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COLUMBUS, OHIO, THEATER FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL WAR TO 1875.

The Ohio State University, Ph. D., 1963
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COLUMBUS, OHIO, THEATER
FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL WAR TO 1875

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
William George Burbick, A.B., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1963

Approved by

[Signature]  
Adviser
Department of Speech
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INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

The dissertation is primarily a chronological study of the legitimate theater as found in the city of Columbus, Ohio, from the fall of 1861 to the spring of 1865. The study was designed to deal specifically with prevailing practices, actors and managers, theatrical billings, and all that went to make up the dramatic activity of the time. The principal objective was to obtain as accurate a picture as possible of American provincial theater in this era, particularly as reflected in the commentaries and criticisms of the contemporary press and others who saw it or who took part in it.

It sometimes appears that discussions of any period of American theater tend to measure development largely in terms of what was accomplished in New York and Philadelphia along with one or two other metropolitan centers along the Atlantic seaboard, and with an occasional mention of San Francisco and New Orleans. Conclusions regarding the tastes, trends, and mode of operation of American theater are deducted from the pattern set by these cities with little or no regard for the smaller municipalities across the country whose dramatic activities might come closer to representing the true nature of theater in America. It was therefore assumed that a chronological study of theatrical fare found in a typically mid-western city of moderate size might be profitable.
In order to evaluate accurately the out-of-New York theater as being significant in American theater development it was considered essential to note in detail not only what was being attempted and accomplished there, but also to note contemporary reaction thereto. This premise made necessary the full consideration of current attitude, the essence of which was to be found in abundance in the daily newspapers of that time. Thus did this study not only seek to recount the theatrical events and trends in a city removed from the influence of acknowledged theatrical centers, but also to examine and appraise the contemporary reactions which helped to shape those trends.

For the specific period represented in this study, it should be noted that during the theatrical season of 1860-61 there occurred in this country two major events, both of which had the potential of leaving a mark upon the theater. In 1860 Dion Boucicault, actor, theater manager, and playwright then working in New York City, initiated a practice which came to be known as "The Combination System." This practice was conceived, in part, in order to combat the pirating of play scripts in the absence of adequate copyright laws and to encourage a greater emphasis upon the play itself as against the actor. A major result of the Combination System was the decline and virtual disappearance of the resident stock company.

The second event which threatened to change American theater was the Civil War, a national turmoil which lasted nearly five years and which, aside from the usual war-time hardships, left in its wake economic and social changes which had a definite effect upon the theater of the late nineteenth century and thereafter. The Civil War was theatrically significant because it brought with it the first instance of
an established American theater subjected to the rigors of a major military conflict. The nature and causes of the war are sufficiently familiar to render unnecessary their discussion here, and the details thereof abound in numerous works devoted to that purpose. The only direct association between the theater and the actual causes of the war was the alleged influence upon Northern thinking wrought by such plays as Uncle Tom's Cabin.

The nature of the Combination System already mentioned may deserve some clarification: The first copyright law, passed August 6, 1856, partially through the efforts of Boucicault, proved inadequate in providing protection against the theft of plays. A prime weakness of the law was its failure to require registry of the entire script. Only the title was registered. Consequently, the law offered little protection since anyone could seize upon a script, change the title, and the play was his. This situation discouraged playwrights from publishing manuscripts because to do so would expose the manuscripts to unscrupulous producers and probable theft.

Boucicault was adamant in his efforts to secure rights to his own work and, in 1860, instead of sending a star around to play with resident companies as was the common practice, he sent out an entire company—a duplicate of the one playing in New York—with the play itself billed as the attraction. By this means the play would remain within one company and there would be less chance of other producers appropriating the script for their own. Beginning with his play, The Colleen Bawn, Boucicault engaged a company and offered the play as a package deal to managers in other cities. Naturally a few problems arose, but
the financial success of this plan led other managers to adopt it and
the decline of the resident stock company began.¹

With these two developments in mind—a major change in theatrical practice and a socio-political upheaval in the form of a civil
war—it was the intention of this study to follow closely the theatrical
activities of an American city that might logically have felt the in-
fluence of both these events and which, at the same time, would be repre-
sentative of theatrical growth outside of New York City from 1861 un-
til such time as that influence might be complete.

The selection of a city meeting the requirements of this study
seemed to point to Columbus, Ohio, as a likely subject. As the capital
of a state that was second to none in its contribution to the Union
Cause, Columbus became geographically and materially the focal point of
Ohio's war effort. Its size and its location some 500 miles from New
York City and near the western frontier of that day made Columbus
attractive to players and stock companies out of New York. Columbus
was not so small as to be ignored by the traveling players, nor was it
large enough to be theatrically self-sufficient—that is able to be in
constant support of a resident company. These particular qualities rend-
ered Columbus typically representative of those municipalities main-
taining a program of dramatic entertainment at the outbreak of the war.
Consequently, the theatrical activities of this city were selected for
detailed study, season by season, for the purpose of ascertaining the
true nature of American theater in the period following the Civil War

¹Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the
and to determine what influence, if any, the war and the Combination System had upon its development. It is the gradual transition from resident stock to complete reliance upon the Combination System that formed an important aspect of this study, a transition that took nearly fifteen years to complete itself. The conversion of Columbus' popular legitimate theater, the Atheneum, to a straight variety house in the fall of 1875 seemed a suitable terminal point for this study. It marked the end of one of Columbus' most successful resident companies which fell not only before the Combination System but also before the rising popularity of vaudeville. The growing importance of the play itself as well as the various by-products of a changing theatrical order encouraged by the social and economic developments of a rapidly growing America are here likewise subject to consideration.

The Source Material
The reliability of available information in research of this kind is always open to question, particularly when sources go back approximately one hundred years. The accuracy of records was not then a matter of importance and, in many cases, no records were kept. What is known of events and the people who participated in them comes to us in the later reminiscences and memoirs of persons involved therein or who knew something about them—all subject to the vagaries of mind and pen. The waters are muddied further by conflicting accounts often having equal claim to authenticity and, in most cases, the passing of time has removed all possibility of resolving the contradictions.

A major source of information was the contemporary press. Columbus supported two daily papers during the war—The Ohio State Journal
and The Ohio Statesman—plus two or three weekly publications of lesser importance.² The two daily papers, representing opposing political interests, were the most influential sheets printed in Columbus in this period. A few other papers appeared for a short time, usually in support of a political candidate or a major issue believed to be neglected by the other publications, but they were eventually absorbed or discontinued.

While the daily papers supplied an on-the-spot account, their reports were frequently erroneous. There were often mistakes in the facts themselves and errors in the printing thereof. In fairness to the press we are reminded that the linotype was not invented until 1885 and type was set by hand. Furthermore, heavy reliance upon handwriting made possible many errors, particularly in spelling. Similarity in names was always cause for suspecting a printer's error while other like causes for journalistic carelessness—often most obvious—could only be corrected by cross reference and even then guesswork was often the only recourse.

As for accuracy, the news reports were under the heavy influence of extensive editorializing. The policy of straight news writing which confined commentary to the editorials was not the common practice in the nineteenth century. Reporting was seldom checked for accuracy and was frequently received across the city desk from those who may, or may not, have been qualified to judge the facts. This is evident to anyone reading the papers of this time. However, in spite of errors and

²In 1871 The Ohio Statesman combined with the Columbus Sunday Dispatch to become The Columbus Evening Dispatch, still a leading Columbus newspaper today.
frequent editorializing, the contemporary newspapers formed a major source of information.

Many of the details of performances and backgrounds, the descriptions of actors and managers, plus customs and traditions are to be found in the personal memoirs and the biographies of the people concerned. It seems that every actor of prominence (and some of lesser prominence) was induced to write a book about his personal experiences. They wrote about themselves and they wrote about each other. While such sources abound in interesting information of almost every kind, most of it is similar almost to the point of being repetitious. Each biography is quite different and yet all biographies are very much the same, and to read further serves only to duplicate the basic circumstances unless, of course, one is interested in collecting anecdotes.

Histories and biographies published in later years also vary occasionally in their accounts. Studer notes that the old State Street Theater "took the name of the Atheneum and was opened as a place of public entertainment November 13, 1871 ..." Yet daily newspaper accounts and theater advertising as early as 1863 freely use the name "Atheneum" in referring to what was obviously the same theater.

The practice of omitting the given name of an actor, as was often followed on programs and advertising, made precise identification very hazardous. The practice suggests that, at this time, there was a general familiarity with resident company personnel, making more precise identification unnecessary. (The less type to be set by hand!) But variations on a name were apparently used to pad the dramatic personae

3Jacob H. Studer, Columbus, Ohio, Its History, Resources, and Progress (Columbus: Jacob H. Studer, 1873), p. 435.
when parts were doubled or even tripled. Smith might be listed as "J. Smith," as "U. L. Smith," or just as "Mr. Smith" in several portions of the same program. Stage managers and other theater staff members often played secondary roles in addition to their regular duties, and their names varied, as illustrated, for each separate responsibility. Complications arose over the custom of using double play titles, but more will be said of this practice later on.

In summary it may be said that utmost care has been taken to verify names and facts as closely as available source materials would permit. Still, there must be a reasonable allowance for error and it is quite possible that some mistakes were originally committed by souls long since laid to rest.
CHAPTER I

COLUMBUS AND THE CIVIL WAR

The City and Its Resources

To trace the origin and growth of the city of Columbus, Ohio, is hardly essential to this study, yet a glance at its circumstances during the Civil War and the years immediately following will clarify the type of background against which its theatrical program functioned. First of all, it is interesting to note that, contrary to the origin of a great many American cities, the beginning of Columbus was in no way assisted by any particular geographic advantages. Columbus was not the result of an excellent sea or lake port, a navigable river, or even rich mineral deposits as was the case of its sister cities, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, and others. The location and founding of Columbus had been prescribed by legislation, the specifications for the capital city stating that it was to be located no more than forty miles from the center of the state. Cincinnati had declined the honor of becoming the state capital some time earlier by implying that lawmaking and manufacturing did not mix. Newark made a bid for the honor in 1832 but the new capital was finally established in 1808 on the north bank of the Scioto River opposite the little town of Franklinton.

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1Secretary of State, Inventory of the State Archives of Ohio (Columbus, 1940), p. 20; Osman Castle Hooper. History of the City of Columbus, p. 40.
In spite of its beginnings as a political center only, and though it lacked some of the physical advantages of other cities, Columbus, nevertheless, grew in population and importance. The National Road east and west went through Columbus and much traffic moving between Cleveland and Cincinnati passed through the new capital by canal and later by railroad. For many years the city was a prominent point of departure for emigrants moving west. Announcements of wagon trains moving through the city appeared regularly in the daily papers giving the number and destination of the emigrants even after 1870. One account reads as follows:

Thirteen wagons laden with emigrants and their traps consisting mainly of men, women, boys, girls, dogs, guns, frying pans, corn bread, and energy passed through the city yesterday forenoon going west where they hope to obtain wealth, happiness and plenty of elbow room.2

The outbreak of the Civil War immediately moved Columbus into a position of great economic and military importance. Lee states that "among all the loyal states which participated in this mighty game of war, Ohio fulfilled the most conspicuous part . . . and the capital of Ohio was the principal rendezvous of the forces collected and organized."3 For this honor and responsibility Columbus was no better prepared physically and psychologically than any other city. Not only army volunteers but contractors, office-seekers, adventurers, and opportunists of every description flocked from all directions to Ohio's capital city. They came by train, by canal boat, by stage, on horse-

2 *The Ohio State Journal,* July 5, 1870.

back, and on foot until the houses and streets of the city swarmed with strangers. The reception extended to the volunteers was especially regrettable since it was they, above all others, who came to Columbus to "give" rather than to "get." Lee describes their lot in this manner:

When the volunteers began to arrive no provision had been made either to feed or shelter them. Many came in civilian dress, some even wearing high silk hats, and found no uniforms ready. Those who uniformed themselves had adopted such styles as suited their fancy which manifested itself in many whimsical notions as to military propriety. A red shirt with blue trousers and a felt hat constituted the dress most common.

Meanwhile troops continued to pour into the city and had to be temporarly lodged. For this purpose the capitol, the public benevolent institutions, Starling Medical College and even the penitentiary were drawn upon. At night the terraces, rotundas and crypts of the capitol were crowded with weary sleepers.¹

In referring to Ohio's Adjutant-General in office at this time, Reid commented: "He accepted companies without keeping account of them, telegraphed hither and thither for companies to come immediately forward and soon had the town so full of troops that his associates could scarcely quarter, and he could scarcely organize them."²

Goedale Park was converted into a military camp called Camp Jackson for a rendezvous of all Ohio troops north of Hamilton County and south of the Reserve. In camp all the rules of military discipline were rigidly enforced insofar as possible with such raw and undisciplined recruits. The officers' quarters were in the keeper's house at the entrance gate while tents were pitched in the center of the park and large wooden buildings were duly erected for lodging and for mess

¹Ibid., p. 91.
²Whitelaw Reid, Ohio in the War (Cincinnati & New York: Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin, 1868), p. 96.
halls. Wagons continually traveled in and out and all the clamor of camp life was to be seen and heard in what had recently been a peaceful and quiet retreat.

After a time Goodale Park was abandoned as a military camp with a gradual thinning out of the occupants and their transfer to a new camp organised on the National Road four or five miles west of the city. The new location was at first called Camp Jackson, but the name was soon changed to Camp Chase in honor of Salmon P. Chase, ex-governor of Ohio then serving as Secretary of the Treasury. The camp contained 160 acres which had been ploughed, harrowed, and rolled to a level smoothness.

By June 12, 1861, there were 160 houses on it. The camp was under national, not state control. A short time later Camp Thomas was established east of the Worthington plank road three or four miles north of the city believed to be in the vicinity of the present Olentangy Village. It was first used as a rendezvous for Col. H. B. Carrington's regiment, the 18th U. S. Infantry, but it soon became a camp for general war purposes. Another rendezvous was established in September for the 46th Ohio Regiment near Worthington and was first called Camp Wade, afterwards Camp Lyon. A prisoners' camp constructed north of the city the same month was named Camp Carlisle and to it were committed a large number of Confederate prisoners.

New barracks, called Tod Barracks in honor of Governor Tod, were built in the fall of 1863 on the east side of High Street north of the depot. They were intended to accommodate recruits and the sick and dis-

6*Hooper, op.cit., p. 47.

7Ibid., p.47.
abled soldiers but ultimately they became the place where regiments and other units were paid off and mustered out. It was in the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus that the Confederate raider, General John Morgan, was imprisoned following his capture after bringing to Ohio its only direct experience with hostile troops and from which confinement he later escaped in a manner which both puzzled and embarrassed Columbus.

Following the Civil War there was in the city a period of prosperity and energy in public and private improvements. In the decade from 1850 to 1860 the population had grown only about 800, but at the close of the war there came a new vitality and a steady growth which was to continue for many years. The soldiers returning home found street cars on the Columbus streets. The streets themselves were about as bad as they could be, but business was good and people were prosperous and filled with a desire for a better way of life. In 1860 the city's population totalled 18,554 and by 1870 it had reached 31,274, an increase of 70 per cent. Of this figure 23,663 were native (including 1,847 colored persons) and 7,611 were foreign born.8

In spite of an earnest desire to maintain its position as third largest city in the state, the equally rapid growth of its sister cities eventually dropped Columbus into fourth place. Cincinnati was out in front with a population of 216,239; Cleveland was second with 92,829; while Toledo edged Columbus in 1870 boasting a mere 310 persons more than Columbus according to the census of that year.

In 1873 there was published a combined history and social study of Columbus entitled Columbus, Ohio, Its History, Resources and Progress, [231, op. cit., p. 99.

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8 Studer, op. cit., p. 99.
the work of Jacob H. Studer. In this book the author summarised the economic and social assets of Ohio's capital as they existed at that time with special attention given to the merits of the city as a place of investment:

It is only necessary for a wise and prudent man to examine into the facts in regard to the propriety of investing in real estate in Columbus and he will be quite certain, if he desires to invest in such property at all, to make his outlay in our city. Why should such a man, in order to get rich, go west out of the pale of civilisation or to some other fabled El Dorado where there are no railroads, schools, churches, libraries and other public and social institutions or those only of an inferior grade when by locating in such a place as Columbus already started with railroad speed a career for becoming a great city he could, with slenderer means and less expenditure of brain and muscles, reap in a short time a richer and more abundant harvest.9

Studer sought to back up his testimonial on behalf of Ohio's capital city by reviewing a number of her economic assets including her tax program:

The reader will notice that the amount of taxable property of Columbus is $8,383,090 more than Toledo and at the same time the city taxes of Columbus are less than Toledo by $76,028. Take the city of Cleveland with a property valuation of only $35,333,021 more than Columbus. She has a city tax of $711,110.01 more than this city, facts which show clearly that Columbus is the lightest taxed city in the state.

Property in the city and the vicinity has long been for some time and still is steadily and healthily, and we may add, largely, augmenting its prices.10

The writer of the above commentary listed eight principal railroads centering in Columbus and extending into the agricultural and mineral districts of Ohio and other states. The total assessed value of

9Studer, op. cit., p. 107.
10Ibid., p. 110.
real estate in the city in 1871 was $22,278,598 with the assessed total value of personal property running to $13,091,694. In this same year Columbus had four Catholic and twenty-one Protestant churches, and a Hebrew Synagogue, many of them being most spacious and attractive.

Franklin County, of which Columbus was a part, was equally prosperous in the postwar years. The total county population in 1860 was 50,361 and it had increased to 63,019 by 1870. The value of livestock, a principal rural asset, was $2,019,363 in that year. Livestock values in 1871, according to Studer, were as follows:\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>1,414</td>
<td>$1,025,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>22,290</td>
<td>597,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mules</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>32,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>32,191</td>
<td>65,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs</td>
<td>52,543</td>
<td>261,967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An insight into the cost of food and produce during the war is given in a list of prevailing prices published in the Ohio State Journal of March 4, 1861:\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Produce</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>$1.25 per bu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>$.25 per three heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green apples</td>
<td>1.25 per bu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>$.30 and $.50 per lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>$.18 and $.20 per doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef and pork</td>
<td>$.15 per lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkeys</td>
<td>$.12 and $.20 per lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>23.00 and 25.00 per ton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>$.22 per lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increased building in 1871 tended to vouch for the growth of both the city and Franklin County:

The number of dwellings, hotels and depots erected in the county in 1871 was 350 valued at $340,000; nine mills machine shops and iron furnaces, value: $40,000; one church, value: $9,000; one public hall, value: $100,000; forty barns

\textsuperscript{11}Tbid., p. 108.
and stables, value: $24,000, and twelve miscellaneous structures value: $6,000. The total number of new structures was 43 and their total value $569,000.12

While a financial panic occurred in 1873, the material prosperity of the capital city was not seriously impaired—at least it was not admitted by the press. The Columbus Evening Dispatch of November 3 commented on the matter thus:

All the croaking to the contrary, Columbus suffers as little from the money stringency as any other city. The material wealth and prosperity of our business interests are unimpaired. There are no failures or suspensions that we hear of to any alarming extent or to any amount whatever. The approach of winter always throws a great many mechanics and laborers out of employment, but there is nothing extraordinary about this and this is no excuse for fears of an increase of the panic. Sensations may be well enough at proper times, but there is no necessity for making them senseless.

Five days later the Journal devoted all of the second page of that issue to the report given by the Secretary of the Board of Trade dated November 6, 1873.13 Included in the report was a summary of businesses and occupations to be found in the city at that time. A partial listing from that report appears here as indicating something of Columbus industry in 1873. The number of persons engaged in each profession follows the listing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural tools manufacturing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 Ibid., p. 109.

13 It is possible that the publication of Studer’s study of Columbus resources and progress in the same year as the report of the Secretary of the Board of Trade was not a mere coincidence. Much of Studer’s material is an elaboration of this report. A flurry of civic pride may have induced both writings, or Studer may have been encouraged by his associates, as he says in his preface, as well as by the Secretary’s report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attorneys</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and limestone dealers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters and builders</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet weavers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriage and wagon makers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigar manufacturers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil engineers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing sales, wholesale and retail</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druggists</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry goods, retail</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engravers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florists</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour and feed stores</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour mills</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundries</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture manufacturers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas and steam fitters</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocers, retail</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunsmiths</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware dealers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance companies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry dealers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livery stables</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumber yards</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine shops</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat markets</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planing mills</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing offices</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate agents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling mills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harness and saddle manufacturers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap and candle manufacturers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoves and tinware</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanners</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraph companies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco dealers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertakers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upholsterers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinegar factories</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch and clock dealers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A summary of the progress made by Ohio's capital city up to 1873 may be expressed thus: "The progress that Columbus has made in wealth,
population, and general prosperity since the introduction of railroads and other great improvements into the western country and her present progressive stage afford an ample guarantee of her future. To those who seek a profitable and safe investment of capital there is no more promising field. \(^{14}\)

The Columbus Theaters

As for the theaters of Columbus, there had been but one edifice specifically built and dedicated to dramatic presentations prior to 1855. There were several public halls, however, as well as private buildings possessing halls or rooms large enough to house fair-sized assemblages which were at least partially suited to dramatic performances. Not one of them catered especially to drama and the city's theatrical fare in the first half of the nineteenth century, for the most part, had to take its chances in securing the use of a hall along with a host of other activities--parties, balls, lectures, concerts, conventions, and even the drills of local military groups and the temporary occupancy by branches of the state government when a fire deprived the latter of their own quarters. \(^{15}\)

In 1835 a building was erected on the west side of High Street between Broad and Gay Streets by Edwin Dean and David McKinney of the Eagle Street Theater, Buffalo, New York. It had a frontage of fifty feet and an over-all depth of 100 feet. A stage and dressing room oc-

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 110.

\(^{15}\)In December of 1852 the State Senate moved out of the U. S. Court Room it had occupied since the State House fire in February and into Ambos Hall, thus being next door to the House at the Odson. Both of these locations had been used for entertainment including theater.
cupied about half of the building while three tiers of boxes, a pit removable for converting the theater into an equestrian amphitheater and a saloon at the rear made up the other half. Financial problems and public indifference, molded in part by moral attitudes, combined to undermine the success of the capital city's first theater and it was eventually taken over for use as a city hall and public auditorium in 1843. In time it was made over into private dwellings.

The second building in the city to be consigned to theatrical interests was erected by John M. Kinney & Company in 1855 on State Street almost opposite the south wall of the State House. The architect was N. E. Lovejoy; the superintendent, J. Boswell, and the building was opened as The Dramatic Temple on the evening of September 12, 1855. The building itself was 120 feet long by sixty-two feet wide and was two stories high, or about thirty feet. The excavation of approximately 1500 square yards was to be completed in a period of two weeks and the entire building with its seventeen-inch thick walls and tin roof was to be enclosed in sixty days as the finished building was intended for first use during the State Fair, September 18 to 21. The completed theater had three tiers and a parquet and its stage, sixty feet square, was supposed to be the largest in the western country.

The project had been the dream of Mr. Kinney for some time. Early in 1855, he, along with the firm of Burnell and Company, had conducted a $300,000 lottery on a national scale which, according to common belief, furnished a major portion of the money necessary to the

erection of the Dramatic Temple. The Journal described the structure on Monday, September 10, 1855, under the heading "The New Theater":

This capacious building, located on the south side of State between High and Third Streets, opposite the State House is nearly finished and will be opened on Wednesday night with a fine cast of performers. It is certainly the most beautiful theater in Ohio, and every exertion has been made on the part of the proprietors to avail themselves of all the modern improvements of the day for the accommodations of the public. An audience of 1500 persons can be comfortably seated and armchairs instead of the old-fashioned boxes and benches, have been provided for this purpose.

The dressing rooms, green room and music room have been beautifully fitted up, and the wardrobes, stage property, and stage furniture are all new and have been selected with most excellent taste.

Nothing that will shock the ear of delicacy will be uttered on the stage, and the managers are determined by the aid of an effective police, to preserve the strictest order and decorum during the performance...

