulled down long since. The hotel was made up of several houses thrown into one, and was of the ramshackle order. It would have been easily set on fire; and had it got well alight nothing could have saved it.

Loveday and I supped with Irving in his sitting-room on the second storey, and after supper were enjoying our smoke. It was then late for Edinburgh, nearly one o'clock. As we sat we heard a queer kind of roaring and crackling sound in the passage outside.

"That sounds like a fire!" I said, and ran out to see if I could help. In the passage a curious scene presented itself. A sort of housemaid's closet in the back wall was well alight; the flames were roaring. The night porter, when collecting the boots, had seen it and was now trying to put it out. He was in a really dangerous position, and was behaving very bravely. I ran up to my room just overhead and brought down two great jugs of water which were on my wash-hand stand. When I got down a tall man was standing near the closet and talking very angrily to the porter. He was attired in a long white night-shirt under which his bare feet and legs displayed themselves. He was not making the least effort to help, but kept on abusing the man who was working, 408Considering that the chances were that in a few minutes the whole hotel would be on fire, with what awful result none could foresee, it was strange conduct. In the midst of the hurry, for by this time we were all doing what we could, I had to laugh at the absurd situation and his out-of-place blaming:

“This is a pretty nice sort of thing for a gentleman staying in your damned hotel to have to endure! Do you always do this sort of thing, sir? Nice thing indeed! A gentleman to be waked up out of his bed by your infernal stupidity in setting the house on fire. Are we all to be burned in our beds? Nice sort of conduct indeed! Edinburgh should be ashamed of itself!” We were all hard at work but were doing little good. The porter who knew the place was trying to get at the water-tap within. He succeeded at last, and when a jet of water could be used in that narrow space the fire was soon held in check. We stood for a while to admire the angry stranger, still “jawing” away at the porter, who took not the least notice of him. By this time the other guests were alarmed and came running out of their rooms in various stages of night gear and partial dressing, till the passage was thronged with frightened women and men full of inquiries.

When we went back to the room to finish our smoke we left them all there. The unclad stranger was in the midst, still in a sublime state of indifference to decorum, haranguing—at what or whom he did not seem to know, for the porter had gone. In the room Irving said, as he cut the end of a fresh cigar:

“I wish I had that fellow’s self-conceit—or even a bit of it. With it I could do anything!”

b

The next fire we were at was on 6th December 1882. We had supped together in the Lyceum after the play and were leaving tolerably early. We were going out by the private door in Burleigh Street, when there came a sudden red glare in front of us a little to the right, or north, just as Irving was crossing the sidewalk to the cab. In those days he always used a four-wheeler; he did not have a brougham till twelve or thirteen years later—and then it was a hired one.

“Hullo!” said Irving, “there is a fire! It seems pretty close too. I suppose you’re off!” It was a standing joke with him against me that whenever there was a fire within range I was off to 409it hot-foot. I was just putting on heavy shoes when a vehicle stopped hurriedly at the door and there was a loud rapping. I ran out—Irving was back.

“Come quick,” he said, “don’t wait to change. It’s the Alhambra.” We jumped into the cab and the man drove for all he was worth. We got into Leicester Square just as the police were clearing the place and forming a cordon. All the Bow Street men knew us both and they hurried us into a doorway just where the Empire Music Hall is now. From there we had a splendid view, the place all to ourselves.

The fire had made quick headway and as we got to our place the whole theatre seemed alight within, and the flames burst out of the windows. The Fire Brigade got to work quick; but when a building of that size and with so large an interior gets alight there is no checking it. Within a time which seemed incredibly short the roof began to send up sparks and flames, and then all at once it seemed to be lifted and to send up a fiery column of flames and sparks and smoke and burning ashes, which a few seconds later began to fall round us like rain. There was a terrific crash, and more leaping and towering flames. And then the roof fell in.

After the fall of the roof, the rest was detail. We waited an hour or so and then came away.

c

At the next fire we were not together. Irving was on the stage of the Star Theatre, New York, and I happened to be standing at the back of the parquet near the aisle which in all American theatres runs straight back from the orchestra rail. The occasion was the first night of Irving’s playing *Hamlet* in New York, and the house was crowded to excess in every part. The play went well, incidentally I may say that it was an enormous success. All went well till the “play scene.” The light for the mimic stage was supposed to be given from the attendants ranged on each side carrying torches. These torches were of spirit, as such give leaping flames which are picturesque and appear to give good light, though in truth their illuminating quality is small. Early in the scene one of these torches got overheated, and the flaming spirit running over set fire to one of the stage draperies. The super-master, Marion, who was “on” in the scene, at once ran over and tore down the curtain and trampled it out.