When the drop curtain was let down for the first time at the conclusion of the opening performance, the Ohio Statesman commented:

The scene comprises a beautiful lake upon which gently falls the soft light of the setting sun; beyond it are hills and mountains which recede from the lake until they are lost from view in the distance. On the right is a castle in ruins and on the left a balustrade leading from the water's edge to a beautiful valley. In the foreground is a youthful couple sitting upon the green—wooing lovers, perhaps, who have sought this fairy spot that they might breathe forth the story of their love. The drapery which surrounds the scene is beautiful beyond description, and the gold bullion fringe gives it a richness which can only be realized by seeing it. In our opinion, among the scenic artists of this country, Mr. Gulick is without a rival.17

In spite of a promising beginning, the Dramatic Temple (frequently referred to as The Columbus Theater) encountered the usual financial difficulties and the building changed lessees several times be-

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17The Ohio Statesman, Sept. 13 1855.
between 1855 and 1860. Finally, on March 30, 1861, William Neil, who had been the plaintiff in a suit against Kinney and Company over the Dramatic Temple for five years, purchased the theater and lot for $9,334.00 which was two-thirds of its appraised value.

The theater was most often referred to as "The Atheneum" during the period covered by this study, a name given it by John Elsler when he was lessee and manager in 1863. It was later known as Sargent's Atheneum and as Neil's New Atheneum under those managers and around 1880 it was called the Grand Opera House. However, during periods of inactivity and in the hands of a few managers the name reverted back to State Street Theater, especially in the news articles, although it was still the same "Dramatic Temple" constructed by John M. Kinney in 1855.

With the purchase of the property by William Neil, the State Street Theater (or Atheneum or Dramatic Temple, if you will) was completely rebuilt with the exception of the outside walls. An attractive front was added containing stairways and a large vestibule. The proscenium arch measured thirty-three feet in height and the ceiling rose to forty-one feet. Studer listed the number of seats at 1200 with the possibility of seating 1500 quite comfortably. The parquet and dress circle featured cane-bottomed seats and the stage itself measured fifty by sixty feet. The theater was heated by furnaces and "everyone who has passed an evening in it, even in the coldest weather, speaks in the highest terms of its warmth and comfort. The cost of rebuilding and refitting this fine place of public entertainment was $20,000."19

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18 Studer, op. cit., p. 435.
19 Ibid. p. 435.
The third theater to be erected in Columbus was the Opera House which was constructed in the summer of 1864. It was first called by the proprietors "Union Block;" but the public referred to it as the "Cotton Block" since it was assumed that the necessary funds had been derived from speculation in cotton. In later years it was more generally acknowledged as the Opera House Building and was situated on the west side of High Street between Town and Rich Streets. The first floor of the four-story building contained large rooms suitable for business purposes while office space made up the front part of the second and third stories. The Opera House itself occupied the three upper stories in the rear of the southwest portion of the structure measuring eighty-six feet in width by 110 feet in length and thirty-three feet in height. The house contained 1190 registered seats and could seat a total of 1450 in an area measuring seventy-four feet and was furnished with 300 neat and comfortable chairs. The dress circle contained six rows of seats all elegantly upholstered and capable of accommodating 450 persons and the gallery or upper circle had five rows of upholstered seats which could take care of 425 persons. Four private boxes were available and finished in excellent style and able to seat eight persons each. Studer gives a rather detailed account of the manner in which the interior was ornamented as well as the names of some of the artisans employed:

The walls and ceilings are neatly painted, frescoed, and ornamented with panels. The front of the gallery is decorated with paper mache and models. The effect of the ornamentation is beautiful, especially under the illumination of 150 gas burners. The stage is furnished with nine commodious dressing rooms and all other needed conveniences. The curtains and scenery belonging to the proprietors elicit admiration of all who see them. The block was erected by B. E. Smith, T. Comstock and C. P. L. and Theodore H. Butler. The Opera House or Hall was built by Messrs. Smith and Comstock and under the immediate supervision of the latter. The fres-
coing was done by Mr. Pedretti of Cincinnati; the painting by John Knopf of this city; the scene painting by Wm. F. Porter of Cincinnati, an eminent artist. Messrs. J. C. Auld and Son of this city were the architects of the building including the hall. 20

For a period of roughly thirty years the Opera House and the Atheneum (State Street Theater) housed virtually all of the theatrical entertainment that appeared in Columbus. The two establishments saw a number of managers and lessees and the theaters alternately exceeded each other in popularity, in stage facilities, and in audience comforts. Both underwent remodeling and redecoration at frequent intervals in a continuous effort to keep abreast of each other in public favor and managers and their companies did not hesitate to move from one theater to the other if physical or pecuniary benefits merited a change and the vacancy of the preferred building made such a move possible.

After thirty-two years of service to Columbus theater patrons the Atheneum was destroyed by fire on Sunday evening, February 20, 1887, at a loss of about $30,000. Its companion-in-art, the Opera House, continued alone for another five years before it met a similar fate on January 25, 1892. It was said as late as 1947 that on the site of the present Grand Theater there still stands some thick brick walls presumably from the original Dramatic Temple of John Kinney. 21

In the early years of the nineteenth century the absence of an adequate physical plant greatly hindered both the quality and the quan-

20 Ibid., p. 435.

21 This fact was revealed by Jake Luft, late manager of the Dusenbury estate and the Grand Theater building, in an interview with Katherine Utz, author of an unpublished dissertation on early Columbus theater history, "Columbus, Ohio Theater. Seasons 1840-41 to 1860-61" (Ohio State Univ., 1952) p. 33.
tity of dramatic entertainment to be found in the capital city, but in the years following the war the presence of two worthy theaters there created other problems. Good companies in both theaters simultaneously usually meant meager financial returns for both. In truth, Columbus, prosperous though it was, could not support two theaters for any length of time, a fact readily recognized by the press in the early 70's. There were also those who felt that the city had never been especially sympathetic toward the theater generally and any actor or manager who stayed long in Columbus was putting his talent and ability to a severe test. Many managers undertook that test and failed. On this point William Davidge, writing in 1866, comments:

Columbus, in the state of Ohio, is not distinguished for its profuse patronage of the drama even at the present time when they are in possession of an extremely elegant and convenient theater. Years ago, before the building was in existence, attempts were periodically made to create a taste, but seldom with much pecuniary success.  

It is difficult to say whether Davidge was referring to the remodeled State Street Theater, by this time known as the Atheneum, or to the Opera House, then just two years old. Both structures were in excellent condition and a decided improvement over the facilities of just a few years back. Nevertheless, his comments reflect a prevailing attitude of managers toward Columbus, Ohio, who considered the city a difficult one in which to play and still meet expenses.

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CHAPTER II

THEATER CUSTOMS, PRACTICES, AND PROBLEMS

The Press Review

It is essential that in this study of Columbus theater there
be included a survey of the more common theatrical practices and tra-
ditions found in all major American cities during this period. It is
also proper that such a survey begin by noting the part played by the
press. No form of writing so clearly indicates the thinking of the day
on contemporary matters as an editorial or a review. Memoirs and com-
mentaries written in the calm retrospect of a later time may possess an
objectivity not found in a report of the morning after, but they may
also be so saturated with nostalgia as to improperly reflect the true
state of affairs. Usually an event and a press review are in much clos-
er proximity to each other. Because of this fact, newspaper accounts
present a timeliness and a reality of detail that demand primary con-
sideration in a study of this kind.

Much that was written at this time about the theater was
greatly editorialized, and the practice of using "puffs" meant a high de-
gree of exaggeration about the size of audience, the popularity of the
play, and the caliber of acting, etc. True as this was, it does not
discount the fact that, generally speaking, the newspapers were ex-
tremely loyal to the theater and did everything in their power to aid
its growth and prosperity. This was certainly true of Columbus papers.
There were times when news of the war, election returns, or pending legislation would crowd out the theater reviews, but very seldom was there lacking ample coverage of the city's theater as a rule.

With more limited opportunities for recreation in the culture of this time, particularly in the smaller cities, the press appeared to take a more active and personal interest in the theater. The successful operation of a theater in Columbus in 1860 was a matter involving public pride and it can be said that papers like *The Ohio State Journal* and *The Ohio Statesman* did their utmost to arouse the public to the support of a struggling theater manager through lavish praise of a performance or by rebuking an indifferent citizenry or by both. No doubt the papers benefited somewhat from the printing business they received, but this same support of the press was also evident in other projects. Printing was not the only commercial by-product of a successful theater and the press may have been community-minded enough to recognize it.

Yet it is true that praise was often so lavish and stock expressions were so often repeated that a performance of exceptional merit left the press without words—at least words which had not already been drained of their effectiveness through excessive use in routine performances many times before. So many productions were described as "the best we have seen this season" that the reader cannot help but doubt, or at least marvel at, the dizzy heights of excellence supposedly attained by those players appearing late in the season. Attendance was so often described as being "in excess of any night previous" that any accurate evaluation of true attendance is impossible. A typical "puff"
It is with some hesitation we attempt to criticize the performance at the Opera House last evening. We say hesitation from the fact that we must confess that it is with the greatest difficulty we can find words to express our unqualified admiration of the brilliant California Gem, Miss Lotta. At once original, beautiful, and young she has talent of the very highest order and we unhesitatingly assert that she is the most attractive star in her peculiar line of characters in this country.

This review was probably the most accurately written of any of that decade. In the first place, Miss Lotta was very popular and was so recognized from coast to coast. But the greater truth lay in the writer's admission of a depleted vocabulary as the concluding sentence with which he describes Miss Lotta was applied by the press to many an actress who appeared either before or following her appearance at this time. Nevertheless, there was frequent press criticism of both actors and plays and some of it was severe and fraught with admonition, rebuke, and ridicule. In the midst of such an abundance of lavish praise one may be assured that any derogatory comment surely must have had some foundation.

In the early 1870's the press review seemed to move away from the superlatives and the florid descriptions that characterized the commentary of earlier years. Journalistic style was undoubtedly undergoing a change, as was everything else, although it was still far from the style of writing employed by the press today. Not only were descriptions less extreme, but there was a tendency toward increased brevity more in keeping with the true merits of the work being described. Either increased sophistication on the part of critics or an awakening to the absurdity of the "puff" slowly led to commentary on theatrical
fars that was closer to the truth. Perhaps both factors had their
effect.

The Resident Stock Company

As for the theater itself, there were resident stock companies
in virtually every important American city by the middle of the century.
Webster defines a stock company as one "organized to present a repertory
and composed of the stock types of characters without a star."¹ This
description adequately defines the practice prevalent in Columbus and
other cities at this time, at least up to a point. Most of the stock
companies then were resident companies in that they occupied the same
location for an entire season and often for several seasons. Thus they
"belonged" to the community in which they were located. This was in con-
trast to the traveling stock company which, in a manner of speaking, had
no permanent home, but traveled about, a practice which was most common
at the end of the century. However, some resident companies divided
their time between two or more cities, remaining in one from eight to
twelve weeks and then moving on to an alternate city to finish out the
season. Early in the 1860's John Ellsler, popular manager from Cleve-
land, often brought his company to Columbus during the time legislature
was in session and afterward returned to Cleveland.

But the resident company during this period was not exclu-
ively a stock company in the literal sense of the definition. The com-
mon practice was to engage a guest star on tour out of New York or Phil-

¹The typical make up of a resident stock company is found in
the Journal's listing of Manager Sargent's company as engaged for the
1874-75 season. Infra., p. 314.
adelphia to play with the company for periods ranging from a single performance to two weeks or more. Such a star would play his own repertoire with members of the resident company playing in his support. With the departure of the guest star, the company would return to plays from its own repertoire until the appearance of a new star which was often the very next week. Under these circumstances it was the guest star who was the attraction and the name "resident stock company," as defined, did not entirely fit. The troupes of Ellsler, Derwort, Sargent and others who played Columbus during this period were organized as stock companies, but they did not operate entirely as such because of the presence of a guest star a majority of the time. As the Combination System became popular, more and more stars traveled with their own companies. This practice meant that the resident troupe would be idle, would withdraw to play a neighboring town, or would often augment the visiting troupe as the size of the production might demand. Now and then the press was forced to lament the inferior support rendered by the star's own company when resident players might have done a better job had they been used.\(^2\)

A regular actor in such a company was usually quite versatile and was ready at very little notice to support a visiting star in whatever plays the latter might choose to perform. It was also not unusual for a billing to be changed at the last minute because of the late arrival of the star due to transportation difficulties, illness, or other circumstances. Then the order of performance would be changed or an entirely different play substituted—one with which the company was familiar. The thought of arriving at the theater with the intention of playing to

\(^2\text{Infra.},\ p.\ 280.\)
a visiting star only to learn that she would not appear and that another
play had been substituted suggests rather effectively the need for the
resident actor to be versatile and, above all, possessed of a good mem-
ory. The frequency with which plays were changed from night to night
as normal procedure (a point to be discussed presently) prior to the ac-
ceptance of the Combination System, required of most actors a ready rep-
ertoire of currently popular plays, plus the ability to memorize new ones.
Blanche Chapman, one of the Chapman Sisters who played Columbus in 1870,
returned to the stage after a long period of retirement and became a
prima donna of light opera. At this time she had at her command over
seventy-two leading roles. "This meant, in those days, that she could
walk through the stage door, look at the call board, and step out onto
the stage and sing any one of those seventy-two parts."3

The Nightly Format

A distinguishing characteristic of the theatrical practices of
the 1860's was the night-to-night change of billing. Regardless of the
popularity or financial success of a play, it would most likely be re-
placed the following night by another play and, possibly on the third
night, by still another. The object of this procedure seemed to be the
completion of a repertoire of plays regardless of what the preference
of the patrons might be. Once the repertoire was complete it was pos-
sible to go back and repeat the more successful ones and this practice
prevailed whether the company was playing alone or with a guest star.

There were obvious conclusions to be derived from this custom:
First, the expenditure of time and labor in changing sets required by

3George D. Ford, These Were Actors (New York: Library Pub-
alternating plays back and forth did not seem to matter. Of course, staging was sufficiently simple and standardized to permit the frequent striking and remounting of sets in most cases. However, it was not uncommon to see an opening night postponed because of incomplete staging and even more frequent were the press criticisms of mechanical or scenic defects that sometimes marred an opening night. The most significant characteristic indicated by this practice of rotating plays was the importance of displaying the versatility of the star and the company rather than bringing to the public one or two pleasing productions. After the repertoire had been exhausted, the company would go back and repeat a popular performance but only after it had presented all the pieces that had been prepared. The plays were usually current favorites but were chosen principally for the variety of opportunities afforded a visiting star to display his talents. It was this very practice which, in part, prompted Dion Boucicault to inaugurate his Combination System in an attempt to shift the emphasis from the star to the play.

Naturally, there were many exceptions to this practice of rotating plays, but it was not often that one saw a play repeated more than two successive nights before it was "spelled off" by another in those earlier days of the 1860's. As time went on, however, it became more fashionable to retain a play on the boards for four or more nights. Then, in the following decades, a two week's run of successive nights began to foreshadow the long run of the twentieth century. Of course all of the previous discussion pertains to the featured play. However, it was customary for the evening program to close with a "laughable farce," to use the oft-repeated description. Occasionally the perform-
ance was begun with a farce, making a total of three plays in one evening. One farce was the rule and it was usually a one-act, but when the length of the featured play—and often there was a "double feature"—made it necessary, the farce was omitted from the bill.

The Star System

A second characteristic of mid-nineteenth century theater was the constant reappearance, season after season, of the same plays with the same actors playing them. As if this was not enough, the sequence of visiting actors often meant repeating some of the very plays presented during the previous engagement. It seemed that every star had to prove her ability to play Capitola in The Hidden Hand, or to star in Fanchon. There were similar standard vehicles for male talent as well. After seeing The Hidden Hand and other plays like it on the stage several times a season (and often played just a few days apart) one would think that complete boredom would beset players and spectators alike, but apparently it did not.

It is difficult for a modern theater patron to comprehend this constant reappearance of a cycle of dramas season after season unless he reconciles himself to the obvious stress placed upon the actor rather than upon the play. There is little in modern theater to compare with it. Today, with the exception of an occasional revival or a classic, a play is seldom seen again at the same theater. Motion pictures will make a second run of neighborhood movie houses but usually with the intent of picking up the patronage of the lower economic brackets. In

Infra., p. 66.
the middle nineteenth century, however, not only did popular plays re-appear again and again, but they often featured the same actors in the principal roles. This practice became so commonplace that the mere mention of a leading actor would indicate the coming dramatic fare. A notable example of this was C. W. Couldock who played Columbus for many years and whose engagement always meant *The Willow Copse* and *The Chimney Corner*, plays with which he had become identified by constantly playing them. Other players of this age whose close association with their roles fused with their personal identities were Joseph Jefferson as Rip Van Winkle, J. E. Owens as Solon Shingle, E. A. Sothern as Lord Dundreary, and Frank Mayo as Davey Crockett. These are just a few examples. In later years James O'Neill, father of Eugene O'Neill, who played Columbus under Ellsler's management, became so closely identified with *The Count of Monte Cristo* that he was unable to get away from it and he died feeling that the role had been his theatrical damnation.5

The press worked both for and against this association, sometimes greeting the arrival of a star with the expressed desire to see him perform in that part which had made him famous. Then again, hope was sometimes expressed that an actor would play something beside the customary character. Joseph Jefferson appeared at the Opera House on March 3, 1869, with a company from the National Theater in Cincinnati prepared to render his famous interpretation of Rip Van Winkle.6 Mr. Jefferson was billed four nights. In line with the wishes of many pat-


6*The Ohio State Journal*, March 3, 1869.
rons, the Ohio State Journal came out suggesting that Jefferson devote one or two of his performances in Columbus to playing another character in addition to "Rip." Whether Jefferson or members of his company were not prepared to make the suggested deviation from the program, or whether he felt that "Rip" was enough is not known, but Rip Van Winkle constituted the program all four nights. In kindness, and undoubtedly in all sincerity, the Journal made no mention of the disappointment, but praised the performances and the depth of character played by Jefferson as revealing something new each time it was witnessed.

The Audience as Critic

A very interesting circumstance growing out of the seasonal recurrence of plays tending to throw emphasis upon the actor was the audience familiarity with plays and roles which certainly must have resulted from seeing them performed so often. The theater patron who attended the theater with any degree of frequency could not help but develop a thorough knowledge of current dramatic literature, the major roles contained therein, and the accepted manner in which they should be played, having seen them performed often and by qualified performers from Charlotte Cushman down to run-of-mine stock company players. This circumstance contrasts with that of the present-day patron who may see a star several times a season but in a different role in each instance and very seldom on the heels of another actor who had played the identical part just ten days previously.

7Ibid., March 5, 1869.
Strange as it may appear, the habitues of the pit, rough unlettered men and women as they were, in many instances registered the failure or success of the play then presented, being the actual critics. Attending the theater regularly, they became familiar with not only the relative merits of the actors but with the text of the plays then given, including Shakespeare, to the extent that they were able and often did apply the forgotten line or word in an audible voice to the luckless one; which, if not appreciated, the actor was promptly relegated to their black books.

Today the only circumstance comparable to this exists in Grand Opera whose devoted patrons are thoroughly familiar with the libretto of each opera and are in a position to evaluate the merits of each performance and the personnel who take part therein. It is somewhat comparable to the world of sports where a devout fan can quote the professional merits of a player and often predict what he is likely to do under a given set of circumstances. It is doubtful that a nineteenth century actor could play a part and feel that he was being judged on his own merits. He was more likely to be judged in comparison with others and according to accepted interpretation. Unless he was playing the back country he could never count on the ignorance of the audience to shield his weaknesses.

The repeated performance of the same familiar plays was not due to a dearth of playwrights or to sterile imaginations. New plays did appear at the hands of Boucicault, Tom Taylor, Buckstone, and many others. Still, there was a tendency to stick to those pieces already proven popular with the public except where a new play offered additional challenge to the actor and gave him further opportunity to prove his worth competitively. As every student of the theater knows, plays of this era were cut from the same basic stock, for the most part, and

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they were frankly recognized as being so in the press reviews of the day. The play was "not the thing" in this age but a vehicle for displaying the histrionic abilities of the actor. To witness the interpretation of a play already familiar, along with variations in staging as actors and companies competed with each other, was the lot of the theater audience. From all available indications the audience was satisfied with its lot. Modern scholars viewing the theater before the turn of the century from a present-day vantage point, tend to seize upon this circumstance as a weakness and a just cause to label the dramatic fare as trite, mechanical, unrealistic, and lacking in imagination.

Perhaps nineteenth century dramatic literature was all of these things, but to a great extent there was some justification. It is very easy to overlook the fact that the theatrical practices of the late nineteenth century were not entirely the result of a naive and unrealistic outlook upon life coupled with the physical limitations of the theater as is often suggested. These practices were, in part, the result of a combined philosophy of life and a theatrical concept. The latter was marked by the tendency to lay stress upon the actor's ability to develop his assigned role and to leave him to his own devices in accomplishing this end. This approach to acting tends to suggest the custom of the Commedia del Arte of some centuries past whereby actors were given a basic plot and allowed to develop it in accordance with their own repertoire of "gags" and stage business. It is true some nineteenth century actors never advanced beyond the point of repeating their over-worked actions no matter what the role, but many sought to develop a distinctive character, at least as far as their abilities and the acting traditions would permit. In any case, it was always a question of what
the actor was able to do with the part. It was a good part if, in the opinion of the audience, it permitted the actor to perform according to his known abilities; it was a poor one if it hindered him in this respect. The papers were quick to notice if a role did not permit a star to display completely his acting skills. They also took notice if he failed to afford the part the full treatment given it during a previous engagement—his own or that of another actor.

As to the prevailing philosophy of the time, it continued to reflect a basic Romanticism. There was an emphasis upon the natural goodness of man, the ultimate triumph of good over evil, and the prevalence of sentimentality. By modern standards the plays of this era were saturated with the idealistic outlook. Of course society always finds it difficult to avoid extremes in anything it undertakes and the outlook of the nineteenth century was no exception. Yet a careful study of this period reveals a positive approach to life and an active, rather than a passive interest in right living which found ample expression in dramatic writing. Anything short of a positive influence for good justified criticism of the theater as failing in its responsibility. More than that, it was accused of working in the interests of evil. The late nineteenth century theater was thus governed in its program by the prevailing philosophy of the age plus the skeptical regard of a morally sensitive public. The theater, therefore, had sufficient reason for assuming not only the task of depicting life, but of interpreting and directing it as well. Unfortunately the extremes to which it went eventually helped to defeat its purpose.
The Versatile Actor

It is a moot question as to whether it was the public or the theater that was the more responsible for the continued stress laid upon the star during this period. In either case, a widespread familiarity with existing plays and a critical eye for good acting, at least according to prevailing standards, were all that could be considered a favorable result therefrom. On the other hand, the star system virtually precluded any possibility of a production unified in purpose and effort.

Most students of the theater are familiar with the legendary reply of Edwin Booth who, when a manager asked that he arrive a week early to permit rehearsal with the company, replied, "Just get them on the stage; I'll find them." Press reviews encountered in this study frequently refer to the poor support given a visiting player not only in terms of inferior ability but often in terms of the lack of preparation and, occasionally, outright indifference. One such instance occurred during the appearance of Melissa Breslau at the Opera House in 1869. The Journal of November 10 of that year concluded its review of her performance by saying, "Proper encouragement will cause the company to play with less timidity or with less of the 'don't care down-in-the-mouth' quality that was predominant in speech and act last week."

A moment's reflection on this point reveals the difficulty faced by the supporting company in playing to any star. Precision acting and timing, as we know it today, was impossible. The age of the play director was not yet at hand. Guest stars seldom arrived more than a day or two before opening night and many of them did not arrive that early. It was not uncommon for a star to arrive barely in time to check the set and get into costume before the curtain went up. This
circumstance was often caused by a late stagecoach or train and occasionally a grounded canal boat. Since the guest star was the feature of the performance it was natural to give him the right-of-way to play as he would. Thus much of the company support, except for the lines of the script itself, was virtually impromptu or based upon common practice and tradition. It is a great tribute to the skill and resourcefulness of the actors of that day who could adapt themselves so quickly to changing conditions or who could rely upon their art to conceal their failure to do so. It is a compliment to acting that any worthwhile performance resulted at all. Such skill contrasts greatly to that of present-day artists who, in the hands of a meticulous director, come closer to Gordon Craig's "ubermarionettes" by comparison than they themselves might care to admit. In whatever way we may regard the artificiality of their art, we cannot help but respect such versatility and resourcefulness.

The Protean Farce

A curious dramatic vehicle for Further displaying the talents of an actor was the protean farce, a one-act afterpiece with the plot so designed as to permit one person to play most of the characters. The name of this dramatic form likely was taken from the Greek sea god who was supposed to have the power to turn himself into any form he desired. This kind of play was a favorite with actors playing a benefit, for, in such instances, they could display their talent and versatility by assuming a variety of roles. The Female Detective was such a play. Kate Denin, appearing in Columbus in March, 1865
played five of the characters in this piece. In the same year Mollie Williams also enacted five roles in a performance of *In and Out Of Place.* Also in 1865 Miss Lotta (the popular Charlotte Crabtree) assumed no less than seven characters in *An Old Trick.* The list could easily be extended. Such plays always demanded several quick changes of costume as well as an alert mind.

The protean farce was not the only occasion for playing multiple roles. A number of standard favorites of the mid-sixties and later were so constructed, or were altered, to permit a player to star in two or three parts simultaneously. *The French Spy,* a military drama by John T. Haines, was a perennial favorite calling for the star to assume three characters. This play was an exercise in pantomime for the three major characters—Matilde de Merie, Henri St. Alme, and Hamet—were deaf mutes.

**Double Casting**

The near opposite in purpose of the protean farce was the practice of advertising two, and sometimes three, star actors who would play the same role in a single performance. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was sometimes subjected to this dubious practice of doubling up on leading parts. Posters and hand-bills would announce "Two Uncle Toms" or "Two Topsys!" which meant that two guest artists would share the role by all-

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9 The Ohio State Journal, March 29, 1865.

10 Ibid., May 4, 1865.

11 Ibid., October 30, 1865.
ternating scenes or dividing the performance otherwise and thus adding to the box office appeal of the performance.

Two or more stars were rarely seen together in mutual support in the same play, as they often are today, unless they were working as a team, i.e., a husband and wife or a father and daughter as in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Conway, Mr. Richings and his Caroline, or C. W. Couldock and his daughter. If two stars chanced to be booked for the same engagement they would usually appear in separate plays. The fact that stars did not play opposite each other with the freedom existing today, yet would occasionally split up a leading role indicates that, with the exception of the classics and a few others, most of the popular plays were built around one principal character. It is likely no star of this age would consent to play a supporting role to another star's lead, but he would share the lead in the right instances. This attitude was not entirely a matter of marquee billing, but in accordance with theater practice, the plays were written to exalt the leading player, while the supporting roles were deliberately designed with lesser magnitude.

Additional Talents

While multiple parts gave stage personalities ample opportunity to display their versatility in acting there was also opportunity to display such other talents as the actor might possess. Virtually every guest artist and many stock company members qualified (or attempted to qualify) as entertainers in specialties outside that of acting a part. Many performers, particularly women, were gifted singers and they often garnished their dramatic roles with songs. Frequently these songs were
part and parcel to the play, but often as not they were currently pop-
ular or semi-classical melodies having little to do with the play but
which were tucked in, where possible, to give an additional lustre to
the performance as well as to the performer. A program might read in
part, "Kate O'Brien with songs," followed by the name of the actress
playing Kate. In such instances the reader could be reasonably certain
the songs were an added attraction.

Also common was the custom of singing several songs between the
plays performed in an evening as a kind of intermission entertainment.
Dancing was a popular alternate talent in great demand between pieces
and dances could be appended to a major role if the artist qualified.
Note that such interim entertainment was not supplied by a special
performer, but was an additional contribution of the star who might also
reappear in the concluding farce to round out the evening. Male actors
were also given to this practice—singing, dancing, and even giving rec-
itations as a part of the program. Sheridan's Ride; The Declaration of
Independence, and other literary works dealing with patriotism were pop-
ular during and following the Civil War. An actor who could sing The
Star-Spangled Banner between plays was sure to stir the house and in-
crease his own popularity.

Charlotte Crabtree, a Columbus favorite, played the banjo most
skillfully, sang, and danced as a part of her role or as interim en-
tertainment. Other actresses who were famous for their versatility were
the Partington Sisters and the Chapman Sisters. It is to no purpose to
single out the names of such people since there were so many who could
sing, dance, and even play the banjo. Mile. Marietta Ravel was a tight-
rope artist in addition to being an actress. She played Columbus in the
late sixties and there is some question as to whether her popularity on stage stemmed from her acting or from her feats on the high wire. Then there was W. J. Sargent, manager of the Atheneum in the early 1870's who would occasionally perform feats of magic between acts. Such versatility suggests a high degree of physical stamina on the part of performers who played thus with little or no respite through an entire evening and in those days a performance often ran from 7:30 p.m. to past midnight.

Special notice should be taken of this practice of interspersing plays with songs and miscellaneous entertainment in the middle nineteenth century for it helped to shape the format for legitimate theater programs after 1870 and contributed greatly to the rise of the variety show. W. H. H. Derwort, who managed the Atheneum in 1867, was one of those who recognized the growing popularity of variety and attempted to use it beyond the occasional intermission song and dance.

The Actress In the Male Role

A discussion of the theatrical customs of the mid-nineteenth century, and especially of the attitude toward the display of one's acting abilities, would not be complete without mention of the frequency with which well-known actresses were found playing male roles. This practice could not be blamed entirely upon a shortage of challenging female roles. There was an abundance of these from Medea down to Camille and other heroines of the nineteenth century playwrights. Nevertheless, it was not uncommon to see actresses playing Romeo, Hamlet, and even Shylock. Again, one may safely conclude that such roles offered the greatest challenge to an actor's skill and to the aspiring
actress the fact that they were men's parts was a mere technicality. Indeed, some of the older actresses were not entirely unqualified in stature and voice to render a reasonably acceptable performance of a male character and most were quite successful.

Charlotte Cushman was one actress who did not hesitate to assume such roles. She was described by William Winter as "a tall woman of large person and of commanding respect" and she was inclined toward masculinity.\(^2\) Emma Waller, billed as the great tragic actress of the age, played Romeo and Hamlet during a brief Columbus appearance in 1864.\(^3\) Mrs. D. P. Bowers also played Romeo, Hamlet, and Shylock at one time or another in Ohio's capital city.

Double Titles

Aside from the melodramatic format of nineteenth century dramatic literature, its most quickly recognized characteristic is the possession of a double title. Mazeppa, or The Wild Horse of Tartary; Perfection, or The Maid of Munster; Satan in Paris, or The Mysterious Stranger are typical double titles of popular plays. How, or exactly when, this custom began is not certain, although it goes deep into early American history. It might have been a feeble effort to suggest the nature of the play in cases where the proper title gave little indication of what the story was about. The kind of tale to be found in Olive, or The Mysterious Murder is made much clearer in the second title. However, a seemingly more logical explanation was the frequency with


13 *Infra.*, p. 130.
which plays were pirated by rival companies and produced under another name. This practice was possible under the existing copyright laws. A conniving manager needed only to change the name of the stolen play to clear him of the law and thus several companies could be producing the same play but under different titles. A good play, so treated, could become known by several titles. The confusion of the public was one objective of deliberate title manipulation, presumably to lead them into thinking they were about to see a new show when actually they were not. Even the classics were not immune to this practice. The plays of Shakespeare, Moliere, and even the Greek dramas were often staged with additional titles other than the originals.

The Benefit

Giving an actor a benefit was a custom commonly practiced in the mid-nineteenth century and was apparently quite popular for a number of years earlier. It is not too clear as to what initiated this unusual, yet seemingly essential custom of devoting the proceeds of a performance to the guest star or other designated person unless it was an outright financial necessity—a means of augmenting the inadequate and uncertain remuneration then received by those of the acting profession. The Friday night performance was the one most often designated as "benefit night" although other evenings served the purpose as well, especially if the recipient consisted of a team or a couple such as the Webb Sisters. Then one member might take a benefit on Wednesday or Thursday night, for example, and the other on the accustomed Friday.

Accounts are not clear as to exactly how the benefit operated and the procedure may have varied from time to time. Generally the
proceeds, or a portion thereof,\textsuperscript{11} were turned over to the star on the appointed night, who would earn it by appearing in a variety of roles in a program designed for that purpose. The remainder of the cast apparently waived claim to their salary for the night as the newspapers frequently speak of this or that player "volunteering" his services. They speak also of stage personalities coming in from neighboring cities to perform for the benefit. These "importations" were most often professional friends of the recipient and their appearance, we assume, added lustre to the performance and further assured a good benefit. The benefit was in the hands of the recipient to do with as he desired to build up the night's receipts, even to the point of helping sell his own tickets if he wished and some did that very thing.

The benefit custom was also exercised by members of the resident stock company and by the end of the season all the senior members would have received at least one benefit. Some would have received more. The lesser personnel and even members of the theater staff were thus honored at times in what occasionally developed into a series of benefits during the last week of the season or in an extra week tacked on to the regular run to serve that purpose. One cannot help but wonder whether this custom, designed to augment the actor's salary, did not, in the long run, tend to deprive him of what would have been his anyway if he had always been able to count on his regular weekly wage.

The complimentary benefit had much the same objective as a regular benefit but operated somewhat differently and was motivated outside the pale of the theater. Theoretically at least, a group of influential,\textsuperscript{11}Weston, op. cit., p. 53.
citizens, impressed with the talent and efforts of a guest star, usually
an actress, would request a benefit for her by addressing to her a very
formal letter to which she would reply with equal formality. Both let-
ters would appear in the local papers. The request was usually signed
by at least 200 names or better and these people would then sell tickets
expressly for the benefit. Again, there is no indication of the details
of such a plan. It is possible these might have been special tickets,
the proceeds of which went exclusively to the beneficiary, or their
sale may have only increased the gross receipts and so indirectly in-
creased the star's share.

The date requested for the benefit was so frequently the fol-
lowing night or thereabouts that it seems there could have been little
publicity value in the published letters. One wonders also what hap-
pened if such short notice rendered the date inconvenient and who had
the final authority to say whether or not a benefit would be forthcom-
ing? A manager about to lose 50 per cent of his gate receipts on such
short notice might have something to say, not to mention the cast if
called upon to forego the wages for a night's work. In any case, the
successful benefit was quite dependent upon the cooperation of a large
number of people not the least of which were the other members of the
company. Despite the questions here raised regarding its operation,
the benefit seemed to be a popular method of increasing the revenue
of at least the recipient. From the patron's point of view, the compli-
mentary benefit was a means by which an actor's admirers might show
their appreciation in a very tangible way.

Now and then theater managers themselves were accorded compli-
mentary benefits. John Elsler was so honored at least twice in Colum-
bus following the war. Derwort and Sargent were also given benefits although the benefit for Derwort did not work out too well. In the cases of these men it was the feeling of the citizens of Columbus—or at least of those who patronised the theater—that they had put forth special effort to bring to Columbus a worthy program of theatrical entertainment. If the press reviews written on the work of these managers may be considered at all accurate, they were, in truth, very deserving.

The list of citizens' names affixed to the petition for a complimentary benefit was always impressive and representative of prominent business, professional, and industrial leaders in Columbus as well as members of the state legislature. Whether they were avid drama fans or whether they ever bothered to go to the theater at all in each and every case is debatable. That many of these people did attend the theater there can be no doubt, but affixing one's name to a petition, letter or other public document, especially one supporting a popular theatrical figure, could have been done merely as a matter of form and expediency. Studies similar to this have attempted to use such petitions as a basis for determining the number and class of theater patrons making up the audience of a given period. It is doubtful that any positive conclusions therefrom can be considered valid as these lists compiled under such circumstances are likely to err in exclusion as well as inclusion.

\[15\text{Infra.}, \text{p. 202.}\]
CHAPTER III

THE NON-LEGITIMATE THEATER

It was the intention of this study to concentrate exclusively upon the production of legitimate drama in Columbus, Ohio, during the Civil War and the years immediately following. However, an accurate picture of Columbus theater in this era would not result without some brief attention being paid to a few of the more outstanding forms of non-legitimate theater. This consideration is essential because, first, to omit these other forms would render a one-sided impression and do an injustice to closely related theatrics which held the stage in the off-seasons and, secondly, the so-called legitimate drama of the day was not entirely so, at least in the light of present-day standards, for even that theater called "legitimate" was fraught with song, dance, and recitation lending a touch of vaudeville to an otherwise formal drama.

The Minstrel Show

Foremost of the early non-legitimate theatrical attractions found in Columbus at this time was the minstrel show. This distinctly American contribution to entertainment had its beginning prior to the Civil War. Its great success, which for many decades seemed limitless, was most likely due to four factors: First, its quaint and simple origin which, at least as far as Northern tastes were concerned, was both new and different. Secondly, the format and subject matter
of the minstrel show derived from primitive Negro culture and Southern plantation life was most timely for this period of American history. Third, the minstrel show was built in part upon the exploitation of a minority group—a guaranteed format for humor anywhere. Finally, the minstrel called for light variety in its structure, another proven ingredient of box-office appeal.

Needless to say, the minstrel show was the legitimate theater's greatest rival in frequency of appearance and in general popularity. Its performance varied from the quality shows of numerous good professional companies to the efforts of lesser groups often inferior and occasionally outright immoral. They appeared in every possible form—all colored performers, white performers made up in black face, mixed colored and white, all-female troupes, and even units such as Skiff and Gaylord's Albino Minstrels which appeared in Columbus in February of 1871 and several times thereafter. The names of these companies were legion and the frequency with which they appeared and reappeared became such that even the press, usually friendly to this form of entertainment, was at times forced to bemoan their repetitious and too frequent performances. However, the popularity of the minstrel show was a very real thing and the legitimate stage was forced to recognize that popularity through the use of variety entertainment between the plays of an evening's program, while the minstrel format itself was appended to many legitimate performances as an added attraction.

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1The great popularity of Irish comedy in America during the nineteenth century demonstrates this fact with another minority group.

2The Ohio State Journal, Feb. 17, 1871.
Toward the close of the century minstrelsy diminished in popularity. The variety show—or vaudeville, as it was often called—proved to be a much more flexible form than the minstrel whose format was limited. By the turn of the century the public had finally exhausted its interest in a strictly illiterate Negro type of humor embellished with the melodies of the Southern plantations. Modern variety owes its existence in part to the minstrel show and even today it is possible to see minstrelsy performed in varying degrees of excellency.

Burlesque

Second in importance of the non-legitimate attractions was burlesque. It is difficult for a modern theater patron to visualise burlesque as a reputable form of entertainment in the light of its present standing built upon the prevalence of off-color jokes and sex amid not-so-clean surroundings. The truth is, however, that burlesque had no particular association with the less refined forms of entertainment or with any kind of "leg show" until the appearance of The Black Crook in 1866. Even then there was no suggestivism, as we would understand it, until the twentieth century and the introduction of the bumps and grinds and the strip-tease of Billy Minsky's shows. Prior to this, mid-century burlesque was a light-hearted "ribbing" of classic plays or of serious individuals and was found to have considerable literary merit. It was both fashionable and morally acceptable to patronize burlesque, and a number of artists and writers devoted their talents

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3The Black Crook itself was not a burlesque but was a musical. However, the popularity of its heretofore unheard of "freedom" was later capitalized upon by burlesque managers.
to this clever form of comedy. The titles themselves suggested the burlesque spirit: Alladin, The Wonderful Scamp was a popular burlesque, also Dick Mit Three Eyes (Richard III) and Lady of the Lions (Lady of Lyons), just to mention three examples.

Magicians, Concerts, and Pantomime

Other entertainments competing with the legitimate stage or filling in between legitimate engagements included the prestidigitators, as the exponents of magic and slight-of-hand preferred to be called. Hermann, the Great Prestidigitator, was always a favorite in Columbus who arrived with much ballyhoo and fanfare. Another was Professor Anderson advertised as "The Great Wizard of the North." Robert Heller announced himself as "First of Prestidigitators, Peerless Pianist, King's Scholar, and Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Originator of and Only Exponent of the World's Greatest Mystery--Second Sight!" There were many others of this profession claiming one distinction or another and all eager for the patronage of the public.

Columbus also had a strong taste for classical music which was exemplified in various forms ranging from grand opera to orchestral concerts, choirs, and the recitals of numerous gifted individuals. Lecturers occasionally commanded sizable houses, particularly if well known or possessed with a timely message. Artemus Ward delivered several addresses in Columbus during the decade of the sixties. Bret Harte and the popular writer, Mark Twain, also came to Columbus and when such popular names as these were not at hand there were lesser
speakers to discuss issues of moral, scientific, or political interest. Oratory itself seemed to be quite popular among nineteenth-century people as a form of semi-entertainment.

In addition to the previously named forms of amusement there were others which appeared with varying degrees of frequency. Pantomime troupes provided an entire evening's program in tableaux, pageantry, and scenic displays of the silent type. Acrobatic artists and masters of the tight rope and trapeze were in abundance. Ballet troupes were popular and now and then one might even witness a spiritual seance in no less public a place than the Columbus Opera House. Programs were also presented which were built about the display of stereoptican slides and scenic panoramas. These were usually a kind of travelogue built around geographical and historical points of interest, the most notable of which were scenes from Ireland or places of significance in the Civil War. Most of the slides shown were actual pictures made by the photographic methods of the day, while others were well executed sketches, drawings, and paintings. Descriptions of these programs remind one of the semi-educational movie shorts seen in the modern motion picture theater and it would not be amiss to say that this type of program was likely the forerunner of such films as Disney's "Beaver Valley" and "Nature's Half Acre" and others of their kind.

The Circus

The circuses and menageries which frequented Columbus, principally in the summer months, were always preceded by a vast outlay of "paper," as posters were called, along with elaborate press notices, sometimes with illustrations (engravings) which could whip any town
into a frenzy of excitement prior to a one or two-day stand. Columbus was no exception. However, strong as was their drawing power, the circus seldom competed directly with the theater because of its appearance in the summer months when drama was less frequently seen and because of the brevity of the circus engagement. When a circus did crowd into the early fall or spring, the theater managers somehow arranged to close just before, or open just after a big top show. Sells Brothers, a circus that originated in Columbus, always made at least one appearance there and P. T. Barnum's circus and traveling menagerie entertained Columbus about four times in the period of this study. There were also other Barnum exhibitions apart from the circus itself such as his Museum of Curiosities; General Tom Thumb, the midget, and other carnival-type attractions. Other circuses played Columbus more frequently including several originating in European countries. And then there was the Great Fire King appearing in his Salamander Supper during which he would eat "burning coals of fire, drink boiling brandy, eat balls of blazing brimstone, and draw a red-hot bar of iron across his naked tongue and emit a blue blaze from his mouth."

Variety-Vaudeville

Finally a word should be said concerning variety-vaudeville for it was during the latter half of the nineteenth century that this form of theater grew from a disreputable and vulgar form of entertainment patronized chiefly by men and a few women of doubtful reputation to a fashionable amusement worthy of the Palace and other quality New

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\(^{4}\)The Ohio State Journal, July 24, 1865.
York theaters. It was around 1861 that variety was struggling to overcome a reputation comparable to that of present-day burlesque and for many years any reference to the term "variety" was enough to bar the doors of respectable theaters against it.

It is interesting to note the complete reversal of position which was accomplished by variety—vaudeville and burlesque in the moral esteem of the public by the turn of the century. The transposition per se was not the deliberate intention of producers nor was it the result of a general change in moral attitudes. It was the natural result of an earnest desire to clean up variety on the one hand along with the efforts of some managers to exploit, beyond good judgment, the sensuous in burlesque which had been suggested by the success of The Black Crook and Lydia Thompson's British Blondes. It is also possible that Mazeppa, as played by Ada Isaacs Menken, may have sparked interest in the display of the female form which was eventually carried to the borders of indecency in the early twentieth century.

W. H. H. Derwort, who managed the Atheneum in Columbus in 1867 and later moved to the Opera House, was one of the early Columbus managers to recognize the growing popularity of variety and to incorporate variety material in legitimate productions beyond the customary interim songs and dances. A number of traveling companies played in the early seventies and advertised themselves as "dramatic and acrobatic" or as "musical and dramatic" while a few went so far as to use the term "variety." The latter word was risky, however, for many of the better theaters had scruples against other than legitimate drama or music although the ever-popular minstrel show seemed to be welcome anywhere. The Col-
umbus Opera House, for example, apparently had a definite policy concerning its use, judging from the occasional remarks in the press notices, but nothing remains to indicate what those rules might have been. A regular variety house was managed in Columbus rather sporadically for a number of years, but details of its nature and operation are unknown as the press seemed to avoid the mention of it except to occasionally hint that it should be closed. The Journal finally acknowledged its existence with a brief commentary in the issue of March 5, 1864, but made no effort to follow its fortunes thereafter:

Amusements: A place of amusement was opened in this city nearly one year ago called "The Varieties" where we learned that all kinds of disreputable performances were enacted and we never mentioned the place except it was connected with some outrage upon the morals or good order of the city. We have understood for some time that the objectionable features of the performances were dispensed with and that under its present management it was conducted in a quiet and orderly manner.

Variety also held forth at the State Street Theater (the Athenaeum) at irregular intervals, the Ohio State Journal of January 8, 1868, reporting that "a variety troupe continues at this place of amusement" referring to the State Street Theater then under the management of Christie and Miller with J. A. Hayes as stage manager and

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5The Journal of July 9, 1869, claimed that the Opera House was secured for the Democratic State Convention on false representation. Said the Journal, "It is the custom to rent the house only for legitimate or standard entertainments, but as the convention on Wednesday came under the head of a variety or free-and-easy show, there was misrepresentation on the part of the manager of the company. The convention was the first variety troupe that ever gave an entertainment in the Opera House." Whether there was actually variety entertainment at the Democratic Convention or whether this comment was a jibe hurled by the Journal at the opposition party cannot be said. There is, however, suggestion that some restriction was placed upon the use of the Opera House and variety was normally excluded.
T. B. Williams as orchestra leader. For a number of issues both the 
Journal and the Statesman carried a simple block advertisement without 
detail until it abruptly disappeared following the issues of January 
28, 1868. No reviews or other commentary were written in these or 
other Columbus papers to indicate the nature of the programs offered 
there.

It was announced on January 17, 1867, that John Weaver would 
open "Old Drury," as the State Street Theater was sometimes called, for 
the season beginning that night and following a period of renovation 
and improved heating. According to the Journal, Weaver proposed to 
produce a variety of moral dramas, operatic burlesque, vaudeville, 
laughable farces, spectacles, pantomimes, ballets, dancing, and singing 
and he guaranteed that "nothing shall be said or done to offend the 
most fastidious." Four months later the Journal announced that "John 
Weaver, formerly manager of the Theatre Comique in this city, has 
opened a similar institution in Cleveland. We hope this enterprise may 
be more successful there than here." Perhaps Mr. Weaver neglected 
his advertising and so gave the press reason to ignore him; then again, 
the public may have been indifferent to his place of business. In any 
case, it was unsuccessful and represented the fortunes of most variety 
in Columbus prior to 1870.

While all these specialties provided Columbus with theatrical 
entertainment in competition with legitimate drama, we cannot overlook 

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6January 17, 1867.

7Ibid., May 29, 1867.
the fact that virtually every non-legitimate form made frequent appearance as part of a legitimate theatrical bill. Acrobatic troupes, for example, often featured a farce or even a reputable comedy as a portion of their program. Sometimes this was accomplished by members of the acrobatic troupe; other times the drama was handled by separate players. Often the resident company would appear jointly with the acrobats. It was also not uncommon to see a trapeze artist or a singer occupying the interim between featured play and the afterpiece. More will be said on this point later. Sufficient for the present to say that in this period of history and in this city the drama, as in every other age and place, met the competition of other forms of entertainment which, at times, were strong rivals for the public favor and at other times proved to be helpful allies.
CHAPTER IV

JOHN ELLISER AND THE EARLY WAR YEARS

The Season of 1861-1862

The difficult beginning.--There is little doubt that the winter of 1861-62 was one of the poorest and one of the most unsettled dramatic seasons Columbus had so far experienced or would be likely to experience for many years. The reason was clear: Sumpter had fallen and the war which had been considered by many as inevitable was now a reality. The public was wondering what would happen next and this same question bothered theatrical management throughout the country. Certainly all engagements, tours, leases, and plans for expansion were given closer study and many were red-penciled in the face of an uncertain future. As in every other aspect of life, the theater had to regain its balance and adjust to a war footing.