410Through it all Irving never hesitated or faltered for an instant. He went on with his speech; no one could take it from movement, expression or intonation that there was any cause for concern.

Still a fire in a theatre has very dreadful possibilities; and at the first sign of flame a number of people rose hurriedly in their seats as if preparatory to rushing out. There was all over the house a quick, quiet whisper:

“Sit down!” As if in obedience, the standers sat.

There was but one exception. A lanky, tallow-faced, herring-shouldered, young man, with fear in his white face, dashed up the aisle. It is such persons who cause death in such circumstances. There is a moment when panic can be averted; but once it starts *nothing* can stop it. The idea of “*Sauve qui peut!*” comes from the most selfish as well as the most weak of human instincts. I feared that this man might cause a panic, and as he dashed up I stepped out and caught him by the throat and hurled him back on the ground. At such a time one must not think of consequences—except one, which is to prevent a holocaust. The rude, elementary method was effective. No one else stirred. I caught the fallen man and dragged him to his feet.

“Go back to your seat, sir!” I said sternly. “It is cowards like you who cause death to helpless women!” He was so stunned or frightened that he did not make the least remonstrance, but went sheepishly back to his seat.

On the way he had to pass a man who stood a little in front of me—a tall, powerful, black-bearded, masterful-looking man. As the other was passing he put out his hand, and with finger and thumb caught the lappet of the young man’s coat and drew him close. Then he said in a low voice, full of personal indignation as at a wrong to himself:

“Do you know that you rushed past me like a flash of lightning!” Then he suddenly released him and turned his eyes to the stage. I think it was the most contemptuous action I ever saw. The rest of those present moved no more.

d

Two years after we had at the Lyceum a somewhat similar experience of a stage fire. This was during *Faust*. A curtain caught fire, and was promptly put out by the nearest person. Another such fire occurred in 1891 in *The Corsican Brothers*.

e

There was one other fire which had a bearing on Irving’s interests though he was not in it or near it. This was the burning of the Union Square Theatre, New York, on the 28th February 1888. This theatre backed on to the side of the Star Theatre where we were playing. The Morton House beside it, at the corner of Broadway and Union Square, caught fire. The theatre was quite burned out. When I saw it, which was quite by chance, it was well alight. There was a great crowd held back by the cordon of police. I managed to pass the guard, as I was concerned in the Star Theatre, and inside saw the Fire Chief of that section—the Thirteenth Street. He and I had become great friends in the process of years. The American firemen are born to their work and they are all splendid fellows. If they like you they drop the "Mr." at once; and when they call you by your Christian name that is, in their own way, the highest honour they can pay you. I was "Bram" to Chief Bresnin and his men. He said to me:

"Would you like to come into the theatre? It may be of use to you some day to know what a theatre is like inside when it is burning!" I acquiesced eagerly, and we hurried to the stage entrance. A policeman stood there, and when I went to pass in barred the way. The Fire Chief was surprised. "He is with me!" he said. The other answered gruffly:

"You can go in, of course; but I won't let him! It's murder to let him go in there!" The chief was speechless with indignation. From his point of view it was a gross affront to question any direction of his. By New York rules the Fire Chief takes absolute command, and the police have to obey his orders. Bresnin threw back the lappel of his uniform coat and showed his badge as Fire Chief.

"Do you see that?" he asked. The other answered surlily:

"I see it!"

"Then if you say one word—even to apologise for your insolence—I shall have you broke! Stand back! Come on, Bram!"

I wanted to go on. But even if I had wished to hang back, I could not do so then. In we went.

The place was a veritable hell. It seemed to be alight in every part; the roaring of the flames was terrific. The streams of water from some twenty fire-engines seemed to be having no effect at all, they did not make even steam, but seemed to simply dry up. The 412heat was of course very great, but as the draught was coming behind us we did not feel it much. It seemed to be all overhead. I was made aware of it by my silk hat collapsing over my eyes, like a big tam-o'-shanter. The whole place seemed moving and tumbling about; great beams were falling, and brickwork rattled down like gigantic hail. We stood on the stage. Here my own special knowledge of the safest place supplemented the fireman's general experience. It was by no means safe. Within a minute a huge beam, all ablaze, came thundering down not far from us and drove end on right through the stage, like a bullet through a sheet of paper. We kept an eye on the door close to us, and when things got perilous we came away.