In Columbus the theater had problems in addition to the war. The Dramatic Temple finally left the hands of John Kinney in a transaction which enabled William Neil to purchase the property at two-thirds of its appraised value following a five-year court struggle.¹ Kinney himself left the city to pursue an interest in balloons for the military, but apparently he had made a commitment on the use of the Dramatic

¹Studer, op. cit., p. 435.
Temple prior to its sale which Mr. Neil saw fit to honor, for the
\textit{Journal} announced on March 25, 1861, that C. T. Smith of Pike's Opera
House, Cincinnati, would open the Dramatic Temple on the following Wed-
nesday with the assistance of Messrs. Hamblin and Edwards of Woods
Theater of that same city. The announcement stated that "we are
assured that things will be managed in a much more satisfactory manner
to the public than they have been of late. . ."\textsuperscript{2} The new dramatic
troupe included the infant prodigy, Marian Maria Smith and her mother
who had appeared at this same theater in February. Marian, then aged
four years, played Little Eva to her mother's Eliza in an abridged
version of \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin}.

The first sign of theater in the fall of 1861 was the appear-
ance of Mrs. Matt Peel's Minstrels that opened at Armory Hall November
11 and performed two nights. This minstrel troupe was the first of a
number of non-legitimate forms of theater which made up the bulk of
Columbus entertainment in the first year of the war. During the month
of November Columbus played host to the Webb Sisters, Ada and Emma, at
Armory Hall. These gifted young ladies gave of their talents in the
interest of the soldiers who, by this time, were crowding Columbus,
both within the city itself and in the outlying camps. A brief comment
appeared in the "Local Affairs" column of \textit{The Ohio State Journal} of Nov-
ember 28 relative to the Webb Sisters: "There is no place where you
can spend an hour or two more pleasantly and at the same time contri-

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{The Ohio State Journal}, March 25, 1861.
bute to the assistance of our needy soldiers than by going to see the Webb Sisters tonight." Their program consisted mainly of songs, impersonations, an occasional sketch, and a generous amount of sentiment and wit. What was considered the national theme song that year, "The Union Forever For Me," was usually sung by Ada Webb and it became an indispensible part of their program in the manner of Kate Smith and "God Bless America" eighty years later.

On December 30, 1861, there appeared an advertisement in the Journal under the heading "Theater." It referred to the State Street Theater (the old Dramatic Temple) and listed as manager C. T. Smith and H. Mehen as stage manager. Allen Fisk was scenic artist and John Kinney, former owner of the theater returned to serve as treasurer. The theater opened on New Year's Day with the child wonder, Marian Maria Smith, who was to play six characters besides offering three songs and three dances in a play entitled The Young Actress. This piece was followed by scenes from Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew under the title Katherine and Petruchio with Mrs. C. T. Smith playing Katherine and Mr. Balton as Petruchio. The bill was repeated the next two nights with the substitution of Asmodeus for the Shakespearean scenes. The Serious Family by M. Barnett and The Idiot Witness, a three-act melodrama by the English author, John T. Haines, made up the Saturday billing. Mrs. S. Delman made her theatrical debut as Emma in the first piece and while this fact is devoid of any particular significance in the theater world outside of Columbus, the comment thereon by the Journal the following Monday is interesting: "...Her part was well played for a new beginner. All she wants now is confidence in herself.
and good wishes of her many friends. Her husband having gone to de-

fend our government, we should encourage her efforts and by our presence
acknowledge her worth."

Miss Julia Daly, advertised as "the celebrated American Comic
Actress," came to Columbus January 8 starring in Our Female American
Cousin. Miss Daly was Philadelphia-born and made her debut on the
stage February 22, 1818, at the Walnut Street Theater at the age of
fifteen. Our Female American Cousin was the play's original title,
later shortened to Our American Cousin, a popular comedy written by Tom
Taylor in which E. A. Sothern later made famous the role of Lord Dun-
dreary. The play also had the unhappy distinction of being the attrac-
tion at Ford's Theater in Washington the night of Lincoln's assassina-
tion. For Miss Daly's Columbus engagement the play was enacted three
nights accompanied by two farces which were changed each night.

In spite of the good performances of Miss Daly, the Journal
was not at all pleased with the state of theatrical affairs in Columbus
and commented to that effect in its issue of January 14, 1862:

Theater--This debilitated establishment is fast sinking
into oblivion having dwindled down until it is almost a slur
on the word to call it a "theater." The old orchestra that
for many winters discoursed sweet strains has sunk gradually
until all that now remains of it is an old piano, a fiddle,
and a broken-winded flute from which so many persons make vain
attempts to coax out something which in these hard times might
go by the name of music.

The acting partakes largely of the "variety" style-- and is
hardly passable under that name--scarcely any of the performers
carrying their parts well; or in case one does "go through"
in a manner at all creditable, he or she is so poorly sustained
as to render the effect ridiculous.

The audience in its decline is in keeping with its surround-
ings--so small that it can scarcely make a show or raise an

3 Ibid., January 6, 1862.
acclamation. Alas for the poor old theater, its prestige is
gone, its power to draw is gone, and it will soon be among
"the things that were."

This commentary virtually summed things up for the remainder
of the season as far as the Journal was concerned for it paid no atten-
tion to the State Street Theater until January 12, 1863, when John
Ellsler leased the building. Meanwhile, the Journal devoted its thea-
trical coverage to the sequence of prestidigitators and minstrel shows
which appeared in Columbus, principally at Naughton's Hall. The most
outstanding, of course, was Hermann, known as "The Great Prestidigita-
tor," and Professor Anderson advertised as "The Great Wizard of the
North." Campbell's Minstrels seemed to be the most popular of the
burnt cork troupes.

In spite of the uncomplimentary remarks made by the Journal,
C. T. Smith's aggregation labored at presenting a number of popular
plays all completely ignored by the Journal and but briefly mentioned
in the paid advertisements of the Ohio Statesman. The child prodigy,
Marian Smith, continued to attract until February 3 when F. S. Chanfrau
began an engagement of twelve nights. It was not until Chanfrau's
third performance, however, that the Statesman seemingly felt obliged
to comment, probably because there had been an improvement and, after
all, the theater had been advertising in that particular paper. The
Statesman led off with a slap at previous productions in the manner of
the Journal some weeks ago and then followed a day or so later with an
acknowledgment of a general improvement in theater production:

Mr. Chanfrau's great drama of the sacking of Fairfax
Courthouse or Battle of Bull Run, made a great hit last
night and is far superior to the drama of that name hatched
up last week. In fact it was no representation at all placed along side the one now being produced.4

Twelve days later, following the lead of the Cincinnati theaters, the Columbus theater announced through the Statesman that admission prices would be reduced from fifty cents to thirty cents in the Dress Circle and from twenty-five cents to fifteen cents in the Family Circle. It is a matter of speculation as to what prompted this decrease in prices even in Cincinnati, but it had some effect upon theater attendance which, by this time, was made up of soldiers as well as civilians. Again the Statesman ventured a compliment:

This favorite place of amusement is fast gaining popularity and last night there was a fine audience who, from the frequent rounds of applause, we should think were highly delighted, and we noticed a great improvement in the orchestra. The musicians accompanying the dance performed as well as any orchestra could be expected to.

The cheap prices seem to suit the public and we think the managers have made a hit by putting the rates of admission at so reasonable a figure.5

Francis S. Chanfrau who opened at the State Street Theater on February 3 had won for himself quite a reputation as an imitator and at Mitchell's Olympic in New York he created a sensation in The Widow's Victim where, as Jeremiah Clip, he gave imitations of every actor of note. His greatest triumph, however, was as Mose in A Glance at New York, a piece which thereafter became a mainstay in the Chanfrau rep-

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4The Ohio Statesman, Feb. 6, 1862. The production presented previously bore the title Patriot's Dream or Battle of Bull Run and starred Etta Henderson on Thursday, January 30.

5Feb. 21, 1862.
Chanfrau opened his Columbus engagement with Ireland As It Was, a melodrama by the English playwright Amherst. In addition to A Glance At New York the current repertoire included Don Caesar de Bazan, Boucicault's The Octoroon; The Idiot Witness, and Jack Sheppard.

On February 24, Hattie Bernard made her first appearance as a member of the local company playing six characters in Selby's Satan In Paris. This melodramatic spectacle was the same piece in which Ettie Henderson made her initial Columbus appearance January 21, just over a month ago. Miss Henderson starred in a number of current favorites for nearly four weeks, supported by Mrs. C. T. Smith and D. E. Ralton.

The Webb Sisters returned to Columbus on March 13 and began a long engagement of legitimate performances with the support of the resident company. Their popularity in wartime Columbus was beyond question and the Ohio Statesman of February 15 noted that they "are drawing immense houses at the theater and we must confess that we are agreeably surprised at their rendition of the pieces they have produced the past few evenings..." A benefit was given Miss Emma Webb the night of the 26th and the Statesman used the occasion to praise her:

Tonight we set apart for the beautiful and accomplished Miss Emma Webb on which occasion she will appear in her celebrated character of Parthena in the much admired play of Ingomar in which she will be supported by that excellent actor Mr. Ralton as the barbarian. And we feel confident that Ingomar will be produced in a style far superior to any former presentation given it on the Columbus boards. We trust our citizens will turn out tonight and give Miss Emma a rousing benefit, for if anyone is deserving of a bumping benefit it is this young lady. Miss Ada will also appear in the laughable Yankee farce of Our Gal and also sing the great national song of "The Union Forever For Me." She will

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appear as the Goddess of Liberty enveloped in a magnificent silk flag presented to her expressly for the occasion by her many admirers. That charming little fairy, Marian Maria Smith, will appear in one of her favorite dances. Secure your seats early for there will undoubtedly be a rush.7

The engagement of the Webb Sisters continued to April 9 as they appeared in a variety of pieces, many of them protean farces.

Miss Fidget was presented April 2 with the title role played by Mrs. C. M. Webb, most likely the mother of the girls. Emma played four characters and Ada five in the same production.

The French Spy, a military drama by John Haines, began the joint engagement of Sally St. Clair and her husband, Charles M. Barras, on Thursday, April 10, 1862. Miss St. Clair had appeared in Columbus almost exactly a year ago with a repertoire similar to that which she was now offering. On Friday, following her opening night, Miss St. Clair played Clarissa in Marriage A La Militaire as well as Martha Snifkins in The Hypochondriac to Charles Barras' Vertigo Morbid. Satan In Paris on Saturday gave Miss St. Clair an opportunity to play six characters to finish out the week, and on Monday she undertook two roles in Fairy of Home, a piece written by Barras. The remainder of the engagement was a repeat of previous performances with the actress taking a benefit on Friday. Two comedies by the company composed the Saturday bill.

Ada Isaac Menken--The coming to Columbus of Ada Isaac Menken on Monday, April 21, was unique in that she opened her engagement with the same drama, The French Spy, used by Miss St. Clair for her Columbus

7The Ohio Statesman, Feb. 26, 1862.
opening ten days prior. *The French Spy, or The Fall of Algiers,* had first been presented in Columbus in October of 1856 and had continued a Columbus favorite for a number of years. Maggie Mitchell, in that first Columbus showing, played Mathilde de Meringue, the deaf mute who, disguised as a soldier, Henry St. Alme, in turn disguises as an Arab mute, in order to spy on the enemy.

Mrs. Menken was probably one of the most colorful American actresses to come out of the nineteenth century. As an actress she was only fair, but her fortune was her figure plus an attractive face that was beset with a crown of curly black hair cropped close to her head. A pair of flashing black eyes completed her charm. Like many actresses of her day, she was a versatile person and much of her repertoire required her to play several parts. On the occasion of her benefit Friday she presented the play *Three Fast Women* or *Female Robinson Crusoe* in which she sustained no less than nine characters, sang seven songs, and performed two dances. The bill was repeated Saturday.

But the climax of the acting career of The Menken had come the previous year with the playing of the young Tartar in *Mazeppa,* written by H. M. Milner and based on the writings of Lord Byron. R. E. J. Miles, who popularized the play with his trained horse, was playing in Albany, New York, in 1861 and saw fit to capitalize on the face and attractive form of Mrs. Menken by inducing her to play the role. Previously it had been the safe procedure to strap a dummy to the back of

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8 *Ohio State Journal,* October 16, 1856.

the horse as called for by the action of the story, but it was Miles' intention to use Mrs. Menken in place of the dummy. After some rehearsal, which included a nasty fall, the play was produced as planned. The actress was strapped to the "fiery steed" at the proper time and was borne up the succession of ramps that constituted the rocky ascent. No small part of the sensation was the young lady's attire which featured a pair of tights, leading to her being described as "not over-dressed, not wholly bare." Her appearance in such daring habit had a violent impact upon theater audiences and naturally rendered the actress world-famous. Her performance in *Mazeppa* is considered one of the initial attempts to exploit the female form on the stage.

The following Monday a benefit was extended to D. E. Ralton, member of the resident company who had played a number of the principal roles opposite visiting stars over the past several weeks. *Nick O' The Woods* was Mr. Ralton's play in which he assumed six roles. The next night the company played in support of Alice Kingsbury who opened a short engagement with *Pride of the Market* and the farce *Bonnie Fishwife*.

Miss Kingsbury's acting career was short, lasting but ten years, but it was impressive and her reputation was just beginning when she opened at Columbus on April 29, 1862. The remaining three nights of her appearance were given to *Youthful Queen* and to *Nan, The Good-For-Nothing*, the latter played on Wednesday, April 30. A farce entitled *2-4-5-0* featured C. T. Smith, the theater manager, and Mr. and Mrs. Mehens, he being the theater's stage director. The occasion was a benefit for the Mehens. The domestic drama, *Maud, The Chimney Sweeper's*

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10 *The Ohio State Journal*, April 28, 1862.
Daughter and the farce, Love and Charity, starred Miss Kingsbury on succeeding nights in multiple roles culminating in her benefit performance Friday.

The theater was closed Monday, May 5, but on Tuesday it reopened with a special program which included the romantic Indian drama, Wept of the Wish-Ton-Wish, starring Ettie Henderson, plus a miscellany of minstrel entertainment, the entire program being introduced by a display of fireworks in front of the theater. This production was a benefit for John M. Kinney, the theater's treasurer and former owner. It is likely that Mr. Kinney did have need for a benefit at this time in the wake of the numerous disappointments he had recently experienced including the death of two members of his family, his loss of the Dramatic Temple, and the government's rejection of his balloon project.\(^{11}\)

The remainder of the season lasted but three days with performances by Ettie Henderson, the most significant being The School for Scandal in which the actress played Lady Teasle to Mr. Ralton's Charles Surface. The season closed Saturday, May 11, as a benefit for the star, but the piece is not known by name as no advertisements or press reviews mentioned it.

In summary.—It was obvious that the past theatrical season had not been a spectacular one and that it had been sustained primarily by the Webb Sisters. These young ladies served admirably during this time of confusion wrought by the first months of the war and they probably served the needs of the hour better than performers of the legitimate drama. Of the latter, the engagement of Ada Isaac Menken was the high-

\(^{11}\)Eitz, op. cit., p. 511.
light of the season with some consideration being given to F. S. Chan-
frau. However, the theater itself was in a deplorable state finan-
cially and professionally at the season's outset, as evidenced by the
remarks of the press. The efforts of C. T. Smith to restore Columbus
theater to some level of proficiency in the face of the war's turmoil
best characterizes the season's achievements.

The Season 1862-1863

The management of D. E. Ralton.—Presumably it was only fair
that the privilege of opening the 1862-63 season should fall to the
Webb Sisters who had become great favorites and generous entertainers
in this city the previous year. The two girls were scheduled but for
a brief run of four days on September 2, and on the third day they
staged a benefit for F. G. White, referred to in the Journal as "the
favorite comedian and first comic actor who ever visited the city." Little is known of F. G. White other than what the Journal reported and
why he should receive a benefit at the hands of the Webb Sisters so
early in the season is a mystery since he was not a part of the Webb
Sister troupe and he was not staying. It is possible he was an "old
timer" (if the Journal may be taken literally) whom the Webb Sisters
sought to honor in this manner, or he could have been one of the many
actors reporting to the colors at this time and the benefit was in the
nature of a send-off. This is all guess-work, of course. Following
their final appearance on September 5, the Journal commended both the
Sisters and Mr. White, and in the subsequent Tuesday edition offered

12The Ohio State Journal, Sept. 4, 1862.
further praise—that is with the exception of "panning" a Mr. Radcliffe who failed to measure up to standards:

When the Webb Sisters played their farewell performance on Friday night last it was not expected that so large a house would greet them as did upon the occasion of their complimentary benefit last evening. . . . The Manager's Daughter was performed in a superior manner and was well sustained in all its parts except by Mr. Radcliffe who rather inspired disgust than admiration. He had better keep off the boards as he cannot fail to detract from the merits of other actors . . .

The unfortunate Mr. Radcliffe most likely offended with an obvious lack of ability for, had he been intoxicated (a common offense) the Journal would have mentioned the fact directly.

The final performance of the Webb Sisters was succeeded by the resident company which was now under the management of D. E. Ralton who had been a prominent member of the company the previous season. A brief resume of the company given in the Statesman of October 2 listed its members as Mrs. C. T. Smith, Marian Maria Smith, Miss M. Moore, Mrs. Melville, Mr. Ralton, W. Arnold, W. T. Melville, and Mr. Moeller. While Mrs. C. T. Smith is listed as a member, her husband, the former manager, is not mentioned. It is likely he had entered the service by this time since it is known that he spent much of the war in the service of General Stoneman. It is also very likely that W. T. Melville was the same gentleman of that name who, in March of 1861, made public apology for secreting himself in the balcony of the theater and hissing the actress Miss Noverre when she attempted to sing "The Red, White, and Blue" during a performance the night of April 27, 1861. The public must have accepted Melville's apology whole-heartedly for him to remain upon the

13 Ibid., Sept. 9, 1862.
Columbus stage considering the ugly mood they were in on the night of his misguided actions which resulted in their demanding that he leave the city within twenty-four hours. Meanwhile the Statesman expressed confidence in the new manager by saying that the season under Ralton's management promised to be a great success. It is safe to assume that Ralton's company lived up to the Statesman's predictions, at least in a modest way, for a steady program of plays, mainly comedies and farces interspersed with an occasional bit of ventriloquism or pantomime, held the attention of the city to the end of the year. A play with the interesting title The Drafted Man and His Substitute was presented by the Ralton company the night of November 25. Unfortunately nothing is known of this piece and the press, then in the habit of overlooking much of what was being played at the time, made no mention of it. Such a play must have treated with the problems of the draft and the practice of sending a substitute in one's place. In what manner the subject was treated is not known. At the same time an abundance of minstrel shows covered the country and found their way to Columbus. Said the Journal on the occasion of the appearance of Woods' Minstrels: "... The Negro is now the absorbing theme in all classes of society. And to Tim Woodruff and his associates is left the strange and interesting fortune of showing up what the 'darkie' is and what are his peculiarities..."

For reasons no longer known, Mr. Ralton concluded his occupancy of the State Street Theater with the end of November, for the

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11 Ibid., April 29, 1861.
15 The Ohio Statesman, Sept. 25, 1862.
16 The Ohio State Journal, Dec. 23, 1862.
Melodeon Troupe, a minstrel outfit played there from December 1 to 6 after which the building was closed for extensive repairs. The Journal of January 6, 1863, noted:

In consequence of a scarcity of hands, Col. Busch was not able to complete his improvements in this institution the State Street Theater in time to open last night as per announcement. He went to Cleveland last night to secure more help and hopes to open early next week.

Six days later an advertisement appeared in the Journal announcing the opening of the theater as "Ellsler's Atheneum" with John Ellsler as manager. The announcement heralded a complete change in the interior which had been papered, painted, ornamented, and outfitted with new scenery and appointments at a cost of $2,500. The announcement stated that the building was under lease by Mr. Ellsler who had made the improvements.

John Ellsler and the Atheneum.—The Story of the Columbus theater during the Civil War is largely the story of the theater management of John Ellsler. While his period of management in that city was not of especially long duration, nor was it continuous, it was by far the most popular and his appearance in the capital city was always anticipated. Ellsler rightfully belonged to Cleveland where he managed the Academy of Music, but the frequency with which he came to Columbus, especially during the period when Legislature was in session, gave Columbus citizens ample reason for claiming him.

John Ellsler was born in Philadelphia September 26, 1822, but in the latter days of his youth his family moved to Baltimore where he was employed in a bookstore. His first contact with the theater came as a result of his employment. He had the job of delivering the print-
ed programs to the theater which earned for him a place on the "dead head" list and the opportunity to see the performances nightly. In time he became call-boy at the theater and later played a few small parts. In time Ellsler married and went on to New York to play with Joseph Jefferson's company at the Chatham Street Theater and later at the Bowery. After serving as manager in several small theaters across the country and encountering financial difficulties thereby, he received an offer from the stockholders of the Cleveland Theater, earlier known as Foster's Varieties. After 1858, Ellsler and Felix A. Vincent, who were by this time co-managers of the Cleveland Theater, divided their efforts between Cleveland and Columbus, appearing in the capital city during legislature and returning to Cleveland in April where they continued to play until the 4th of July.

It would not be entirely correct to say that Ellsler's co-management of the Cleveland-Columbus enterprise was, monetarily speaking, a complete success. In time he was forced to withdraw from Cleveland and turn to stock company acting with George Wood in Cincinnati where he played first old man and served as stage manager while his wife played leading lady. With Wood's retirement Ellsler again became a manager where he remained until the outbreak of the Civil War when "the theatrical business took so fatal a turn that I found it impossible to stem the tide longer."17

It was in the very early days of the Civil War that John Ellsler formed a partnership with John Wilkes Booth in western Pennsylvania oil land. It was a great shock to the manager, and to the company as

17Weston, op. cit., p. 104.
well, when they received the news of Lincoln's assassination at the hands of their partner and colleague. The Ellsler company was playing Columbus at the time and the repercussions immediately following the death of the president caused Ellsler some anxious moments because of his associations with Booth.

Following Cincinnati and short turns in Baltimore and Rochester, Ellsler took over the management of the Cleveland Theater again in 1862 which he renamed the Academy of Music. Again he resumed his old practice of visiting Columbus. Ten years later he also assumed management of the Euclid Avenue Opera House, Cleveland, and at the same time became manager of the Pittsburg Opera House. The Combination System was beginning to make serious inroads into theater operation by the 1870's and Ellsler responded by rotating his company among the three houses with occasional stops at Columbus. But, much to the disappointment of the capital city, it was eventually forsaken by Ellsler who was forced to seek greener fields. Only on the occasion of a spectacle or other grand attraction did the Cleveland manager favor Columbus with an occasional short run. Meanwhile, the State Street Theater, still bearing the name "Atheneum," was taken over by H. J. Sargent who replaced Ellsler's name with his own to call it Sargent's Atheneum.

Oliver Goldsmith's comedy She Stoops to Conquer was the piece selected by the Ellsler company to open their season in Columbus January 13, 1863. John Ellsler played Mr. Hardcastle and his wife, Effie, played the role of Miss Hardcastle. The popular classic was followed by a farce called Mr. and Mrs. Peter White, James Lewis starring as Peter White. Records fail to mention whether or not the famous New
York comedy specialist, James Lewis, who made such a hit there several years later, ever played in the city of Columbus. However, it is likely that he and the Lewis performing with Elsler's company were one and the same since this popular comedian had played earlier in western New York state and in Rochester where Elsler had served a managership. It is quite feasible that Elsler might have brought Lewis back to Ohio with him for a season or so before the latter went on to New York. The press was so excited about the inimitable antics of James Lewis that it is hardly possible his later absence from the Columbus stage could mean anything but that he did go to New York to play in more lucrative fields.