I went back to the Brunswick Hotel where Irving and I were both staying. I sent for his man, Walter, to tell him if the "Governor" had been alarmed he had better go into his room where he was having his regular afternoon nap and tell him that as yet the Star Theatre was all right, and would probably escape as the ruins of the other theatre were falling and the firemen would be able to deal with them. I had just come from it. He answered me:

"It's all right, sir! The Governor knows about the fire. Some one here went up and woke him and told him that the Star was on fire! So he sent for me."

"What did he say?" I asked. He grinned as he replied:

"He said: 'Is Fussy safe, Walter?' So when I told him the dog had been with me all the time, he said 'All right!' and went to sleep again!"

III
FLOODS

a

On Saturday night, 1st February 1896, we played in New Orleans, and as we were to play in Memphis on Monday, arranged that our "special" should leave as soon as possible after the play. We had all ready for a quick start, and so far as our part was concerned had loaded up and were ready to start at the time fixed, one o'clock. We did not start, however; something was wrong on the line. It was two o'clock when we heard that we should have to go by a different route, the Valley section, as there had been a "wash-out" on the course destined for us. In New Orleans the 413heat had been intense, almost unendurable, and higher up the Mississippi valley there had been terrific rain-storms. It was three o'clock before we started. All went well till the forenoon of next day when we came to a creek called Bayou Pierre. This was a wide valley seemingly miles across—it was really between one and two miles. Here the line was carried on a long trestle-bridge. But the flood was out and the whole great valley was a turgid river whose yellow, muddy water rushing past swirled in places like little whirlpools. It had risen some four feet over the top of the bridge, so that no one could say whether the track remained or had been swept away. There was a short and hurried conference between our train master and the local engineer and they determined to "take the chances." And so we started.

It was necessary to go very slowly, for in that alluvial soil the running water weakens any support; the motion and vibration of a heavy train might shake down the structure. Moreover, the water level was almost up to the level of the floor of the carriages. Any wave, however little, might drown out the fires. It was a most remarkable journey; the whole broad surface of the stream was starred with wreckage of all sorts: hayricks, logs, fences, trees with parts of the roots sticking up in the air; now and again, the roof of a barn or wooden shanty of some kind. Several times the floating masses carried snakes!

Our own little group took the experience calmly. Indeed we enjoyed its novelty. Of course things might have turned out very badly. It was on the cards that any moment we might find that the bridge had been swept away—there could be no possible indication to warn us; or the passage of our long train might cause a collapse. In either case our engine would dive head foremost, and the shock of its blowing up would throw the rest of the train into the flooded bayou. Irving sat quietly smoking all the time and looking out of the windows on either side as some interesting matter "swam into his ken."

In the other cars the same calm did not reign. There were a good many of the company who were quite filled with fear. So fearful were they that, as I was told later, they got reckless and in their panic *confessed their sins*. I never heard the details of these confessions, and I did not want to. But from the light manner in which they were held by the more sturdy members I take it that either the calendar of their sins was of attenuated or mean proportions; or else that the expression of them was curtailed by a proper 414sense of prudence or decorum. Anyhow, we never heard of any serious breach or unhappiness resulting from them.

We crossed Bayou Pierre at last in safety, and kept on our way. Ours by the way was the last train that crossed the bayou till the flood was over. We heard next day that one section of the bridge close to the bank had gone down ten minutes after we had crossed. It had been an anxious time for the officials of the line. We could see them from both banks perpetually signalling to our driver, who was signalling in reply. It made the wide waste of water seem wider and more dangerous still. The only really bad result to us was that we arrived in Memphis too late to get anything to eat.

In those days the rules governing hours in the South-Western Hotels were very fixed, especially on Sundays. Up to nine o'clock you could get what you wanted. But after nine the kitchen was closed and money would not induce them to open it. Irving and Ellen Terry had of course ordered each their own dinner, and these, cold, waited them in their rooms; but the rest of us were hungry and wanted food of some kind. So I tried strategy with the “boy” who attended me, a huge, burly nigger with a good-humoured face and a twelve-inch smile. I said:

“What is your name?”

“George, sah! George Washington.”

“George!” I said, as I handed him half a dollar—“George, you are an uncommonly good-looking fellow!”

“Yah! Yah! Yah!” pealed George’s homeric laughter. Then he said:

“What can I do for you, sah!”

“George, your cook is a very stout lady, is she not?”

“Yes, sah, almighty stout, wide as a barrel. Yah! Yah! Yah!”

“Exactly, George. Now I want you to go right up to her, put your arms around her—tight, and give her a kiss—a big one!”