The Statesman was pleased with the choice of plays for opening night and sought to encourage more of the same caliber:

We are glad that Manager Elsler has selected these two plays for his opening night. We trust it is an indication of the character of the entertainments at the Athenæum during the season. We have just now tragedies enough in real life without going to places of amusement to witness some mimic representation. It would seem like a solemn mockery of domestic grief. What the public needs now is something humorous, playful, witty, and mirthful to relax the mind and cheer the drooping spirits.  

Apparently Mr. Elsler was of the same mind as the Statesman, or else was duly persuaded, for the billings that followed were all of a lighter vein. All Is Not Gold That Glitters was the attraction the second night and it was followed by the romantic drama, Gypsy Girl and the farce Betsy Baker on Thursday. The week closed successfully on Saturday with Ingomar, Son of the Wilderness written by Mrs. Maria Lovell. By this time the Journal had awakened to the improved the-

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18 The Ohio Statesman, Jan. 11, 1863.
atrial performances and it carried a complimentary statement following
the performance of January 16:

A fine house, considering the snowy walking, greeted Mr. Ellsler and his talented company last evening. "The Honeymoon" and "Mr. and Mrs. Peter White" were well presented and well received.

The management as well as the histrionic ability now found at the Atheneum render it a most agreeable place of entertainment. The order is perfect and no rude or boisterous behavior is permitted. This very important improvement as well as the wonders wrought by Col. Busch in renovating the interior of the building, the new scenery, the elegant costumes prescribed by the good taste of Mr. and Mrs. Ellsler render the Atheneum a delightful resort for lovers of the drama.19

The Statesman was likewise quick to be as complimentary as it had been critical a few weeks ago and praised the present manager for the smooth operation of the theater:

...But if our citizens and strangers knew how pleasant and comfortable it is at the Atheneum, even on the coldest nights, few would be absent on account of the unpleasant weather. The building is thoroughly warm and made attractive by the combined skill of the artist and the artisan. Besides, the evening's performance commences and the curtain rises precisely at the hour named in the bills. There is no tedious delay between the acts or the plays, but everything passes off with a promptitude and in order. This of itself should be a great inducement to visit the Atheneum under the management of Mr. Ellsler.20

The Monday following, the Ohio State Journal commented further on the Saturday production of Ingomar stating that the efforts of the manager and company had made that play "a magnet to the pure, the crit-

19 The Ohio State Journal, Jan. 17, 1863.
20 The Ohio Statesman, Jan. 17, 1863.
ical, and the appreciative and particularly to those who wish to see
the stage the place from which moral influences can be inculcated.\(^2\)

Sally St. Clair appeared as guest star with the Ellsler com-
pany for a short engagement beginning January 20, 1863, starring first
as Lucretia Borgia in the play of that title and playing Miami in
Huntress of the Mississippi on Wednesday, January 21. The \textit{Journal}
described the latter play as possessing incidents which stirred every
emotion of the beholder. "There is depth of affection, the sweetness
of love, the bitterness of revenge, the wildness of desperation, the
bewilderment of surprise, and the secret of estrangements."\(^2\) Follow-
ing a performance of \textit{Lady of Lyons} the next night, \textit{The Hypochondriac}
and the Indian romance \textit{Wept of the Wish-Ton-Wish} were presented at the
Atheneum on January 23 with Charles Barras, husband of Miss Sally,
playing Virtigo Morbid in the first play. Barras received a rousing wel-
come according to the \textit{Journal}.\(^2\) \textit{The Hidden Hand}, a melodrama based
upon a \textit{New York Ledger} story by Colin Hazelwood and a play which was
played most consistently on the Columbus stage for a number of years,
featured Miss Sally in the role of Capitola Black on January 24. The
next night \textit{Jessie Brown} or \textit{The Siege of Lucknow} was on the boards with
Miss St. Clair as Jessie. This piece was described as a hair-raising
military drama dealing with the Sepoy Rebellion in which a Scotch girl
keeps a small garrison from surrendering to an overwhelming force of
natives by insisting that she hears the bag-pipes of a Scotch regiment

\(^2\)\textit{Ibid.}, Jan. 22, 1863.
\(^2\)\textit{Ibid.}, Jan. 24, 1863.
coming to their relief.\textsuperscript{24} The \textit{Statesman} described the play saying "it is replete with thrilling interest and abounds in grand illuminated military tableaux, startling dramatic effects, and reflects with wonderful fidelity many of the scenes and incidents in the present Great Rebellion.\textsuperscript{25} The commentary suggests the practice of taking existing military dramas and refitting them in setting and character to represent situations from the then-current War Between the States. The remainder of Miss St. Clair's engagement consisted largely of repeating her repertoire. The after-piece performed January 30 and billed as a "comedietta" entitled \textit{The Young Rebel} suggests a Civil War play, but no factual evidence is available to substantiate this possibility.

Miss St. Clair closed her engagement Saturday night with \textit{The French Spy}.

\textit{The Seven Sisters.--}One of the first of a number of dramatic spectacles to grace the Columbus stage during the next decade was billed for February 2, 1863, by the Elsler company. However, the opening had to be postponed a night, as the \textit{Journal} said, "in consequence of the vast preparation necessary for the presentation." The review promised that "... the public will then have an opportunity to witness all that beauty can display in scenic art."\textsuperscript{26} The feature attraction being prepared was \textit{The Seven Sisters}, an extravaganza based upon a familiar German piece called \textit{The Seven Daughters of Satan}. It was filled with elaborate scenic effects and was described


\textsuperscript{25}The \textit{Ohio Statesman}, Jan. 25, 1863.

\textsuperscript{26}The \textit{Ohio State Journal}, Feb. 2, 1863.
as an "operatic, spectacular, diabolical, musical, terpsichorean, farcical burletta." The spectacle had opened on Broadway in November of 1860 and broke New York's continuous run record by playing there for 253 nights.

The presentation of The Seven Sisters by Elsler's company was further enhanced by a sort of epilogue affixed to the end of the performance and separately announced as "The Birth of the Butterfly in the Bower of Ferns." This feature was built around an elaborate display of scenic splendor and mechanical manipulation taxing the facilities of the stage and the skill of the crews. Unfortunately the opening performance was marred by a breakdown in machinery which reduced the effectiveness of the tableau, but the public was assured that everything would function properly the next night. The Journal regarded the production as the most popular ever to be staged in Columbus. The Seven Sisters ran in Columbus for nine performances and might have run longer except for other commitments which prohibited its continuation. A benefit for J. McDonough, who held the production rights to the play, was given Saturday night while Elsler himself was proclaimed the star of the show playing Pluto "who was the terror of all evil-doers in his demoniac regions . . ."

C. W. Couldock and his daughter. The engagement of C. W. Couldock and his daughter was already an annual event in Columbus theaters when he appeared at the Atheneum to open a brief run with a performance of Richelieu on February 17, 1863. He was both a fine actor

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27 Ibid., Feb. 3, 1863.
28 Ibid., Feb. 7, 1863.
and a quaint figure in theater circles by the early sixties and, either by choice or necessity, had narrowed his acting to a very limited repertoire. The Willow Copse and The Chimney Corner were his most popular pieces and the mainstay of every engagement. A portrait of Mr. Couldock occurs in the personal memoirs of Clara Morris:

Charles W. Couldock was an Englishman by birth and had come to this country with the great Cushman. He was a man of unquestionable integrity—honorable, truthful, warm-hearted, but being of a naturally quick and irritable temper. Instead of trying to control it he yielded himself up to every impulse of vexation or annoyance while with ever-growing violence he made mountains out of mole hills and when he had just cause for anger he burst into paroxysms of rage, even of ferocity that had they not been half unconscious acting, must have landed him in a madhouse out of consideration for the safety of others; while, worst of all, like too many of his great nation, he was profane almost beyond belief...

He was squarely, solidly built, of medium height—never fat. His square, deeply lined, even furrowed face was clean-shaven. His head, a little bald on top, had a thin covering of curly grey hair which he wore a trifle long while his suit of black cloth—always a size or two too large for him—and his never-changing big hat of black felt were excuse enough for any man's asking him about the state of the crops—which they often did and were generally urgently invited to go to the hottest Hades for their pains...

The strong point of his acting was in the expression of intense emotion—particularly grief or frenzied rage. He was utterly lacking in dignity, courtliness, or subtlety. He was best as a rustic and he was the only creature I ever saw who could "snuffle" without being absurd or offensive.29

Couldock opened his engagement at the Atheneum playing the title role in Richelieu, another play he often presented, while his daughter supported him as Julie. According to the press, crowded houses witnessed his rendition of the aforementioned plays on subsequent

nights and on the occasion of his benefit, February 20, he played Antoine de Verney in the drama, Advocate's Last Cause.

The next week saw Mrs. Emma Waller on the Atheneum stage in the role of Lady Macbeth, with J. C. McCollom, a capable member of the resident company with a growing popularity, in the role of Macbeth. Mrs. Waller was the wife of D. Willmarth Waller, actor and stage manager in New York in the late 1850's and who was acting as stage manager at Booth's Theater in New York at the time of his wife's present Columbus engagement. The Journal described Mrs. Waller as "... one of those artists whose study does not stop at the author's words. His mental creations become hers and, as Lady Macbeth, she reveals to us something of that 'tempestuous loveliness of terror' that must have presided in Shakespeare's mind when he conceived that wonderful drama."31

The second night Mrs. Waller played the principal role in Kotzebue's popular drama The Stranger. According to the historian, Quinn, the influence of Kotzebue upon the English stage began around 1796 when Die Neger Sklaven was produced in London. The sentimentality and the glorification of the middle class had appealed to the English theater patrons and it was believed the American audience would likewise respond. The story of The Stranger concerns the return and repentance of an erring wife who had deserted her husband and children for a lover. Her suffering upon finding that her children have naturally forgotten her and she is unable to make herself known to them is a theme appearing in a number of plays and stories of which East Lynne is one example.

30 The Ohio State Journal, Feb. 17, 1863.
31 Ibid., Feb. 24, 1863.
Lady Windermere's Fan, by Oscar Wilde, carried a similar theme. Mrs. Waller played the part of Mrs. Haller in Kotzebue's piece with J. C. McCollom playing the stranger and James Lewis playing Peter.

Mrs. Waller was one of those actresses of the period who made it a practice to play male roles, especially Shakespeare characters, and for her benefit on Friday, she assumed the part of Iago in Othello. The program was evidently a success both as a performance and as a benefit for the Journal remarked the next day that "Mrs. Waller's benefit last night was a most substantial one showing the public appreciation of her superior histrionic talents." Mrs. Ellsler was also commended for her interpretation of Desdemona. On the following Wednesday Mrs. Waller again assumed a male role—that of Hamlet. Her final appearance occurred on Saturday, March 7, when she played Imogene in Bertram or The Sicilian Pirate.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred B. Conway occupied the Columbus stage from March 10 to March 21, 1863. Mr. Conway was another of America's many actors who was European-born, having come over to this country from England in 1850. His wife was the former Sarah Crocker, a sister to the actress Mrs. D. P. Bowers. The Conways opened their Columbus engagement on March 9, 1863, with a performance of Ingomar, Mr. Conway playing the title role with his wife as Parthenia. Two of Dion Boucicault's sensations, London Assurance and Peep O' Day then followed in order. The latter remained on the bill four additional nights. The Statesman was especially enthusiastic about Peep O' Day, both as a

\[32^\text{Ibid.},\text{ Feb. 28, 1863.}\]
play and as a performance, and described the climactic scene in the March 11 issue:

The creme de la creme of the piece is the great scene in the dark cave where Mullon attempts the murder of Kate Cavennaugh after he has destroyed the bridge which cuts off her escape and places her at his mercy. Her brother, however, at an opportune time witnessing the struggle of his sister for her life from the top of the cave, is almost distraught at finding the bridge cut away. But spurred to desperation he climbs along the ledge of rocks until he reaches the branches of a projecting tree and from this he makes a fearful leap through the air reaching the ground in safety, and with a sudden blow from the spade which Mullon had dug, he thought, her grave, he strikes him to the earth and receives his fainting sister in his arms forming a tableau which brings a hearty applause from the spell-bound audience, who are so deeply interested in the fate of Kathleen.  

A clear insight into the kind of acting frequently found on the stage at this time, which was often resented by the public in spite of a common twentieth century notion that they approved, is found in the Statesman's praise of the Conways on the eve of their benefit March 13:

To us it is a pleasure to see rant and noise avoided, to see no swaggering, to hear no whining, no preaching, to witness no impossible specimens of humanity . . . If ever artists deserved the recognition of the public at their benefit they are Mr. and Mrs. Conway, and if ever the drama deserved fostering support from our citizens it is now.

Two days later the Statesman nearly lost its editorial head in an ecstasy of praise for the achievements of the Athenaeum and the

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33The Ohio Statesman, March 11, 1863.
Conways. The result was a glittering testimony, not only to the great stars, but to theater art itself:

Prejudices have existed against the drama in all ages and in all countries. It has been fined and imprisoned, arrested and deprived of its habeas corpus, lived in perpetual fear of the claws of some conscience-stricken constable. It has been declared to be a vagabond by acts of Parliament in Old England and condemned to the stocks and the whipping post by the city fathers of New England. But the drama, instinct of life, and though often hiding deep in the secret corners of the human heart, sometimes doubting even that it exists, will gain courage and with resistless power assert its sway in sovereignty, over the feelings and passions of the soul and its right to delight, to astonish, to amaze and instruct.

Yet as all things are liable to abuse so the unhappy drama has been often abused. It has been kicked and cuff'd, horribly mangled, vilely maltreated, bemired, bedraggled, made crazy with ill usage until it screamed and begged for mercy at the hands of its persecutors—a set of things bearing some resemblance to the human form but fearfully deficient of the highest attributes of humanity who call themselves its children. Unnatural children, bastards in fact, or how could they inflict such tortures on their venerable parent and his circle of sympathizing and admiring friends?

We have seen such even in Columbus, but see them no more and hope never to set eyes on them again, but now under the parental care of Mr. Ellsler are gathered together a goodly family of true off-springs of the drama, visited at the present by two of its high priests, Mr. and Mrs. Conway who nightly offer propitiating sacrifices. Let us attend upon their shrine. [34]

With the close of Peep O' Day on March 17, Mr. and Mrs. Conway continued their engagement with The Guide of the Alps, the Shakespearean tragedy Romeo and Juliet, and Camille, the latter affording Mrs. Conway her second benefit on the night of March 20. The Conways completed their engagement on Saturday with Schiller's The Robbers

[34]The Ohio Statesman, March 15, 1863.
and a three-act musical drama entitled Rob Roy by the English author Pocock.

The Couldocks made their second appearance of the season in Columbus on Monday, March 23, playing The Willow Copse and, on Tuesday The Chimney Corner, both plays with which the Couldock name will be associated. A play by Tom Taylor called The Jew of Frankfort featured the Couldocks on Wednesday and The Chimney Corner was repeated the next night along with The Maniac Lover, a two-act drama supposedly then given for the first time in Columbus, Ohio. Mr. Couldock took a benefit on Friday with a performance of Still Waters Run Deep and a farce called One Touch of Nature completing the week with Louis XI.

The remainder of the 1862-63 season was largely given over to performances by Ellsler's own company with frequent benefits for the more outstanding members including Mrs. James Dickson who starred in Paul Pry the night of Monday, March 30. Bulwer's melodrama Money followed on Tuesday. A special farewell benefit was given to James Lewis on April 1st although there was no mention made of the reason for a farewell nor of his destination on departing as he was to play with Ellsler's company for another season or so. Nevertheless, Mr. Lewis was featured in the comedy Sweethearts and Wives, a farce called Bobtails and Wagtails, with Selby's melodrama Robert Macaire as the concluding piece. Lewis performed the leading role in all three plays.

The Gunmaker of Moscow and the comic piece Pocohontas were placed on the stage Thursday and a benefit performance featuring J. C. McCollom in Angel of Midnight and a Shakespearean extraction entitled Catherine and Petruchio was the Friday bill repeated on Saturday.
A "melo-spectacle," as the papers called it, entitled Bluebeard or Woman's Curiosity opened the following week and featured "six experienced bareback riders and their mounts." Said the Journal on Tuesday, "Bluebeard at the Atheneum last night elicited shouts of laughter and applause. The music, songs, duets, and chorus were good. The scenery, dresses, and decorations were all admirable. The grand equestrian promenade was decidedly eccentric and laughable..."35

The two-act farce Naval Engagements finished out the week at the Atheneum for John Ellsler's company, the Friday performance being a benefit for the manager.

The occasion of Ellsler's benefit evoked considerable enthusiasm and show of appreciation on the part of the press and the public for the quality of theater under the Ellsler management. The Statesman led off with a card signed "Many Citizens" printed in the April 10 issue:

Tonight Mr. Ellsler makes an appeal to our citizens in behalf of himself. If ever man deserved a good hearty and generous response to his appeal that man is John Ellsler. He is the best manager that Columbus has ever seen. He came here and rented the theater which, we are sorry to say, had fallen into sad repute, laid out an immense amount of money upon repairing and cleaning the establishment—an almost Herculean task—and on the thirteenth of January presented to the citizens of Columbus a nearly new theater, cleaned and beautified to the extent that scarcely the oldest theater-goer would have recognized the Atheneum. Not only did he cleanse the building itself but also its reputation and now we have a theater to which we do not fear to carry our wives and daughters. He brought us also a company which for talent as professionals and respectability as

35The Ohio State Journal, April 7, 1863.
citizens has never been equalled in the theatrical chronicles of Columbus.

The people of Columbus can make no complaint against John Ellsler as a man; they have always found him a gentleman both in business and in social life. If the capacity of the theater is not tested to the utmost tonight, truly our citizens will lay themselves open to a charge of great ingratitude.36

The following day the Journal commended the Ellsler company in an article appearing in a column headed "City and State News."

We understand that the dramatic season under Mr. Ellsler’s management is to close with this evening. It affords us pleasure to commend the character of Mr. Ellsler’s management as altogether upright and dignified. The dramatic in literature and the scenic in representation have always existed and always will exist among men. The aim of society should therefore be to keep our dramatic literature pure in sentiment and exalted in tone. To this end its representation on the stage must be conducted by those whose characters are themselves refined and exalted. In this regard our citizens owe much to the proper and discreet management of Mr. Ellsler and the cooperation of his estimable lady. In all that has been presented on the stage as well as in the decorum demanded in the auditorium our citizens have united to bear testimony to the proprietors of the Atheneum during the present winter . . .37

With Saturday’s performance Ellsler’s company closed the official season at the Atheneum and returned to Cleveland. However, the theater was reopened on April 15 by G. F. Fuller, manager of the Louisville Theater, with a production of The Seven Sisters featuring Mlle. Sophie, Mons. Baptistaine, and a corps de ballet. The performance was repeated through Saturday, but for some unknown reason the papers chose to ignore the production with the exception of an obviously dutiful review by the Statesman on Saturday. Monday and

36 The Ohio Statesman, April 10, 1863.
37 The Ohio State Journal, April 11, 1863.
Tuesday saw the closing performances of the Fuller group offering a piece called *Orange Blossoms*. One might suspect that Fuller's company was more of a ballet troupe than a dramatic troupe and Fuller, himself, was known at that time as a champion skater. The brevity of the engagement cannot be explained beyond the assumption that Fuller may have been barnstorming or possibly the Columbus patronage was not up to his expectations. Nevertheless, no further legitimate dramatic productions of any consequence were staged in the Atheneum until the following September.

**Summary**

Without question, the 1862-63 season in Columbus was superior to the previous season in every respect. The initial confusion caused by the outbreak of the war had subsided sufficiently to permit considerably greater activity than had previously been possible. The efforts of C.T. Smith and his successor, D. E. Ralton, to restore Columbus theater to a place where it was deserving of the support of the press, had netted results and Columbus would now enjoy an era of quality production under the man who would prove to be one of the city's most capable and respected theater managers—John Ellsler. The season's dramatic fare, although more generous than before, was dominated by much the same plays which had been popular in the past. Shakespeare and other classical drama was also popular.

But the climax of the season was Ellsler's presentation of *The Seven Sisters*, which was the first of several spectacles to grace the Columbus stage in the next decade. This attraction was staged by the
resident company (remembering that Ellsler's company remained in Columbus only a part of the year). Other features of the season were the engagements of C. W. Gouldock, Mr. and Mrs. Conway, and the male roles of Mrs. Emma Waller. The Conway engagement particularly appealed to the critics because of the absence of swaggering, rant, and noise, indicating that such acting was unpopular even in this day in spite of the common idea today that it was.
CHAPTER V

THE LATER WAR YEARS

The Season of 1863-1864

The Athenæum again became the center of dramatic activity in the late summer of 1863 when it was officially opened under the management of A. MacFarland with W. S. Forrest as stage manager. Both gentlemen came from the Detroit Theater Company which they had managed and stage managed respectively. Forrest had earlier become popular as a low comedian, beginning his career in Utica, New York, and playing westward through Rochester, Buffalo, and Cleveland. The company, appearing under MacFarland's management, featured Emma Cushman, another English-born actress who began her career on the American stage in Troy, New York, in 1856, and R. S. Meldrum of whom little is known. Forrest made frequent appearances with the company and the billings also carried the name of Jessie MacFarland who may have been related in some way to the manager.

Kotschube's The Stranger began the season on August 31, 1863, with Emma Cushman as Mrs. Haller and Meldrum as the stranger. The performance met with hearty approval according to the Statesman which noted that the house "was crowded with the elite of the city and sojourning strangers." The Statesman went on to praise the troupe by saying,

1 Brown, op. cit., p. 133.

2 The Ohio Statesman, Sept. 1, 1863.
"The company made a decided hit and it was the universal opinion that it is the best dramatic troupe we have had in Columbus since the theater was first opened by Kinney." Such an unqualified salute in the face of an equally broad commendation less than six months previous on the work of John Ellsler and the Conways can only point up the fleeting memory of the Statesman reporter or the exaggeration of his reviews—unless we are to believe that the MacFarland troupe was so far superior. The remainder of the week saw performances of La Tour De Nesle; Lady of Lyons; Asmodeus, and on Friday, Shakespeare's Othello starring W. C. Pope as Iago. The MacFarland company continued nightly at the Atheneum through most of September closing on the twenty-third of that month.

Two or three singular features stand out regarding this period of theater under A. MacFarland which should be noted: First, with the exception of the closing night, no play was repeated. If one may assume that a reasonably high level of performance was maintained, a repertoire of over thirty plays—each presented one night—speaks well of the talents of the company. Second, though the Statesman carried a daily advertisement of the theater program, neither the Statesman or the Journal made any effort to review the plays.3 The Journal seemingly ignored the Atheneum until Ellsler's return in October.

"Not a few of our readers will be pleased to learn that Mr. John Ellsler with his excellent theatrical corps from the Academy of Music in Cleveland will commence a short season in Columbus at the Atheneum tonight." This statement appeared in the Ohio State Journal.

3Ibid., Sept. 22, 1863.
of October 26, 1863, along with a formal advertisement announcing the
performance of three pieces, Perfection; The Maniac Lover, and a farce
called Our Country Cousin starring the comedian James Lewis. It was
on the following night that Ellsler introduced his first guest artist,
a danseuse and pantomime specialist, Mlle. Marie Zoe, in a three-act
drama called Broken Sword of The Dumb Orphan Boy. Mlle. Zoe was a
Cuban by birth, but it was her appearance in Laura Keene's Theater in
New York during the past summer that attracted Ellsler who booked her
for an appearance with the Ellsler company.

The French Spy was offered on Wednesday, October 28, with Mlle.
Zoe assuming the triple lead, and Broken Sword, followed by Italian
Brigands, was Thursday's attraction, the latter being a Zoe pantomime
specialty. A two-night billing of Wizard Skiff or The Massacre of
Scio finished out the week and incidentally closed the brief appearance
of the Ellsler company. Although the "season" was a short one, the
press did not comment on its brevity in any way. It is probable that
the manager sought to capitalize on the danseuse, Marie Zoe, in other
cities while he yet had her under contract.

For the next two weeks the Atheneum was without an occupant
with the exception of an occasional minstrel troupe or concert recital.
Mr. and Miss Richings and their English Opera Troupe were to appear in
Columbus near the end of November and the Journal proceeded to whet
Columbus appetites by noting that "...these great artists are now
playing at the Academy of Music, Cleveland, to the largest and most
fashionable audiences ever seen within the walls of the theater."\(^4\)

\(^{4}\) Oct. 31, 1863.
The same paper then announced on November 6 that Pike's Dramatic Company from Cincinnati would begin a two-week engagement at Ellsler's Atheneum beginning November 16. On that date the company arrived from Dayton, Ohio, where they had been playing and opened their Columbus run with two comedies, Everybody's Friend and Loan of A Lover, the latter the work of J. R. Planché and referred to by the Journal as a musical farce.

The new company was headed by S. N. Pike as manager, G. L. Aiken as stage manager, and Morris Simmonds, treasurer, while the company itself included Mr. Lingham, Mr. McManus, Mr. Henry, Miss Rachel Johnson, Mrs. Annie L. Brown, Mrs. R. Cantor, Miss Whitton, Mr. Smythe, Mr. Lanagan, and Alice Kingsbury who had played as a guest star in Columbus in April of 1862. Miss Kingsbury was obviously the featured star of the company for she played that position in virtually all the plays making up the Pike Company repertoire. Tuesday's feature was Priuli or A Husband's Vengeance followed on subsequent nights by She Stoops To Conquer, Camille, and Second Love. A matinee was performed on Saturday starring Miss Kingsbury as Eva in Uncle Tom's Cabin, the notices carrying Miss Kingsbury as "La Petite Alice." After a performance of Bulwer Lytton's Lady of Lyons on November 23, 1863, the remainder of Pike's occupancy of the Atheneum was devoted to repeating past performances.

Peter Richings and his daughter.—The Richings troupe arrived in Columbus on November 30 as previously announced and opened at the Atheneum with Donizetti's comic opera Daughter of the Regiment with Caroline Richings as the featured performer. Prices were maintained
at fifty cents for the dress circle and twenty-five cents for the gallery as had been customary, but reserved seats were made available at seventy-five cents. The company had just completed a run at Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati and the Journal wrote that "... the press of that city considers them the best acting operatic troupe they have ever had in that city and are enthusiastic in their praise of Miss Richings' singing." Julius Eohberg's Doctor of Alcantra and also Rose of Tyrol, a new opera, constituted the second and third performances, and on Thursday night Daughter of the Regiment was repeated. Caroline's father, Peter Richings, apparently did not appear in any of these productions; at least his name was not listed among the performers, he serving principally as manager for the company. On Friday, the occasion of Miss Richings' benefit, Mr. Richings played the Marquis de Courcy in Adam's comic opera, Postillion Du Lonjumeau, the piece being repeated on Saturday. On Monday, December 7, Doctor of Alcantra was repeated but with the added attraction of the allegorical tableau in which Mr. Richings, as General Washington, received the homage of the states.

Peter Richings was another actor of English birth who came to America to pursue a stage career. He made his debut at the Park Street Theater, New York City, on September 25, 1821, and for a number of years continued to be associated there. Richings was already in his sixties at the time of the present engagement and it was in the fall of 1867 that he retired to his Pennsylvania farm leaving the opera troupe

5Ibid., Nov. 30, 1863.
to the management of his adopted daughter. As an actor he was talented beyond question. He had, however, a well-known exclusiveness about him and a pompousness that was not helped any by the fact that he greatly resembled George Washington in appearance. This fact gave him the idea for the patriotic picture already mentioned in which he played the principal part. Clara Morris, who was getting her own theatrical start in Columbus about the time of the Richings engagements, described Peter Richings as she knew him:

Mr. Peter B. Richings was that joy of the actor's heart—a character. He had been accounted a very fine actor in his day but he was a very old man when I saw him and his powers were much impaired. Six feet tall, high featured, Roman nose, most elegantly dressed, a term from by-gone days—and not disrespectfully used—describes him perfectly. Arrogant, short-tempered, and a veritable martinet, he nevertheless possessed an unbending dignity and a certain crabbed courtliness of manner very suggestive of the snuff box and ruffle period of a hundred years before.

His daughter by adoption was the object of his unqualified worship—no other word can possibly express his attitude toward her. His pronunciation of her name was a flourish of trumpets—Car-o-line—each syllable distinct the "C" given with great fullness and the emphasis on the first syllable when pleased but heavily placed upon the last when he was annoyed.

Richings' allegorical tableau in which he represented Washington receiving the homage of the states while his daughter Caroline, as "Columbia," sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," was an almost inevitable part of a Richings engagement. It also became the source of much amusement among stage personnel as the result of a prank.

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6Brown, op. cit., p. 313.

7Clara Morris, op. cit., p. 84.
once played upon the veteran actor over his tableau. Miss Morris relates it in her memoirs:

In this tableau, the circular opening in the flat backed by a sky drop of blue clouds hanging about the opening represented heaven and here on an elevation Washington stood at the right with Columbia and her flag at his left while the states, represented by the ladies of the company, stood in lines up and down the stage quite outside of heaven. Now a most ridiculous story of Mr. Richings and this heaven of his was circulating throughout the entire profession. Some of our company refused to believe it declaring it a mere spiteful skit against his well-known exclusiveness.

... After we had been carefully rehearsed in the music and had been informed by the star that only Caroline and himself were to stand back of that skylined opening one of the cast gave one of the extra girls fifty cents to go that night before the curtain rose and take her stand on the forbidden spot. She took the money and followed directions exactly and when Mr. Richings as Washington made his pompous way to the stage he stood a moment in speechless wrath and then, trembling with anger, he stamped his foot and waving his arm cried, "Go away, go away! You very presuming young person. This is heaven and I told you this morning that only my daughter Caroline and I could possibly stand in heaven!"

Whether or not this playful incident took place during the present Richings engagement in Columbus is not known, but from the audience side of the curtain the picture was impressive on the night of December 7 as reviewed by the Statesman the next day: "The splendid illumination at the close of the song which brought into vivid light the almost life-like representation of the immortal Washington by Mr. Richings was for beauty and brilliancy rarely equalled."

The remainder of the 1863 calendar year was given over to a rash of minstrel activity, highlight of which was the appearance of the

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8Ibid., p. 84.

9The Ohio Statesman, Dec. 8, 1863.
the original Campbell Minstrels. Principal personnel of this troupe was given in the Journal of December 14 as Ned Davis, Johnny Booker, Johnny Whiting, J. T. Gulick, M. W. Gould, J. Ward, and T. Walds.

A feature of their performance was a ditty apropos to the times, "Who Will Care For Mother Now?" Burch, Christie and Company Minstrels played the final week of the year appearing at Naughton's Hall as had the Campbell Minstrels.

The Atheneum had been closed following the Richings engagement and on Tuesday, January 5, the Journal announced that "... the Atheneum has been fitted up and painted in a superior manner by our fellow townsman, Mr. Protsman, who has spared no pains in making it worthy of the patronage of every lover of the drama." That same evening the Atheneum opened with John Ellsler's troupe playing Lady of Lyons.10

The Journal listed the principal actors of Ellsler's company as J. C. McCollom, Mrs. Effie Ellsler, Mr. Colin Stewart, Mr. James Dickson, Mr. J. W. Carroll, Mrs. Bradshaw, Mrs. James Lewis, Miss Clara Morris, and Miss Lucy Cutler. The week's billing included Ingomar, Buckstone's comedy Married Life, Theresa or The Orphan of Geneva, and Scotic, The Scout or The Battle For the Union, the latter being a prize drama taken from a story in the New York Ledger and based upon incidents in the current conflict.11

The following week Miss Julia Daly joined the company as guest artist opening her engagement with Our Female American Cousin which

10The Ohio State Journal, Jan. 5, 1864.

11Ibid., Jan. 6, 1864.
earlier had made her famous and with which she had opened in Columbus nearly a year ago under the management of C. T. Smith. While the performance was of good quality, the house was poor; in fact, it had not been very large for several nights. The *Journal*, however, put its editorial finger on the problem the next day saying, "The trouble seems to be in the warming of the house sufficiently to make the audience comfortable, but we learn that this defect will in the future be remedied." The next Wednesday, January 13, the *Journal* reporter wrote, "We observed for the two nights past the house was warm and comfortable and hereafter no inconvenience will be felt by the audience on account of the cold."

At the time of Miss Daly's joining the Ellsler troupe Mr. James M. Ward was also engaged. Little is known of Mr. Ward except that he was a comedian specializing in Irish dialect which he used to good effect in the series of Irish farces presented by the company as afterpieces at this time. At the close of Miss Daly's sojourn in Columbus on January 23, Mr. Ward continued on with Mr. Ellsler for a short period. Some of Mr. Ward's performances at this time included "Barney, the Baron"; *Irish Emigrant Girl*, in which Miss Daly starred on Thursday, January 14, *Irish Lion*, presented that same day, and "More Blunders Than One."

Boucicault's romantic drama *The Colleen Bawn*, another Irish piece, was scheduled for performance on January 18 with Miss Daly and J. M. Ward in principal parts supported by the Ellsler company. But owing to the fact that the stage was not quite in readiness, the piece

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12 Jan. 11, 1864.
was postponed for a night and Margot, the Poultry Dealer, previously performed on January 13, was substituted. When The Colleen Bawn opened on Tuesday night it was a decided success and continued in production for seven consecutive nights. On Saturday the Journal reporter wrote:

... Miss Daly was never more charming in her rendition of "The Colleen Bawn" than last evening and this, too, under the oppression of illness so severe that she fainted before reaching the stage and, in falling, received a severe contusion of the arm which she was compelled to bandage during the evening.\(^\text{13}\)

Though The Colleen Bawn continued in production through the next Tuesday, Miss Daly made her final appearance on Saturday and was on her way to Philadelphia Monday morning. Said the Journal:

Miss Daly's part as the "Colleen" will be assumed by the young actress, Miss Blanche Bradshaw. This is rather a difficult part for so inexperienced an actress, yet until we have seen her tried we will not doubt her ability to acquit herself in a creditable manner... . . . . After seeing Miss Daly in this character, an audience will be content with no common effort upon the part of Miss Bradshaw.\(^\text{14}\)

Miss Bradshaw apparently "acquitted herself in a creditable manner" for the Journal commented on Tuesday that Miss Bradshaw had sustained the character quite effectively. The remainder of the week was given over to Irish drama featuring J. M. Ward.

When the papers announced Lucretia Borgia as the play to open on February 1, 1864, Sally St. Clair was listed as the visiting star. Her repertoire carried virtually the same plays with which she had appeared in Columbus in April of 1862 including The French Spy and Aurora Floyd, a sensation drama. The Jew's Daughter was featured on

\(^{13}\text{Jan. 23, 1864.}\)

\(^{14}\text{Jan. 25, 1864.}\)
benefit night and Saturday saw a performance of The Hidden Hand while
the papers noted that her performances were received enthusiastically
by the Columbus public. The second week was begun with a drama en-
titled The Woman In White in which Charles Barras, Miss St. Clair's
husband, played opposite her as Frederick Fairlie. This, incidentally,
was Mr. Barras' first appearance during this engagement, if the press
is correct, for on February 12 the Journal commented:

Everybody has been inquiring since Mr. Charles Barras
was known to be at the Atheneum when "The Serious Family"
would be produced. The bills announce it for tonight
with Miss St. Clair as Mrs. Ormsby Delmaine and Mr. Barras
as Aminab Sleek in which character he exposes to
ridicule and laughter hollow-hearted and pretentious
sanctity.

The tone of the Journal's comment suggests that Mr. Barras may
have been at the Atheneum more in the capacity of a husband than as an
actor and it was his playing in The Woman In White and again in a pro-
duction of The Hypochondriac with Miss Sallie on Wednesday and Thursday
that the public learned of his presence in Columbus. On those same
two days Miss Sallie played Narramattah in Wept of the Wish-Ton-Wish.
The Journal was not at all impressed with the play and expressed its
disappointment saying, "We have but little to say in favor of the play
itself, but what little there is in it was admirably brought out." Miss St. Clair closed her engagement with The Hidden Hand and The Young
Actress, a protean farce in which she played all six parts.

No visiting star shared the Columbus boards with the resident
company through the remainder of February. A sensation drama by an
unknown author called Sea of Ice was extensively publicized as a great

15Feb. 11, 1864.
theatrical attraction and was offered at the Athenæum on February 15. The play featured Mrs. Ellsler in the double role of Marie de LasCours and Agarita with the remainder of the company's principals in demanding roles. The play ran for six nights and closed on Saturday, February 20. However, it was repeated on Wednesday, February 24.

The story that runs through the whole is a sort of wild romance and has its development in both the new and the old world. As one watches the progress of the drama it becomes more interesting as it proceeds, until the close when injured innocence triumphs over basest guilt. While the representatives of the several characters in it deserve commendation, it would be almost unpardonable not to mention Mrs. Effie Ellsler in her double impersonation of Louise de LasCours, the mother who perishes at sea, and of Marie, her child, who is saved and grows up to womanhood among the Indians.

Nothing can exceed the beauty of the splendid Aurora Borealis exhibited in the second act which brilliantly illuminates with various colored lights the Arctic sky from the horizon to the zenith. It casts a lurid glare over the vast and illimitable sea of ice.

We should not omit the character of the Marquis Del Monte as portrayed by Mr. McCollom. The adventurer whose thirst for gold leads him to commit the worst of crimes from causing a mutiny aboard the ship Urenia to the final consummation when he falls a victim to his own villainous acts is represented to the life by Mr. McCollom and so vividly that all see and detest the villain who for awhile succeeds in his schemes but is at last overtaken by a merited punishment.

In the meantime the company presented The Marble Heart, a play by Selby; John Courtney's drama Eustache or The Man of the Mountain; Dreams of Delusion by an unknown author; and Dombey and Son, a play written by J. Brougham.

16The Ohio Statesman, Feb. 16, 1864.
17Ibid., Feb. 18, 1864.
On March 2 Ellsler's Atheneum presented Miss Kate Denin in *Romeo and Juliet*, Miss Denin playing Romeo--another instance of an actress in a male role. Mrs. Ellsler played Juliet while John Ellsler assumed the role of Friar Lawrence. Miss Denin was born in Philadelphia in 1837 and, while in her teens, made her first stage appearance as one of the dancing fairies in a play called *King of the Mist* at the National Theater in Philadelphia. She married C. K. Fox in the Green Room of the Troy Museum (New York) on March 3, 1854, but shortly thereafter she left him and was later married to the actor Sam Ryan whom she also eventually left and departed for Australia in 1867.  

We may safely assume that Miss Denin was still the wife of Sam Ryan during this engagement for the farce, which followed *Romeo and Juliet* on the night of March 2, starred Ryan as Paddy Miles.

*East Lynne* starred Kate Denin as Isabel the following night. This play, which was to be excessively played in the decades to come, had been launched at the Winter Garden in New York in March just a year ago. It was a dramatization of an extremely popular novel by that name adapted by Clifton Tayleure. Again Mr. Ryan starred in the farce which followed--an Irish comedy called *Temptation*.

Boucicault's drama, *The Octoroon*, received its initial showing in Columbus on Friday night, March 4. Kate Denin played Zoe, the octoroon, while her husband, Sam Ryan, carried the role of Salem Scudder. Colin Stewart, J. C. McCollom, James Lewis, Mrs. James Dickson, and Mrs. Bradshaw were also members of the cast.  

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At this time an open letter to Manager John Ellsler offering him a complimentary benefit appeared in the *Journal* of March 4, 1864, and bore the names of sixty prominent citizens. It read as follows:

City Matters:-- Complimentary to Mr. Ellsler -- The following speaks for itself: John Ellsler, Esq: The undersigned citizens of Columbus appreciating your high character as a gentleman, your efforts and success in presenting to the public the Drama in the best style and devoid of those abuses which have tended so often to its condemnation, tender to you a Complimentary Benefit to take place at such time as may best suit your convenience.

We know of no better mode of expressing the warm feeling existing in our midst toward you for your uniform kindness and liberality as exhibited on many occasions.

You will oblige us by naming the evening that will best suit you to set aside for this testimonial.

Very respectfully,

James E. Lewis  Geo. McDonald  C. P. Butler
Thos. E. Dye  C. H. Frisbie  F. J. Matthews
C. S. Wetmore  O. S. Jones  L. Butties
J. J. Rickley  James Kershaw  Rob't Humes
W. Failing  W. H. Akin  W. W. Medary
John W. Baker  M. W. Goss  W. J. N. Prentiss
Matthias Martin  G. C. Benham  T. Lough
E. G. Field  W. R. Thrall  P. Ambos
H. Bancroft  C. J. Hardy  J. M. Westwater
C. N. Bancroft  T. W. Tallmadge  N. B. Marple
J. G. Neil  L. C. Bailey  C. H. Olmstead
A. H. Bixby  S. M. Fields  R. H. Geary
Jno Seltzer  Theo Comstock  W. W. Riley
R. A. Emery  A. B. Butties  C. A. Wagner
Jno W. Layne  R. S. Neil  O. White
W. J. Savage  J. H. Neil  B. R. Cowen
Wm. Warden  H. R. Beason  F. A. Lesquerex
E. Kelsey  L. Donaldson  John Graham
L. W. Draydard  John Miller  J. N. Wheeler
Jos. Hutchinson  N. B. Hawkes  F. H. Watt

The fact that the name of James E. Lewis, Ellsler's popular comedian, was the first of the signatures does intimate that the proposed benefit may have been initiated by him; this, however, is but conjecture.
In the very same issue of the *Journal* Mr. Ellsler's reply followed:

Ellsler's Athenæum
March 3, 1861

Messrs Tallmadge, Bailey, Field, Butler, etc.
Gentlemen:- Your very kind and liberal offer came to hand some days ago. I can only say that this unmerited compliment has taken me by surprise and renders language almost inadequate to express my full appreciation of the spirit and feeling which induce you to make so beneficial and complimentary a proposition.

I can only say I gratefully accept the proposed offer and with your permission would suggest Monday evening the 14th inst., for the significant occasion.

I am more than delighted to be able to state that the favorite and justly celebrated artist Mr. C. W. Couldock and his daughter have in the kindest manner volunteered their very valuable services for the occasion and in accordance with the desire of many, will produce on that evening their beautiful gem called "The Chimney Corner."

I am and trust I shall ever be
Your humble and obedient servant,

(Signed) John A. Ellsler, Jr.20

The forthcoming complimentary benefit for Manager Ellsler took place as scheduled on Monday, March 14, with the Couldocks in their perennial favorite *The Chimney Corner*. John Ellsler took the stage in the comic afterpiece playing Admiral Kingston in *Naval Engagements* assisted by his wife and Colin Stewart. It was only natural that Bouicault's *The Willow Copse* should follow, it being another Couldock "regular;" and on Wednesday the esteemed visitor played *Richelieu*. The *Ohio State Journal* took the occasion to discuss at length the proper interpretation of this well-known figure in the light of Mr. Couldock's performance on the previous night. The *Journal* attributed great ex-

20 *ibid.*, March 5, 1861.
cellence to Mr. Couldock's skill in enacting the character of Richelieu but raised a question regarding the proper interpretation of the role in the light of historical accuracy. The point of question was not directed exclusively at Couldock but at a general misconception of the character usually presented on the stage relative to his extreme old age. The Journal writer drew attention to the fact that Richelieu, the man, died at the age of 57 "whereas we uniformly see him represented in this drama as at least 70 and with all the decrepitude incident to threescore years and ten." The Journal further indicated that the plot of the drama was not at all dependent upon such extreme feebleness as suggested by the common stage concept of the character which Mr. Couldock was obviously following.

In spite of the reporter's assurances that Couldock's playing was of the finest and that no personal criticism of the actor was intended, it is very likely the man was highly irritated, if Clara Morris' description of his temperament is at all accurate. To infer so directly that an actor has misrepresented a character is more damning criticism than inferring he has not the ability to play the part. The latter is a question of talent about which an actor can do only so much, while the former could only be a matter of indifference or outright carelessness. Whatever Mr. Couldock's reaction might have been, it was not sufficiently disturbing to prohibit his repeating The Chim-

21 March 17, 1864.

22 Ibid.

23 Supra., p. 61.
ney Corner on Thursday and taking a benefit the next night playing John
Mildmay in Still Waters Run Deep plus the comedy One Touch of Nature.
Again the Journal reporter loosed a shaft. This one, however, was aimed
at the play rather than at the player: "We confess that the concluding
comedy called 'One Touch of Nature' did not touch our nature in the
least. It is too dry and ... not calculated to bring into play the
peculiar and highly cultivated talents of Mr. Gouldock."24

The week was concluded on Saturday with another performance
of Willow Copse, but on Monday the Gouldocks introduced Boucicault's
new drama called Dot, taken from The Cricket On the Hearth. The open­ing
was attended by new scenery painted by Samuel Culbert, novel mach­
inery by James E. Fleming, and decorations by Fred Randall.25 The
piece continued through Thursday and played to excellent houses each
night. The Journal reporter wrote on Tuesday: "The queer and quaint
domestic drama, "Dot," drew an immense crowd last evening. It was an
immense house. The drama itself has little depth of plot, but it
abounds in touching passages of tenderness ... keenly relished by
the crowded audience."26

R. E. J. Miles and equestrian drama.--A highlight in the cur­
rent theatrical season was the coming of the popular actor R. E. J.
Miles with what the press called "the highly educated horses," Hiawatha
and Minnehaha. Miles launched a series of dramas especially written—
or at least prepared--to feature the valuable mounts, the first being

24The Ohio State Journal, March 19, 1864.
25Ibid.
26Ibid., March 22, 1864.
Rockwood or Dick Turpin, The Bold Highwayman, staged Monday, March 28. Miles himself carried the role of Dick Turpin and headed the *dramatis personae* while his horse, Hiawatha, was listed second on the printed program. "The feats of riding at full gallop up and down the rocky steeps that formed the scenery of this play, leaping hedges and fences upon the stage when pursued by the officers . . . excited rounds of applause from the crowded throng . . ."27

The enthusiasm of the reporter who thus commented can be appreciated, but his allusion to the horse performing "at full gallop" on a stage measuring only 50 by 60 feet may be questioned. His familiarity with the common means of conveyance in that day should have told him that it takes better than this distance to attain such speed and an almost equal amount to draw down to a walk not to mention the twisting and turning required by the setting. However, there is every possibility that this animal was sufficiently trained to create the illusion of a full gallop, at least enough to satisfy the *Journal* reporter.

Eagle-Eye or The Wild Steed of the Prairie, a piece especially written for Mr. Miles, was the Wednesday attraction. Although nothing is now known of the piece, its title is curiously similar to Mazeppa or The Wild Horse of Tartary which Mr. Miles, along with Ada Isaacs Menken, made famous and which he was to perform in Columbus the next week. Another original drama, Mike Martin, featuring Miles' horse, Hiawatha, was the Thursday bill while the patriotic drama Putnam, Iron Man of '76 and Claude Duval or The Knights of the Road were played Friday, April 1. Both pieces featured Hiawatha. The play Putnam, Iron

Man of '76, written by Bannister, was a drama of the Revolution and was first staged in the Bowery Theater in New York in 1844, where it ran seventy-eight nights. It was produced annually for many years all over the country.