“’Fore Gad, sah, if I did, she’d open my head wid de cleaver!”

“Not so, George! Not with a good-looking fellow like you.”

“An’ what then, sah?”

“Then, George, you tell her that there is a stranger here who is perishing for some food. He is sorry to disturb so pretty a woman, who he is told is the belle of Memphis; but *necessitas non habet leges*. Explain that to her, won’t you, like a good fellow? Make me out tall and thin and aristocratic-looking, with a white thin face and a hectic spot on each cheek-bone, a black, melting and yearning eye, 415and a large black moustache—don’t forget the moustache. Ask her if she will of her gracious kindness break the iron rule of discipline that governs the house, and send me some food, *anything* that is least troublesome. A slice of cold meat, some bread and a pitcher of milk, and if she has any cold vegetables of any sort, and the cruet, I can make a salad!”

George laughed wildly and hurried out. I could hear his cachinnation dying away down the long passage. Presently I heard it swelling up again as he drew near. The heavy footfall drew closer, and the door was kicked in after the manner of negro waiters—in hotels there is an iron or brass plate at the base of the dining-room door for the purpose. George Washington bore an enormous tray, resting on an open palm spread back over his shoulder. When he laid it down its weight made the table shake.

That episode was worth a whole silver dollar to George. It was divided, I presume, with the adipose cook; for there was no external appearance of his head having been “opened wid de cleaver.” For the remaining days of our stay he followed me when opportunity served like a shadow. A very substantial shadow; quite a Demogorgon of a shadow!

b

We had had a somewhat similar experience of a flood some years before, though of nothing like so dangerous a nature. This was on 3rd February 1884, on our journey from Cincinnati to Columbus. The thaw had come on suddenly on the southern watershed of the northern hills when the ground through a long rigorous winter was frozen to a depth of several feet. Of course, the water, unable to sink into the ground, ran into the streams, and the Ohio River was flooded. As we left we could see that it was up to the top of the levée. Later on it rose some *forty feet* higher. It was a record flood. We went by the Panhandle route of the Pennsylvania Railway. As we went, whole tracts of country were flooded; in places we ran where the roads were under water, and a mighty splash our engine sent ahead of her. We went very fast, “rushing” all the bridges, especially the small ones of which there were many. In a stopping time I had a chat with the driver—one whom the depôt-master of Cincinnati had told me he had put on specially because he was a bold driver who did not mind taking a risk. I asked him why he went so fast over the bridges, as I had heard it was much safer to go slow.

“Not in a flood like this!” he answered. “You see, the water 416has been out some time and the brickwork is all sapped and sodden with wet. Mayhap we may shake a bridge down now and then, but I like them to fall *behind* me, and not whilst we’re crossing. The depôt-master told me I was to get you folks in; and, by the Almighty, I mean to do it if I shake down all the bridges in the Panhandle. Anyhow, this is the last train that will run over the section till the floods are over.”

IV
TRAIN ACCIDENTS

a

At a rough computation the railroad journeys of Irving’s tours ran over fifty thousand miles—more than twice round the Equator. The journeys were nearly always taken in special trains running at all sorts of hours, and almost invariably in the bad seasons of the year. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that we had a certain percentage of accidents. That some of these accidents did not entail loss of life is the source of wonder. Several times we have had the train on fire; once so badly that the danger was very great. It was only by the chance of it being discovered just as we were coming into a station that the whole train was not lost. As it was, the Insurance Company had to liquidate damages to our goods to the extent of £500.

Three times the bolt-head of the engine has been blown out, once entailing a delay of six hours, until not only another engine but another driver who knew the road as well as the engine, could be found.

b

Once in February 1900 when on our way from Indianapolis to Louisville some accident or explosion took place which seemed to shatter the whole engine into scrap-iron. But no one was hurt.

c

On 17th January 1904 we went from Pittsburg to Buffalo. The cold was intense. There were ten feet of snow lying on the hills, and down the serpentine valley our driving-wheel got "frosted" and flew to pieces. Fortunately we were on a stretch of level ground. Down the valley are here and there the remains of train wrecks on the bank of the river. Our engine was a very powerful 417one, a great Pennsylvania fast hauler; the great wheel was so thick that I could not lift a seemingly small fragment of it from the ground.