As would be likely to happen any time a trained animal is employed on the stage, an amusing incident took place Friday night to the delight of the Columbus patrons:

Amid the turmoil of pursuit and attacks, various persons and characters were supposed to be duly killed. Among others . . . was Hiawatha. But the high spirited animal disdained to be so killed and sprang to her feet before the curtain could fall . . . This revived "Mike Martin" himself so far as to induce an attempt to convince Hiawatha of the necessity of considering herself dead. She refused to be convinced of this dubious fact and to demonstrate the error began to back out of the arena of death down upon the orchestra in front of the stage which led to the performance of an extemporaneous piece called the "Skedaddle Gallopade." A touch of discipline, however, taught the refractory performer the necessity of properly dying a second time. But she perversely chose such a position for her death couch that the drop curtain could not conceal the dead group from the public gaze. The consequence was that never was an audience more delighted with a tragic event than with that death-bed scene.28

Mazeppa may be recorded as the most famous drama to be performed in this country featuring a trained horse, though its later fame was due more to a particular rider.29 It was presented at the Atheneum Monday, April 4, and was continued intermittently until April 13 featuring R. E. J. Miles as Mazeppa and his second horse, Minnehaha, performing as "the wild horse." It appears that Mr. Miles retained Minnehaha for the rendition of Mazeppa exclusively for her "companion-

28 Ibid., April 1, 1864.
29 Supra., p. 67.
in-flesh" assumed the proper roles in all other plays in the Miles repertoire. Nevertheless, some difficulties were encountered by the featured animal which began with Wednesday's performance. According to the _Journal_ review April 7, a section of the staging gave way as the steed was descending the incline, but apparently it did not mar the performance in the least. The horse, likewise, must have escaped injury for _Mazeppa_ was again presented on Thursday and Friday, the latter being a benefit performance.

The production of _Jack Sheppard On Horseback_ on the following night also had its woes. Mrs. James Dickson accidentally stabbed herself. Mrs. Dickson was playing Jack Sheppard in the first act—Mr. Miles to take over the role in Acts II and III—when this misfortune occurred. The _Journal_ of Monday, April 11, related the details:

An Accident — On last Saturday night during the performance at the Atheneum Mrs. James Dickson accidentally stabbed herself in the thigh with a knife. We learn that the wound is between two and three inches long and two inches deep. It came within an eighth of an inch from the femoral artery which, if cut, would have proved fatal in a few moments. We learned yesterday evening that she is improving and that the wound, being inflicted with a sharp knife, would soon heal.

That night and the night following saw the performance of _Hemne, the Hunter_, another vehicle for displaying horsemanship, and once again an accident took place. According to the _Journal_, at that part of the play where the horse was to carry Mr. Carroll and Miss Cutler up the

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30Another instance of double casting in the same performance.
mountain, the animal lost his footing on the ramp and horse and riders fell fifteen feet to the floor of the stage.

It seems the horse sprang forward from the effects of a blow given by Mr. Carroll and being checked too suddenly by Miss Cutler he was turned and missed his footing and the consequence was he fell down taking with him his riders. If the horse had not been checked he would have pursued his way, being well trained to do the act.31

The Statesman, however, told a more detailed story regarding the accident:

At the theater last night in the second act of . . . "Hermes, the Hunter," Mr. Miles' horse, Minnehaha, leaped from a gangway twelve or fifteen feet high onto the floor of the stage with Mr. Carroll and Miss Cutler on his back. The fall was a terrible one indeed and inflicted severe, though not fatal, injuries upon the two actors and upon the animal. The horse received severe internal injuries and bled profusely. The excitement in the audience was intense, but the disturbance was quieted upon the explanation of the stage manager and the play was finished without further difficulty.32

As Miss Clara Morris described the incident later in her memoirs, Mr. Miles carried with him two horses; the one for the "wild horse of Tartary" and similar roles, the other horse being of a much more docile nature which performed well in other plays the task of transporting the villain, allowing himself to be overtaken, and of playing dead when so required. It was obviously this latter animal which, billed as "Hiawatha" had difficulty playing dead in the incident mentioned earlier.33 Miss Morris calls him "Old Bob," his more spirited companion, referred to by the press as "Minnehaha," being known

31 The Ohio State Journal, April 14, 1861.
32 The Ohio Statesman, April 13, 1861.
33 Supra, p. 109.
back-stage as "Queen." "That night, late," wrote Clara Morris, "the beautiful Queen died with her head resting on her master's knee."34 How they decided to press Old Bob into the part of "the fiery steed" of Mazeppa the next night and tried every means to make him behave like anything but a plowhorse is a most amusing story told in detail by Miss Morris in her memoirs. The audience of that occasion remembered the episode as the night they turned the fearsome Mazeppa into a riotous farce. In the meantime Mike Martin and The Seige of Corinth, both featuring Hiawatha (Old Bob), were presented on Thursday and Friday evenings as scheduled.

Mr. Miles, incidentally, began his theatrical career in Columbus, Ohio, first playing as Benedict in Family Jars on September 13, 1855. He commenced playing equestrian pieces in 1858 at St. Paul, Minnesota, with Mazeppa and later he toured this country with his animal partners. At the close of the sixties he was serving as manager of the National Theater, Cincinnati.35

After the excitement of the past week the Columbus theater patrons settled back to enjoy Maggie Mitchell who had been engaged for a six-night run. Maggie Mitchell had been born Margaret Julia Mitchell to poor parents in New York in 1832 as a stage baby and acted child parts at the old Bowery as soon as she could walk. She had previously appeared in Columbus as early as 1856 while touring the midwest.

Miss Mitchell's appearance in Pittsburg in November of 1861 caused a near-riot when it was rumored that, not long before, she had

34Morris, op.cit., p. 114.
35Allston Brown, op. cit., p. 248.
boasted of Southern principles and had sung Southern songs to arouse the chivalry there to the cause. A scene was created between an artillery captain and a gentleman with whom Miss Mitchell was travelling. Hissing began and only the arrival of police stopped the incident. In a moment or so someone stepped out and vouched for Miss Maggie's loyalty to the Union and discredited the tale that she had tramped upon the Colors, which quelled the captain and won his applause.36

The Mitchell engagement was supposed to begin Monday, April 18, but for some reason the actress did not appear. The Journal summarized the disappointment by saying that all were "well satisfied as a general thing with the program, but a great many went there with the express purpose of seeing Maggie Mitchell and hearing her merry voice once more."37 The press was correct and Miss Mitchell opened the following night with Margot, The Poultry Dealer.

In 1860 George Sand's La Petite Fadette had been translated for Miss Mitchell under the name of Fanchon and was first performed in New Orleans, later being staged in New York at Laura Keene's Theater when Miss Mitchell leased it for the summer season of 1862. The play earned for her a fortune and although numerous other actresses performed it, and some very well, it was Maggie Mitchell who was identified with it for generations.38 It was this play which had been scheduled for Miss Maggie's opening but which had to be postponed due

36Utz, op. cit., p. 279.

37The Ohio State Journal, April 19, 1864.

38The Journal of April 20 advertised the play as an original five-act drama translated from the German by A. Waldaner [sic].
to the delay in the arrival of scenery. Fanchon was thus offered Thursday, Friday, and Saturday to close the Columbus engagement for Miss Mitchell and the Ellsler troupe who moved to Cleveland to perform at the Academy of Music.

The temporary conclusion of Mr. Ellsler's management of the Atheneum on April 23 was much regretted by Columbus. The Statesman referred to the past several weeks as "the most successful season . . . that has ever been known in Columbus, a fact which is in large measure due to the excellent management and superior abilities of John Ellsler and the capacity and popularity of the company he has retained." Then, on May 2, there arrived in Columbus a new troupe of artists, principally from Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati, and including Alice Kingsbury. The advertisements cited John Ellsler as manager, G. L. Aiken as stage manager, and R. H. Geary, treasurer, while the opener was the two-act romantic drama, Asmodeus, followed by Husband of My Heart on Wednesday with Loan of A Lover as the farce.

It is interesting to note that although the present players were billed as being under the management of John Ellsler, the May 5 Journal bewailed the absence of the old company and while they had John Ellsler, there were other things lacking:

The audience was well satisfied with the performance but it will evidently take some time for the present company to be in a condition to take the place of the troupe which recently left the boards of this city under the immediate management of the favorite of Columbus, Mr. John Ellsler. We miss his amiable wife—we miss the ever acceptable comical face of Lewis and the sweet songs of Mrs. Dickson.

39The Ohio Statesman, April 24, 1864.
The Statesman was a bit more optimistic and remarked that "The company are rapidly improving in their acting and by the time the newness and strangeness of the place and stage wear off they will be fully equal to any company we have ever had in Columbus." One wonders if this was the expression of an actual conviction or the accustomed tendency to take the opposite view of the Journal in any matter—political or dramatic—a practice of which both papers were guilty. Angel of the Attic and Maid With The Milking Pail made up the program for both Friday and Saturday nights.

It is possible that the season of the year plus a less acceptable company had some effect upon attendance at the Atheneum which, at this time, was not good. The war also had some influence on attendance, especially upon what might be classed as "transient trade" made up largely of troops who were alternately numerous and scarce. Soldiers were frequently admitted free if in uniform, but this does not seem to have been a constant policy. The Journal remarked to this effect:

The audience of the Atheneum last night was not as large as it should have been. Owing to the fact that active operations are now about commencing in the different armies in the field and all furloughed men and officers sent to their respective commands, and in addition, the National Guard ordered into camp for equipment, there are few left to patronize the drama.\footnote{51}

Meanwhile Miss Kingsbury was performing throughout most of the week in Little Barefoot, a five-act piece written by the author of Fanchon, then changing on Friday to Capitola or The Heiress of The Hidden House, another of G. L. Aiken's re-writes of a current play.

\footnote{50}bid., May 6, 1864.

\footnote{51}The Ohio State Journal, May 6, 1864.
This instance was his version of The Hidden Hand from the New York Ledger story. Journal readers were told that "the piece was played to crowded houses in New York for seven weeks." Attendance in Columbus, however, saw no improvement. "The exciting news which we are receiving from the Army of the Potomac appears to absorb all the interests of our citizens and it is right and proper," remarked the Journal reporter.

Close study of the press at this time reveals a concerted effort to bolster attendance at the Atheneum. As noted above, there was an attempt to explain dwindling crowds on a basis of military movement. A second approach was to further emphasize the merits of Miss Kingsbury, the current star, although such a step would be natural at any time. A third approach was to underscore the moral and orderly conduct demanded by the management. On May 14 the Journal remarked:

We have been inquired of whether the same good order and decorum prevails as did under the management of Mr. Ellsler. We are gratified to state that the same officer, Policeman Davis, is always on hand and that no persons of improper character are admitted.

Whether the Journal had actually received inquiries concerning order in the Atheneum as it claimed is a matter of speculation. Fabricated or real, the motive for writing led to an assurance to the public on this point. The final point can be seen by examining the Journal theater advertisements beginning with the May 2 edition. The listing of John Ellsler as manager was dropped shortly after the initial announcement of the re-opening. It reappeared with the May 14 issue,

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42 Ibid., March 13, 1864.
43 May 12, 1864.
undoubtedly as further assurance of an orderly theater since, to many, the Ellsler name was synonymous therewith.

While the papers were trying to create support for Ellsler's second company, Naughton's Hall was attracting attention with the Irish comedy specialist James M. Ward, who had worked for Ellsler in Columbus earlier in the year. On the night of his benefit (May 9) he was sharing the stage with a Major Pauline Cushman, a woman reputed to have served the military as a spy and, as such, had undergone a number of dangerous and exciting experiences upon which she was now lecturing. The Journal, somewhat more partial to the lesser entertainment attractions, was most liberal in commending Major Cushman. On May 17, however, the Journal felt obliged to print the following:

We Take It All Back:—A few days ago on the occasion of the appearance of the famed and noted Major Pauline Cushman at Naughton's Hall we, in common with a number of our contemporaries, spoke highly of the interesting sufferings, hairbreadth escapes, condemnation to the gallows, and final release from Rebeldom of this Heroine; but we are forced now to take it all back and acknowledge that we were sold. We are cognizant of facts connected with her history in this city which knocks all the romance out of her story and places her in such a position as would forever hereafter preclude her from appearing before a respectable audience in this place. Suffice it to say that her actions in this city for the past few days have been a disgrace to her sex.

The Journal's condemnation must have been based entirely upon the woman's personal conduct in Columbus for the records show that she had indeed been a scout and a spy for the Union. She was born in New Orleans in 1833 and had made a debut as an actress at the Varieties Theater in that city under Thomas Placide's management. In March of 1863, while performing at Woods' Theater in Louisville, Kentucky, in The Seven Sisters, she encountered some difficulty, no longer of record,
which terminated her association there and led to her offering her services to the Union Army as a scout and spy. She was at once employed to carry letters between Louisville and Nashville. For many months she was with the Army of the Cumberland and was thoroughly acquainted with all the roads and countryside in Tennessee, northern Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, rendering invaluable service to the Federal troops. She twice managed to escape capture and was subjected to other dangerous experiences which formed the foundation for her lectures. How or why she happened to be lecturing in Columbus hardly a year since her entry into the service and with the war very much in progress is difficult to say. It is only a guess that she returned to her duties thereafter to render some of the service with which the record credits her.

Paul Feval's French drama, Child of the Savanna, opened Miss Kingsbury's third week in Columbus, playing four consecutive nights through Thursday, May 19. The attendance was in no way improved and the Journal expressed regret that there was such apathy toward Atheneum productions. The Statesman lamented, "Why such a play Child of the Savanna so well performed, should be neglected by those who generally attend the theater for the gratification it affords and who are capable of appreciating a good play is beyond our comprehension." The night of Miss Kingsbury's benefit (Friday, May 20) she appeared in Fanchon and repeated the piece for her closing on Saturday. The Journal

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144. Allston Brown, op cit., p. 89.
145. May 18, 1864.
146. May 18, 1864.
felt that her performance of Fanchon was, in many particulars, equal to, if not superior to, that of Maggie Mitchell, the actress considered supreme in this role by most critics.

On Monday, June 6, it was announced that the Atheneum was being leased and managed jointly by Farnham and Smythe, Mr. Smythe having been a regular member of Pike's company when they had played Columbus in November of 1863. Rachel Johnson was the guest artist who played in Lady of Lyons, Rough Diamond, The Serious Family and Ireland As It Was for a week of rather routine theater fare.

The next week the Atheneum was under the sole management of W. C. Smythe and a crowded house (so said the press) was present to witness the performance of The French Spy with Mlle. Christine Zavistowski as the guest artist. The drama was repeated on Tuesday and then gave way to The Dumb Girl of Genoa which was given two performances. For the Friday benefit Mlle. Christine appeared as Wanderdecken in The Flying Dutchman or The Phantom Ship, another instance of an actress assuming a male role. Excellent houses were reported through the entire week.47

Mlle. Zavistowski, of English parentage and born under the name of Ludlam, came to this country in 1848 with a ballet troupe. She made her initial American appearance with Mons. Zavistowski, whom she later married, in New York and was affiliated with several theaters in New York and Philadelphia. She played most of the major cities and often in the company of her two daughters, Emilie and Alice.48

47 The Ohio State Journal, June 13-June 17, 1864.
Mlle. Christine was asked to remain with Manager Smythe's company, but shared her billing with R. E. J. Miles who was appearing at the Atheneum for the second time this season—and with Minnehaha! Obviously the original Minnehaha was dead and a new animal had been trained in her place. However, the papers recorded the presence of three horses in Miles' equestrian act named Minnehaha, Ida, and Watawah. Old Bob, who had starred so amusingly following the fatal accident to the original Minnehaha some months ago, was obviously no longer with the troupe unless he was now using a new name. Minnehaha (the new horse) was used in Mazeppa with which the engagement opened June 20, along with Watawah who was listed as the Kahn's charger. Mike Martin was featured the next night with Ida and Watawah followed by another performance of Mazeppa on Wednesday. After a performance of Putnam, Mlle. Zavistowski took her second benefit on Friday in The French Spy with Mr. Miles and Minnehaha sharing the program in a rendition of Dick Turpin. Perhaps Old Bob was there after all for the advance notice read, "Six horses on the stage tonight."

The scheduled benefit did not come off as planned. Some backstage disagreement halted the performance of The French Spy and the Journal description of the incident is noteworthy:

The second act being ended the drop curtain fell; the boys went out to take "the oath" or some other cooling beverage; the orchestra played vigorously; the galleries echoed with the cracking of peanuts and everybody waited. By and by everybody stomped and some profane fellows whistled; the "supe" re-lighted the footlights but the curtain didn't rise . . . Directly "Tony Bovard" came before the curtain and begged the indulgence of the audience for a few moments saying that an accident had happened to one of the performers but which would soon be remedied . . . The next moment Mlle. Zavistowski,
accompanied by Mr. M. came before the curtain and, at the request of the lady, Mr. Miles read a small speech from a manuscript something like "Due Mile. Zavistowski forty dollars which I agree to pay (so and so). sic Signed, W. C. Smythe" Mr. Miles stating that at the end of the second act Miss Zavistowski had demanded payment . . . which being refused, she refused to go on in the play, also stating that he had offered to pay the sum for Mr. Smythe which the latter would not permit; and so the "accident to one of the performers" was duly applauded but was not exactly remedied. Mr. Miles politely expressed his regrets at the occurrence but was powerless to correct the default and announced that the drama of "Rookwood" would at once proceed.

The audience did not seem to be materially disturbed by this little "business transaction" not set down in the bills and good naturedly applauded Mr. Miles shouting out "let Rookwood go on" and so "The French Spy" was ended and "Rookwood" went on. 49

Two days later a lengthy card written by Manager Smythe was printed in the Journal giving his account of the proceedings Friday night. While the card itself might well be abridged for its service in this incident, it, nevertheless, appears here in full because of the interesting insight it gives to some of the problems of theater management in this period:

\[49\] The Ohio State Journal, June 25, 1864.

Ellsler's Atheneum
Columbus, Ohio
June 25, 1864

Editor Journal: In your issue of this morning you give a very plain unvarnished tale of the "little scene" at the theater last evening and its concomitants as they appeared to the public from the several orators of the occasion. Now I beg you will give me a hearing and then let the public judge who is the wronged party.

Ellsler's Atheneum was opened on the 7th inst, by Mr. Farnham and myself. At the conclusion of the first week Mr. Farnham withdrew from the concern leaving me as sole lessee. I then informed the company that I would close the season on the evening of Saturday as I did not individually want to speculate in theatricals especially
in the summer season. This the company was opposed to and all the ladies and gentlemen urged me to manage the concern to the best of my abilities and if the door did not meet the full expenses the balance was to be deducted from their individual salaries. This, to me, was perfectly satisfactory. I immediately after this conclusion called on Miss Zavistowski and informed her of the state of affairs. She and daughter were under engagement at $200 a week and the half of the receipts of Friday benefit. She told me to go on and not let her interfere. She would not hold me to her engagement. But as she came here to play a star engagement she did not wish to be disappointed. Well, the conclusion was that she positively agreed to play for me one week and to take for her services all the profits or rather what was left of the receipts after paying expenses. This I reported to the company which was satisfactory. Her first night came. At the conclusion of the first act of "The French Spy" she sent for me and said, "Smythe, I will not play the rest of this piece until I get $50. I told her that was not exactly the bargain but she demanded the $50 and rather than disappoint the audience I paid her the money.

To come to a conclusion she demanded and received from me (for which I hold her receipt) $200 for five nights' services when, had she not broken her word with me, there would scarcely have been due her $100. For her last night's services she accepted my due bill for $40 payable after June 21. Wednesday morning she demanded it. I told her I would not pay her until Saturday, the 25th which was apparently satisfactory to her. Thursday morning Mr. Jones (Mr. Miles' agent) asked me if I had any objection to Mrs. Zavistowski playing for Mr. Miles' benefit. I replied, "Not in the least." Well, Friday night came. I had not the remotest idea what was brewing on the part of this woman. The curtain fell on the first act of "The French Spy." I was sent for by Mrs. Zavistowski who said, "I want $40 or I will not finish the piece." I replied that I was very sorry but as the funds in my possession at that time were the property of the stock company I could not, in justice to them, pay her and rob them ... She then refused to play. I told the company that under the circumstances they could do nothing but prepare the after-piece. I then went before the curtain and made "the little speech" you refer to.

What occurred afterwards is patent to the public. I learned since that Mr. Miles knew all that was to occur that evening and that it was arranged between himself and Mrs. Zavistowski that I should be forced to pay her the sum she asked at the first act of "The Spy." But I didn't. Mrs. Zavistowski finding that she did not gain her point in
that manner was furnished a whip by Mr. Miles with which this lady (?) attempted to take a little revenge out of me. But that did not succeed as it only caused her arrest for assault and battery. She was brought before Justice Heyl today and fined $20 and costs. I have now given you ... a complete statement of facts and I leave it to you to judge who is right and who is wrong.

The public's obedient servant,

W. C. Smythe

The Statesman, having much less to say about the affair, affixed an unintentional but appropriate obituary to the season's closing saying, "We regret that owing to some internal dissensions and professional difficulties the theatrical company which has been playing here with considerable success for several weeks has dissolved. There was no play on Saturday as advertised." 51

Summary.—The past season of 1863-64 had been decidedly more active than had the preceding one indicated by the fact that there had been nineteen guest appearances at the Athenæum as against a mere seven of the season before. The theater, at least in Columbus, had stabilized itself and was going about its business without any deterring effect from the war which, on the contrary, may have improved business somewhat. The theatrical fare gave no indication whatever of the pressure of war interest and patriotism as the popular play were pretty much what they had been the year before with The French Spy being the only piece to claim any association with the military and that was of another time. Except for the engagement of Major Pauline Cush-

50 Ibid., June 27, 1864.

51 The Ohio Statesman, June 27, 1864.
man, the Union spy, the theater seemed not to be concerned with war.

Within the Columbus theater itself a number of incidents took place which reflected the professional difficulties of the period. Included were accidents causing serious injury to personnel and the death of a trained animal. There was also the ever-present back-stage friction which, in the case of Mlle. Zavistowski's engagement, resulted in a disrupted program, some physical violence, and the abrupt conclusion of the season all over the question which has always been a source of trouble--How much will be paid and when?

The Season of 1864-1865

David Hanchett and his daughter.--The first theatrical stirrings in the fall of 1864 took place in late August when the papers announced the opening of a new dramatic company at the Atheneum again under the management of John Ellsler. The stage manager was listed as Mr. Evelyn Evans with Richard Geary as treasurer, the new company opening Monday, August 29, with a presentation of *Lucretia Borgia*. Prices at the Atheneum at this time were given as Dress Circle, 50¢; Reserved Seats, Dress Circle, 75¢; Family Circle and Gallery, 35¢; Private Box, $8.00; Seats in Private Boxes, $1.00.\(^{52}\)

The guest stars engaged to open the season were D. Hanchett and his step-daughter, Fanny B. Price. In 1840 Hanchett, while engaged in mercantile pursuits in New York City, had founded there the well-known Shakespearean Association under whose auspices he played a number of roles. From 1864 he devoted his energies to the talents of his

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\(^{52}\) *The Ohio State Journal*, Aug. 29, 1864.
step-daughter with whom he appeared frequently. Miss Price came from Vicksburg, Mississippi, where her father died when she was very young. She received her schooling in New York City and at the Johnstown Academy (New York), her dramatic training coming principally from her step-father.

The reception given Mr. Hanchett and his step-daughter by the public was excellent. Miss Price's training had apparently been effective and contrary to some of the superannuated principles still being practiced by some. "... We are pleased to note the graceful ease which marks the manner of this lady in contrast with 'the Gods of the Gallery' style of the leading stars," commented the *Journal.* Such a remark and the language in which it is couched clearly indicates an awareness of an artificial style of acting commonly practiced but not so commonly accepted by those who enjoyed a more natural approach to the portrayal of character. The reference to the "Gods of the Gallery" suggests that a less than natural style of performance was demanded by certain patrons of the theater as a contemporary fad or a preferred style of the time. Such patrons may have "set the pace" for acting style in spite of a more general preference for a less affected technique.

The first two weeks of the season were also marked by a series of farces starring the comedian James Lewis. Mr. Lewis was a regular member of Ellsler's company, but the press and public were so delighted with his antics that he was becoming a star in his own right, particularly in the farcial afterpiece. The audience never seemed to tire.

53Sept. 5, 1864.
of his presentation of *Two Buzzards* or of his portrayal of Diggory in *A Ghost In Spite of Himself*.

*The Opera House is built.*—An important feature of the season's beginning was the opening of the Opera House recently completed on High Street between Town and Rich Streets by Messrs B. E. Smith and Theodore Comstock. The new edifice was opened the night of September 8 by an operatic troupe known as The Italian Opera of Associated Artists which launched a series of performances including such works as *Trovatore; Norma; Favorita; Rigoletto;* and *Don Giovanni*. As with many other such buildings, though called an "opera house," it was not exclusively devoted to musical pieces, but was also a home for legitimate drama. The history of the Columbus theater for the next twenty years is basically the combined stories of the Atheneum and the Opera House.