d

The very next week, Sunday, 24th January, when going from Albany to Montreal, we met with another accident. I had been most careful about a good engine, and the agent of the New York Central had given us the spare engine used in case of need for the New York and Chicago "Flyer." The cold was again intense and the snow thicker than ever. Up high amongst the Adirondack Mountains, where the wind roared over hill and through valley, the snowdrifts piled up in places to great heights. That was an exceptionally severe winter and railroading was hard. We climbed all right to the top of a pass amongst the hills and were going along steadily when there was a sharp explosion. Then in a few seconds the train drew up with a jerk. Our saloon was at the end of the train, so it took me some little time to reach the engine, as I had gone outside instead of passing through the train. The road just there was running on an embankment, and the snow-plough had swept the track, only leaving the snow piled at the sides so that to pass the carriages was difficult leg-deep in the snow. On the sloping embankment the snow lay many feet deep; and as the whole place was intersected with storm rivulets there were great holes like caverns in the snowdrift.

The other men had also tumbled out of their carriages in much concern. We came across the train crew working in frantic haste. They told us that both the driver and the fireman were missing, and they feared that they had been blown off into one of the watercourse cavities. In such case either or both might die before we could find them, for these cavities were secret—they were honeycombed out beneath the blanket of snow. Very shortly we found the fireman. He had been on the outside of the engine when the explosion had occurred and was blown into the snowdrift head down. He was nearly choked when he was taken out.

But there was no sign of the driver, and the search went on. Immediately after the accident the brakesman had run back on the track to flag “Danger” lest any other train should come down upon us. This is the imperative rule in such cases. When he had done this duty he was to run along the track to the last station we had passed about a mile back, and bring help.

I was back on the line about a quarter of a mile when an engine 418piled with men came up at a furious pace. As it drew near the men began to call.

“Has he been found?” I shook my head.

Close to our train they stopped and the men leaping from the engine spread themselves along the slopes of the embankment beginning a systematic search. Presently one of the crew of our train came along leaping through the deep snow calling out that the driver was found and was on the engine. We rushed back and found him there smearing his burns, which were pretty bad, with oil. The explosion had set his clothes on fire, but he had not lost his head. He had waited to turn the steam off, and then had taken a header into the deep snow wherein he had rolled himself till he had put the fire out. When he had managed to crawl out of his burrow the others of the crew, seeing the engine empty, had gone back to make search for him. He, not knowing that he was missed, had climbed quietly back into his cab.

When Irving heard of the man’s gallantry in stopping whilst all on fire to turn off steam before thinking of himself he said it was a thing that should be rewarded in a marked way. He was quite willing to give the reward himself, but he thought that the company would like to, and ought to, join in it. So we got up a subscription which he headed. We handed to the injured men a little purse of sixty-one dollars. They declared that they would like to take their injuries over again any time for half the money or a quarter of the kindness.

e

The occasions when we were delayed by minor accidents to the train—hot boxes, breaking steam-pipes, freezing steam-brakes, snows-up, washes-out, broken bridges—were never ending. Many of them were not matters for much concern, but they were all causes of delay; and in touring, delay is often disastrous.

V

STORMS AT SEA

a

Irving was across the Atlantic eighteen times, of which one, in 1886, was for a summer holiday trip. Of course there were many times when there was bad weather; but on one crossing in 1899 we encountered a terrific storm. The waves were greater by far than 419any I had ever seen, even when I crossed in the *Germanic* in the February of the same year during the week of the worst weather ever recorded. On this occasion we were on board the Atlantic transport ss. *Marquette*. The weather had been nice for three days from our leaving London. But in the afternoon of the fourth day, 18th October, we ran into the track of a hurricane. As we went on, the seas got bigger and bigger till at last they were mountainous. When we were down in the trough the waves seemed to stand up higher than our masts. The wind was blowing furiously, something like a hundred miles an hour, but there was no rain. The moon came out early, a splendid bright moon still in its second quarter, so that when night fell the scene was sublimely grand. We forged on as long as we could, but the screw raced so furiously as the waves swept past us that we had perforce to lie by for six hours; it was not safe to go on as we might lose our screw-head. The tossing in that frightful sea was awful. Most of those on board were dreadfully frightened. Irving came out for a while and stood on the bridge holding on like grim death, for the shaking was like an earthquake. He seemed to really enjoy it. He stayed as long as he could and only went in when he began to feel the chill. Ellen Terry came out with me and was so enraptured with the scene that she stayed there for hours. I had to hold her against the rail, for at times we rolled so that our feet shot off the deck. I showed her how to look into the wind without feeling it: to hold the eyes just above the bulwark—or the “dodger” if you are on the bridge—and a few inches away from it. The wind strikes below you and makes a clear section of a circle right over and round your head, you remaining in the calm. To test the force of the wind I asked her to put out her hand, palm out so as to make a fair resistance; but she could not hold it for an instant. Neither could I; my hand was driven back as though struck with a hammer.

In the companion-way of the *Marquette* several trunks too large for the adjacent cabin had been placed. They had been carefully lashed to the hand-rail, but in that wild sea they strained at their lashings rising right off the ground the way a chained dog does when he raises himself on his hind legs. One of the trunks belonging to Irving, a great leather one, full of books and papers, was lashed by its own straps. In the companion-way had gathered nearly all the passengers, huddled together for comfort—especially the women, who were mostly in a panic. In such cases the only real comfort a poor woman can have is to hold on to a man. I 420happen to be a big one, and therefore of extra desirability in such cases of stress. I was sitting on a trunk on the other side of the companion-way from Irving's trunk, surrounded by as many of the womenkind as could catch hold of me, when in a roll of extra magnitude the leather straps gave way and the trunk seemed to hurl itself at us. I shoved the women away right and left, but missed clearing its course myself by the fraction of a second. The corner of it caught me on the calf sideways, fortunately just clearing the bone. Another half-inch and I should certainly have lost my leg. I was lifted into the music saloon, which was close at hand, and my trouser leg cut open. We had three American footballers on board and these at once began to rub and knead the injured muscle; quite the best thing to do. Then it seemed as if every soul on board, man, woman, and child, had each a separate bottle of embrocation or liniment. These were all produced at once—and used.

Before a minute was over the skin of the wounded spot and for inches around it was completely rubbed off! The pain was excruciating—like an acre of toothache; but I suppose it did me good. In the morning my foot was quite black, but by degrees this passed away. I limped for a week or two and then got all right.

The women had a sore time of it that night. They nearly all refused absolutely to go to their cabins, and, producing rugs and pillows, camped in the music saloon which was on deck.

One young man, who spent most of his time leaning on the counter of the bar, gained instant notoriety by christening the saloon: "*the Geeser's Doss-house*!"

b

On Saturday, 5th October 1901, we left the Thames for New York on the Atlantic transport ss. *Minnehaha*. In the river the wind began to blow, and by the time we rounded the South Foreland a whole gale was on. Our boat was a large one, so that we on board did not mind; but it was a bad time for the pilot whom we had to shed at Dover. The row-boat to take him off had come out to us in the comparative shelter of the Goodwins and had trailed beside us on the starboard quarter, nearly swamped in the rough sea. When we slowed down off Dover the sea seemed to get worse than ever. To look at it in the darkness of the night, each black slope crested with white as the lighthouse lit up its savage power, one could not believe that a little boat could live in it. It took the men on board all their time to keep her baled. A number of us men had gone down on the afterdeck to see the pilot depart. He 421was a huge man; tall as he was, the breadth of his shoulders seemed prodigious. When he descended the rope ladder and debarked, which was a deed requiring skill and nerve, he seemed to overweight the little boat, he so towered over the two men in it. When a few strokes took them out of the shelter of our good ship, the boat, as she caught the gale, lurched sideways so much that it looked as though she were heeling over. My own heart was in my mouth. I heard a sudden loud laugh behind me, and turning round saw one of the passengers, a stranger to me. I cried out with angry indignation:

“What the devil are you laughing at? Is it to see splendid fellows like that in danger of their lives? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. The men could actually hear you!” For a few seconds he continued laughing wildly; then turning to me said quite heartily:

“Sorry! It’s a shame I know; but I could not help laughing!” Despite myself and my indignation I could not help smiling.

“What at?” I said again. “There’s nothing to laugh at there?”

“Well, my dear fellow,” he gasped out, “I was laughing just to think that I’m not a pilot!” And once again his wild laughter pealed out.

VI
FALLING SCENERY

In the great mass of scenery in a theatre and its many appliances, some of considerable weight, resting overhead there are certain elements of danger to those on the stage. Things have to be shifted so often and so hastily that there is always room for accident, no matter what care may be exercised. For instance, in Abbey’s theatre in New York—afterwards “The Knickerbocker”—on the first night of Irving’s playing *Macbeth*, one of the limelight men, who was perched on a high platform behind the proscenium O.P., fell on the stage together with the heavy gas cylinder beside him. The play was then over and Irving was making a speech in front of the curtain. Happily the cylinder did not explode. The man did not seem at the moment to be much injured, but he died on his way to hospital. Had any one been waiting underneath in the wing, as is nearly always the case all through a play, that falling weight must have brought certain death.

I have myself seen Irving lifted from the stage by the Act drop catching his clothing. I have seen him thrown into the “cut” in the stage with the possibility of a fall to the mezzanine floor below. 422On another occasion something went wrong with the bracing up of the framed cloths and the whole scene fell about the stage. This happened between the acts whilst Irving was showing the stage to some American friends. Happily no one was hurt. Such accidents, veritable bolts from the blue, are, however, both disconcerting and alarming. During *Faust* the great platforms which made the sloping stage on which some hundreds of people danced wildly at the Witches' Sabbath on the Brocken had to be suspended over the acting portion of the stage. The slightest thing going wrong would have meant death to all underneath. In such cases there must always be great apprehension.

VII

I have mentioned all these matters under the heading of "Adventures"—torpedoes, fires, floods, train accidents, storms at sea, mishaps of the stage—for a special reason. Not once in the twenty-seven years of our working together did I ever see a sign of fear on Henry Irving. Whether danger came in an instant unexpectedly, or slowly to expecting eyes, it never disturbed him. Danger of any kind, so far as I ever had the opportunity of judging, always found him ready.

When he was lying ill at Wolverhampton in the spring of 1905 Ellen Terry ran down from London, where she was then playing, to see him. She had known from me and others how dangerously ill he had been and was concerned as to how fear of death might act on his strength. She had asked him if he had such fear; her description of the occasion as she gave it to me after his death left the matter settled:

"He looked at me steadily for a minute, and then putting his third finger against his thumb—like that—held his hand fixedly for a few seconds. Then with a quick movement he snapped his fingers and let his hand fall. How could I not understand!"

As the great actress spoke, her face through some mysterious power grew like Irving's. The raised hand, with the fingers interlaced, was rigid till with a sudden movement the fingers snapped, the hand going down as if propelled from the wrist! It conveyed in a wonderful way the absence of a sense of fear, even on such a subject as Death. Even at second hand it was not possible not to understand. It said as plainly as if in words: "Not *that*!" There was no room for doubt!

LXXIII
BURNING OF THE LYCEUM STORAGE

At ten minutes past five on the morning of Friday, 18th February 1898, I was wakened by a continuous knock at a door somewhere near my house in Chelsea. I soon discovered that it was at my own house. I went downstairs and opened the door, when a muffled-up cab-driver gave me a letter. It was from the police station at Bow Street telling me that the Lyceum Storage, Bear Lane, Southwark, was on fire. The four-wheeler was waiting, and I was soon on the way there as fast as the horse could go. It was a dim, dark morning, bitterly cold. I found Bear Lane a chaos. The narrow way was blocked with fire-engines panting and thumping away for dear life. The heat was terrific. There was so much stuff in the storage that nothing could possibly be done till the fire had burnt itself out; all that the firemen could do was to prevent the fire spreading.

These premises deserve some special mention, for they played an important part in many ways, as shall be seen.

One of the really great difficulties in the management of a London theatre is that of storage. A "going" theatre has to be always producing new plays and occasionally repeating the old. In fact, to a theatrical manager his productions form the major part of his stock-in-trade. Now, no one outside theatrical management—and very few who are inside—can have any idea of the bulk of a lot of plays. In Irving's case it was really vast; the bulk was almost as big as the whole Lyceum theatre. To get housing for such is a very serious matter. Scenery is long, difficult stuff to handle. That of the Lyceum was forty-two feet long when the cloths were rolled up round their battens; the framed cloths were thirty feet high and six feet wide in the folding plaques. We were always on the look-out for a really fine storage; and at last we heard of one. This consisted of two great, high railway arches under the Chatham and Dover Railway, then leased to the South-Eastern. It was a part of Southwark where the ground lies low and the railway line very high, so that there was full height for our 424scenes. In the front was a large yard. We took the premises on a good long lease and set to work to make them complete for our purpose. The backs of the arches were bricked up. Great scaffold-poles were firmly fixed for the piling of scenery against them. It is hard to believe what lateral pressure a great pack of scenery can exercise. Before we had occupied this storage a year, one of the poles gave way and the scenery sinking against the new wall at the back of the arch carried it entirely away. We had to pay expenses of restoration to the injured neighbour and to compensate him. We had the entire yard in front roofed over, brought in gas, which was carefully protected, and water, and made the storage the best of its kind that was known. The experience of a good many years went to the making of it.

We had had to put in a clause when making the agreement to take the lease for a reason not devoid of humour to any one not a sufferer by it. When I went to look at the arches I found them full almost to the top with mud—old mud that had been put in wet and had dried in time to something like the consistency of that to be found at Herculaneum. The manager of the estate office of the railway told me the history of it.

Some years before, the arches were placarded as to let, and in due course came an applicant. He said he was satisfied with the rent and took out his lease. The railway people were pleased to get such a big place off their hands and took no more trouble about it till the half-year's rental became due. They applied to the lessee, but could get no reply. So they sent to the premises to make inquiries. There was no one there; and they could not hear any tidings of the lessee. They did find, however, that the arches were filled with mud, and discovered on inquiry that the lessee had taken a contract for the removal of road sweepings. This is a serious item in municipal accounts, for the conveyance of such out of London is costly, whether by road or barge or rail. Into the arches he had for half a year dumped all the stuff; thousands and thousands of loads of it. He had drawn his money as earned from the municipal authorities. Rent day drew near, and as he feared discovery he had bolted, leaving every one, including the contractors for carting, unpaid.

It took the railway company months of continuous work with a large staff of men and carts and horses to remove the accumulation.

As the premises were secure in every way we could devise we 425looked upon them as comparatively immune from fire risk. No one lived in them. They were all brick, stone, and slate—as the insurance policies put it. They were completely isolated front and back; at the sides were blocks of solid brickwork like bastions. I had at first, with Irving's consent, insured the contents for £10,000, but only that year when the policies were to be renewed he said it was wasting money as the place was so secure, and would not let me put on more than £6000.

In these premises were the scenes for the following plays, forty-four in all, of which in only ten Irving himself did not play. Twenty-two were great productions:

Hamlet.

The Merchant of Venice.

Othello.

Much Ado About Nothing.

Twelfth Night.

Macbeth.

Henry VIII.

King Lear.

Cymbeline.

Richard III.

The Corsican Brothers.

The Cup.

The Belle's Stratagem.

Two Roses.

Olivia.

Faust.

Werner.

The Dead Heart.

Ravenswood.

Becket.

King Arthur.

Richelieu.

The Lady of Lyons.

Eugene Aram.

Jingle.

Louis XI.

Charles I.

The Lyons Mail.

The Bells.

The Iron Chest.

Iolanthe.

The Amber Heart.

Robert Macaire.

Don Quixote.

Raising the Wind.

Daisy’s Escape.

Bygones.

High Life Below Stairs.

The Boarding School.

The King and the Miller.

The Captain of the Watch.

The Balance of Comfort.

Book III. Chapter V.

Cool as a Cucumber.

For the plays there were over *two hundred and sixty* scenes, many of them of great elaboration. In fact, each scene, even if only a single cloth at back with wings and borders, took up quite a space. There were in all more than *two thousand* pieces of scenery, and bulky properties without end. And the prime cost of the property destroyed was over thirty thousand pounds sterling.

But the cost price was the least part of the loss. Nothing could repay the time and labour and artistic experience spent on them. All the scene-painters in England working for a whole year could not have restored the scenery alone.

426As to Irving, it was checkmate to the *répertoire* side of his management. Given a theatre equipped with such productions, the plays to which they belong being already studied and rehearsed, it is easy to put on any of them for a few nights. There is only the cost of carting and hanging the scenes and generally getting ready—small matters in the vast enterprise of putting on a big play. They had had their long runs, and though they were good for occasional repetitions, few of them could be relied on for great business over any considerable period. Several of them were held over for a second run, of which good things might have been fairly expected. For instance, *Macbeth* was good for another season. It was taken off because of the summer vacation when it was still doing enormous business. *Ravenswood*, too, had only gone a part of its course when the Baring failure, as I have shown, necessitated its temporary withdrawal. *Henry VIII.* and *King Arthur* and *Becket* and *Faust* were certain draws. When for *répertoire* purposes in later years several were required, *Louis XI.*, *Charles*

I., *The Bells*, *The Lyons Mail*, *Olivia*, *Faust*, *Becket* were all reproduced at an aggregate cost of over eleven thousand pounds.

The effect of the fire on Irving was not only this great cost, but the deprivation of all that he had built up. Had it not occurred he could have gone on playing his *répertoire* for many years, and would never have had to produce a new play.

The fire was so fierce that it actually burned the building of the railway arches three bricks deep and calcined the coping-stones to powder. The Railway Company, therefore, not only made a rule that in no case was theatrical scenery ever to be stored on their premises, but actually refused to allow us to reinstate or to have use for the term of their lease. They were prepared to fight an action over it, but the scenery having all been burned, we had no more present use for so large a storage, and we compromised the matter.