The week of September 12 to September 17 was the concluding week of Mr. Ellsler's occupancy of the Atheneum for this time. No guest star appeared and the week's bill was handled entirely by the company with Mr. Evans, the stage manager, playing the principal male roles and Miss Adams the feminine lead. *Hamlet* was the highlight of the week with Mr. Evans in the title role. Mr. Ellsler also performed in this piece, but his role is not recorded although it was likely Polonius, a character he seemed to prefer.

Sam Sharpley's Iron-Clads, a minstrel troupe, moved into the Atheneum on the following Tuesday, September 20, with the publicized assurance that "Nothing indecent or unbecoming a gentleman will be heard from a single member of the troupe."54 *The Ohio State Journal, Sept. 20, 1864.*
partial to minstrel entertainment, hailed their arrival, but on the
day following their second performance the Journal’s ardor had cooled:

The fact is nigger shows are about played out in this
community and were it not for the prominence the press gives
them such a company as performed here last night would be
compelled to play to empty benches. To begin with, Sam
Sharpley lacks all the elements of a gentleman and in our
humble opinion is nothing less than an ill-bred boor.

There is not a performer in the troupe that amounts to
"shucks" with the exception of H. S. Rumsey and from our
acquaintance with him heretofore and his quiet deportment
when mixing with "outsiders" we should say he was much of a
gentleman but is, we think, in bad company.55

Perhaps the Statesman differed with the Journal on Sharpley’s merits.

Then again the Statesman may have only seen another opportunity to line
up against its rival; nevertheless, it immediately pounced on the
Journal’s commentary and declared Sharpley’s company the best that ever
visited Columbus.56

At the Opera House the conclusion of the Italian Opera pro-
gram made the new edifice available to other forms of entertainment,
the first of which was the Carter Zouave Troop Minstrels performing
October 6, 7, and 8. The troop (or troupe in this case) was adver-
tised as "consisting of twenty-two beautiful and spritely girls who,
besides giving a dramatic and musical melange of great interest and

55Ibid., Sept. 21, 1864.
56The Ohio Statesman, Sept. 22, 1864.
the Zouave Drill, will perform in concert upon brass instruments.

The first dramatic troupe to engage the Opera House was that of A. McFarland who opened Thursday, November 3, with a three-night presentation of Tom Taylor's *Ticket of Leave Man*. McFarland had been an early visitor to Columbus the previous season, leasing the Atheneum for the month of September with W. S. Forrest as his stage manager. This year his leading player was Josephine Tyson along with her husband, F. L. Kent, who carried the male leads. Nothing is known of either of these players except that they were members of the regular company which, as before, came out of Detroit. On the occasion of Lincoln's re-election, November 9, the company presented *Soldier's Daughter* and introduced the added attraction of the Martinelli Troupe, acrobats and trapeze artists under Paul Martinelli, who specialised in pantomimes and dramatic skits built around their special talents.

Those who patronized the Opera House on Monday of the next week came prepared to see Miss Mary Provost as an added attraction in the performance of *Nell Gwynne*, but had to be satisfied with what was labeled "the beautiful and affecting drama" of *The Stranger*, with Miss

57Ibid., Oct. 6, 1864. Columbus had a number of Zouave organizations prior to the war. These were private military groups of a lodge-like nature which drilled and trained under private instruction and had a social atmosphere about them. The name "Zouave" was taken from native Algerian infantry battalions noted for their dash and bravery and characterized by colorful uniforms, a feature adopted by their American counterparts. At the outbreak of the war these Zouave units formed the core of many volunteer regiments serving in the Union Army.

Upon their departure to duty many such groups were represented at home by wives and daughters who continued in an auxiliary capacity to serve the troop and sponsored social functions for the sake of funds or prestige. It is likely, though not certain, that the minstrel troupe here mentioned was one of these activities.
Tyson and Mr. Kent of the company taking the leads. The same circumstance developed the following night when Manager McFarland came forward to announce the illness of Miss Provost and his willingness to refund admissions to those who wished it. However, seemingly no one left for that particular reason. Although the papers gave no details on the nature of Miss Provost's illness, she was unable to fulfill her engagement that week and remained confined to her room at the American Hotel. The Journal held out hopes for at least a glimpse of Miss Provost, however, and wrote on the 24th of November:

It affords us unfeigned gratification to be able to announce that Miss Mary Provost is rapidly recovering from her late severe illness and will be able to resume her professional engagements in a short time. Her agent, Mr. Colville, informs us that he deems it expedient she should not play before appearing at the St. Charles Theater, New Orleans, January 2, but we hope circumstances will enable her to favor us with at least two or three of her great representations before taking her departure from Columbus.

The Journal's hopes were to no avail, however, for Miss Provost declined to appear and on November 21 Miss Rachel Johnson began a six-night engagement at the Opera House with Knowles' The Hunchback.

Although it was not the usual night for such things, Miss Johnson took her benefit on Tuesday playing the part of Aurora Floyd in the sensation drama of that name. The announcements also stated that Mr. J. C. Howard would support Miss Johnson and referred to him as a soldier-actor who had volunteered his services. Little is known of Mr. Howard except that he was an actor now in the service and whose military status at the moment occasioned his presence in Columbus. This fact was fortunate for Miss Johnson who had scheduled her benefit for the previous Friday on the strength of a promise of assistance.
from the reputable actor, M. V. Lingham. On Friday noon, however, Miss Johnson was informed by telegraph that Mr. Lingham would not be present.

The Drunkard began the dramatic performances at the Opera House the week of December 5, featuring an actor by the name of Sam Lathrop who played the part of Bill Douton and who also sang a comic song between features. He then assumed the character of Old Delph in the farce Family Jars. The Journal reporter was obviously dissatisfied with Lathrop as an actor, for on Tuesday, December 6, he wrote, "The presence of the inimitable Forrest in this piece [Family Jars] was wanting to give zest to it and the absence of undue obscenity would have been of little advantage to it." Such a comment may have led to Lathrop's dismissal or his voluntary withdrawal from the Columbus stage for after a mediocre performance in the farce Crossing The Line the following night, he no longer appeared.

The famous moral drama Ten Nights In A Bar Room received its first Columbus showing on December 8 and in the role of Mary Morgan was Little Marian Smith, the same who, as little more than an infant, had played "Gentle Eva" in Uncle Tom's Cabin with her parents in 1861. The production carried until Saturday when Little Marian was given a benefit.

A turn to Shakespeare occurred on Monday with the appearance of Emma Waller, advertised as "The Great Tragic Actress of the Age."

Mrs. Waller had previously appeared in Columbus in February of 1863 playing in Macbeth and as Shylock in The Merchant of Venice. Again

58 Supra., p. 60.
she assumed a male role; this time it was Romeo in Shakespeare's famous love story. Josephine Tyson played Juliet while her husband, F. L. Kent, was seen as Mercutio. Guy Mannering, based on the writing of Sir Walter Scott, gave Mrs. Waller an opportunity to play Meg Merriles and the Journal of that Tuesday anticipated her success by saying that "the press in every city in which she has personated this character says she far exceeds Charlotte Cushman in her rendition of 'Meg'."59

The second week of the Waller engagement was highlighted by performances of the sensation piece, Waiting For The Verdict and Macbeth. In general, the former was a domestic story of great interest based upon the abuses of the English game laws and, in spite of its English foundation, had played before excellent houses in New York, Washington, and Philadelphia at this very time. The Wednesday presentation of Macbeth was a strain on the company's personnel and facilities according to the Journal which stated that, "... the troupe is not strong enough and are too deficient in scenery and properties for the successful rendition of this truly magnificent tragedy."60

This appraisal by the Journal left neither Mrs. Waller or the company dismayed however, for the next night they undertook what is usually considered the most difficult of Shakespearean tragedies—Hamlet—with Mrs. Waller as the prince and Josephine Tyson as Ophelia. It must have been a long night for Emma Waller (her benefit too!) as she followed Hamlet by playing Lady Camilla Hailstone in the comedy

59 Dec. 13, 1864.
60 Dec. 22, 1864.
afterpiece, Camilla's Husband. The next night was a benefit for F. L. Kent, who played St. Clair in Uncle Tom's Cabin. A Mr. Flynn, whose role and personal identity are not now known, was mentioned by the Journal reviewer the next day who said, "... And again (in all kindness) we would advise Mr. Flynn to study his part so that the prompter will have less labor." 61

The Laura Keene Combination.—The day following Christmas the Laura Keene Combination arrived at the Opera House and presented Goldsmith's She Stoops To Conquer. It is to be noted that this billing is the first to refer to a visiting troupe as a "combination." While the term is beginning to be used more freely at this time, the Laura Keene troupe is not functioning exactly as a true combination as originally defined by Boucicault's purpose. Miss Keene had her own supporting cast instead of relying upon the resident company, but she did not concentrate upon one or two particular plays exclusively. Our American Cousin was her main dramatic attraction for many years and to this extent her troupe operated as a Combination, but there were a number of other pieces which Miss Keene also included in her engagements as the billings indicate. The Laura Keene Combination could be looked upon as one of those making the transition from resident company with guest artist to traveling company with but one or two featured productions.

The Journal described Miss Keene's acting by saying, "Miss Keene is not what is usually termed a great actress, but she is, nevertheless, an actress of great merit and, as far as we have seen, has never

61 Dec. 26, 1864.
exceeded the bounds of her sex." As in many press comments of the past, the precise meaning is not clear and it is not certain what is meant by "the bounds of her sex." This could be merely a compliment to Miss Keene's personal deportment off-stage. However, the recent engagement of a woman who freely assumed male roles may have brought forth this remark as an inference Miss Keene did not do so, a trait considered to be to her credit. There are occasional inferences by the press that suggest some disapproval of women playing male roles.

If the Journal reporter really was referring to Miss Keene's abstinence from male roles, he surely was aghast at the program advertised for Monday, January 2, when Miss Keene appeared in Our American Cousin as Lord Dundreary. London Assurance and School for Scandal made up the bill for the rest of the week with the exception of Friday's benefit for Miss Keene which featured Sea of Ice played also on Saturday.

John Ellsler returns to Columbus.--It was inevitable that John Ellsler's company from Cleveland should return to Columbus about this time and on Tuesday, January 17, Ellsler opened at the Opera House with The Hunchback by Sheridan Knowles, his guest star being Miss Olive Logan. It is hard to say why Ellsler chose the Opera House over his former place of business which bore his name except that the Opera House was the newer building and the fashionable theater of the moment. Any good businessman would seek the circumstances most favorable to his

62 Dec. 29, 1864.
63 Ibid., Oct. 5, 1872.
enterprise and the Opera House was a more modern theater than the Atheneum, at least at present. Throughout the period of their coexistence the Atheneum and the Opera House seemed to alternate as centers of theatrical popularity as first one building and then the other would undergo redecoration. Rents and fees also had something to do with it and, in this instance, Morris and Wilson's Minstrels had engaged the Atheneum for three nights beginning January 18.

Olive Logan was the daughter of C. Logan, a comedian of ability, and the sister of Eliza Logan, one of the finest female representatives of legitimate drama known to the American stage. Following her opening performance of The Hunchback, Miss Logan played Lady of Lyons, Ingomar, and Camille with a Saturday benefit consisting of The Stranger and Miriam's Crime. Although the latter had been produced previously in Columbus without adverse criticism the Journal chose to classify it this time as a "miserable failure" and expressed the presumption that it would not be produced again under like circumstances. The first four days of the next week were given to Eveleen or The Felon's Daughter, a five-act drama penned by Miss Logan herself the previous year. Of her script the Journal wrote:

As an achievement in dramatic literature Miss Olive Logan's new play is a decided success. Byron said that the production of an epic poem had been "the single wonder of a thousand years" and we may add that a good acting play has been, in the history of the drama, the single wonder of perhaps half a century.

If Miss Logan can find leisure to create such admirable plays as The Felon's Daughter she can give up enacting the

Jan. 23, 1865.
stereotyped routine of stage heroines and an enduring fame will be hers as an authoress.\textsuperscript{65}

While the Journal was elated at the literary talents of Miss Logan, her performances on the stage were a bit less exciting. Following her rendition of Lucretia Borgia on Saturday and Bulwer's Money on Monday, the Journal characterized her acting by saying that "barring a little tameness and a sameness of gesture which characterizes her every performance [it] was, on the whole, very fair."\textsuperscript{66}

Once again C. W. Gouldock and his daughter opened an engagement in Columbus and offered the same repertoire they had offered previously with the addition of The Merchant of Venice which was presented Tuesday, February 7. At this time the young lady who was, in time, to become the famous Clara Morris stirred the attention of the press which noted: "In speaking of the merits of the different members of the Opera House company we should not overlook Clara Morris. Her delivery and deportment on the stage were admirable."\textsuperscript{67} In addition to expressing high satisfaction with individual performances the local critics were greatly pleased with the general improvement of Columbus theatrical fare and again referred to the supremacy of the present company over that of previous weeks. However, when the Gouldock engagement closed on Saturday with a new play called Milky White, written by the author of The Chimney Corner, the reaction was not good:

We do not like the piece as a whole quite as well as The Chimney Corner; the last act is too much filled with minor plots to render it intelligible without the closest

\textsuperscript{66}Jan. 30, 1865

\textsuperscript{67}Feb. 7, 1865.
attention and is devoid of that beautiful simplicity and
truthfulness which has made The Chimney Corner one of the
most popular plays on the stage. 88

Another father-daughter team followed the closing of the Coul-
dock engagement when McKean Buchanan and his daughter Virginia played
Columbus for a week. Their single production was Macbeth with Mr.
Buchanan as Macbeth and his daughter as Lady Macbeth. Thereafter
Joseph Proctor played the Opera House beginning February 21 with
Virginius, Liberator of Rome, followed the next night by Othello. Mr.
Proctor was an actor well known throughout the country having appear-
ed many times as a star in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York.

The Opera House was dark on the Monday previous to these two
performances. Proctor had intended to open Monday, but the presence
of the Orphans' Home Concert at Naughton's Hall that same night caused
Proctor not only to postpone his opening but to offer his services in
the interests of the concert as well. His rendition of Marc Anthony's
speech over Caesar's body from Shakespeare's play was well received as
a part of the Orphans' Concert. Jack Cade, or The Kentish Rebellion
and Schiller's five-act tragedy, Robbers, completed Mr. Proctor's en-
gagement on Saturday, February 25.

For the next six weeks the Columbus theatrical fare was very
much a matter of routine with the usual run of popular plays which, by
this time, had become quite well known from frequent repetition
occasionally highlighted by the exceptional performance of a guest
artist. The press was dutifully responsive and made its daily com-
ments which soon became as routine as the plays upon which they were

88 The Ohio State Journal, Feb. 13, 1865.
written. The war was fast drawing to a close and public attention was centered upon the military and affairs of state. Theater crowds were likewise affected and varied from fairly good to poor. As for guest artists, Mr. Proctor remained for another week and was followed by Sally St. Clair with her husband, Charles Barras. Miss Kate Denin then held the stage from March 20 to the end of the month.

The Saturday performance of Cudjo's Cave (April 1) concluded Miss Denin's engagement along with that of her husband, Sam Ryan, who had been starring in the accompanying farces. The season was drawing to a close for Ellsler's company and the remaining days were given over to benefits for members of the company. On April 4, the day Union troops captured Richmond, the spectacle drama, Greek Slave, was presented by the entire company. Either the celebration of Richmond's capture or indifference to the spectacle drama caused the piece to be withdrawn after one performance.69

Lincoln's assassination.—When John Ellsler announced the opening performance of Alladin or The Wonderful Lamp for Monday, April 10, 1865, the country was rejoicing in news of much greater significance—the surrender of General Robert E. Lee. Before the week was out, however, rejoicing was to turn to extreme sorrow for it was on the following Saturday that President Lincoln was shot while witnessing a performance of Our American Cousin in Ford's Theater, Washington, D. C. The first assassination of an American president was made even more terrible to the company at the Columbus Opera House by the fact that the

69 Ibid., April 5, 1865.
perpetrator was a fellow-actor who had also been a business partner of John Ellsler.

The entire company knew well John Wilkes Booth. Clara Morris, who was playing under Ellsler at the time, recounts hearing the news and its effect on the company:

That was an awful time when the dread news came to us. We were in Columbus. We had been horrified by the great crime in Washington. My room-mate and I had from our small earnings bought some black cotton... and as we tacked it about our one window, a man, passing, told us the assassin had been discovered and that it was the actor Booth. Hattie laughed so she nearly swallowed the tack that she held between her lips, and I, after a laugh, told him it was a poor subject for a jest, and we went in. There was no store in Columbus then where playbooks were sold, and as Mr. Ellsler had a very large and complete library, he frequently lent his books to us, and we would copy out our lines and return the book for his own use. On that occasion he was going to study his part first and then leave the play with us as he passed going home. We heard his knock; I was busy pressing a bit of stage finery. Hattie opened the door, and then I heard her exclaiming: "Why--why--what?" I turned quickly. Mr. Ellsler was coming slowly into the room... He sank down, he wiped his brow, he looked almost stupidly at me, then very faintly, he said: "You--haven't--heard--anything?"

Like a flash Hattie's eyes and mine met; we thought of the supposedly ill-timed jest of the stranger--my lips moved wordlessly. Hattie stammered: "A man, he lied though, said that Wilkes Booth--but he did lie--didn't he?" And in the same faint voice Mr. Ellsler answered slowly: "No--no! He did not lie--it's too true!"... Then, while standing there, staring into space, I heard his far, faint voice saying: "So great, so good a man destroyed, and by the hand of that unhappy boy! My God! My God!" He wiped his brow again and slowly left the house, apparently unconscious of our presence.

When the story of Booth became generally known there was fear among the police and the acting company that an outbreak of mob feeling might result in a demonstration against the theater or against the

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70Morris, op. cit., p. 104.
actors themselves. Mr. Ellsler, especially, was not exempt from this possibility as his business associations on a personal basis were known by others and there was the possibility someone might attempt to link Mr. Ellsler with the crime, absurd as the idea might be. A mass-meeting was called and held in front of the capitol, but the company was urged by Mr. Ellsler to keep clear of it lest their presence arouse some ill feeling.

The crowd was immense . . . the people surged like waves about the speaker's stand and the policemen glanced anxiously toward the new theater, not far away, and prayed that some bombastic, revengeful ruffian might not crop up from this mixed crowd of excited humanity to stir them to violence.

Three speakers, however, had confined themselves to eulogizing the great dead . . . And then an unknown man clambered up from the crowd to the platform and began to speak without asking anyone's permission . . .

"Here's the fellow to look out for!" said the policeman and, sure enough, suddenly the dread word "theater" was tossed into the air, and everyone was still in a moment, waiting for--what? I don't know what they hoped for, I do know what many feared, but this is what he said: "Yes, look over at our theater and think of the little body of men and women there who are today sore-hearted and cast down, who feel that they are looked at askant because one of their number has committed that hideous crime! Think of what they have to bear of shame and horror, and spare for them, too, a little pity.

He paused; it had been a bold thing to do--to appeal for consideration for actors at such a time. The crowd swayed for a moment to and fro, a curious growling came from it, and then all heads turned toward the theater. A faint cheer was given, and after that there was not the slightest allusion made to us--and verily we were grateful. 71

The performance of Alladin.--It would be most trite at this point to say that "in the true spirit of the theater the show went on," yet the records show that the performance of Alladin first given on Monday

71 Ibid., p. 107.
of that week was repeated for a total of eleven performances. It is likely that this acting version was Ellsler's own adaptation from the Arabian Nights Story which he had completed for stage presentation back in the 1850's. The Journal described it as a "monster spectacle... with most brilliant scenery, wonderful mechanical effects, gorgeous Chinese costumes, costly stage properties, unparalleled pyrotechnic illuminations, comic and fancy dancers, terrific combats, beautiful and startling tableaux, with a thousand and one wonders and surprises too lengthy for detail." The spectacle had been performed four weeks in Cleveland by the Ellsler troupe.

The Columbus press received the play with enthusiasm and, except for Mr. Evans, complimented the energetic company on its elaborate production. Mr. Evans was advised by the Journal to pay more attention to his make-up "which is by no means perfect" and to avoid a harsh guttural enunciation which was labeled "unnatural and disagreeable."

It was manager Ellsler's intention to inaugurate a program of matinees to be presented every Wednesday hereafter, but on the occasion of this particular bill, the matinee was postponed until Saturday for the benefit of the school children. However, the matinee for Saturday was again postponed when the news of Lincoln's death reached the grieving city. Finally, on Saturday, April 22, the Ellsler company closed its season in Columbus with a benefit for its manager and the performance of a comedy written by Mrs. Sydney Bateman called Self starring John Ellsler. A feature of the program was "The Last Charge," a poem read

72 April 15, 1865.

73 April 13, 1865.
by Mr. Evans and written about Mr. Ellsler's brother, killed in action.

With the departure of John Ellsler the Opera House was leased by an English opera troupe which performed there until the end of the month when the building was again consigned to legitimate drama, this time under the management of Kent and Weaver.74 The man identified as Kent was, in all probability, F. L. Kent who had been a member of the McFarland troupe which played Columbus just prior to Ellsler's recent occupancy. The stars of the new Opera House company were Miss Mollie Williams and Felix A. Vincent who commenced their engagement May 1 with Heir At Law and Jenny Lind. Mr. Vincent was not new either to Ohio or to Columbus as he had been a co-manager with Ellsler less than ten years ago in Cleveland when, after four years, he withdrew to join Laura Keene's Theater in New York. Little is known of Miss Williams except through her professional association with Mr. Vincent.75

The engagement was a very unimpressive one for reasons never made entirely clear by the critics. Reviews were not severely critical but were obviously quite indifferent in their tone, especially when compared to those given the Ellsler troupe. The Journal summarized the circumstances in a non-committal fashion when it remarked in the May 15 issue: "On Saturday night Miss Mollie Williams and Mr. Felix Vincent terminated their engagement which has not been, we believe, over and above remunerative to either the stars or the management."

The struggling company did get a partial lift from Miss Tyson who re-

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74 Ibid., May 1, 1865.
75 T. Allston Brown, op. cit., p. 368.
turned to Columbus and performed admirably in *East Lynne* which was so acknowledged by the papers, after which she rendered *Old Heads and Young Hearts* and *Self Made* with the assistance of Mr. Weaver and Mr. Kent. *Nick O' The Woods* was a Saturday benefit for Miss Tyson with the assistance of Mr. Ed Lacy who is identified only as a volunteer for this performance. His acting was passable, but there was criticism of the company as a whole reflecting the primary weakness of the present Opera House company:

The members of the company were, with the exception of Mr. Kent and Mr. Weaver and two or three of the ladies, not sufficiently well up in their parts, a lamentable deficiency that we have noticed on more than one occasion—to entitle them to even brief mention. 76

This same issue of the *Journal* announced the reopening of the Atheneum under the management of S. N. Pike, manager of Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati, who had been bringing his company to Columbus at intervals for several years. The Pike Company included the following names publicized in the *Journal* of May 22:

- H. A. Langdon
- W. C. Sheridan
- M. Lanagan
- T. D. Radcliffe
- J. Radcliffe
- J. G. Wilson
- Mrs. Annie S. Langdon
- Miss Kate Singleton
- Misses A. & J. Benedict
- Miss Kate Edwards
- Miss C. Mansfield
- Miss C. Isner
- B. Hale
- G. W. Garrison
- C. T. Murphy
- E. A. Beachy
- H. Howard
- H. Wood
- Mrs. L. Barry
- Miss M. Andresy
- Mrs. Benedict
- Misses A. & L. Maling
- Miss J. Bashaw
- Lady of Lyons, starring H. A. Langdon and his wife Annie, was the Pike company's opening production followed by Tobin's comedy, *Honey*
Moon, and the farcical Two Buzzards on Tuesday. At the same time Miss Tyson starred first in Camille and then in East Lynne at the Opera House to begin the first instance of competitive legitimate theater in Columbus since the city first possessed professional theaters. The Octoroon was the subsequent attraction at the Opera House lasting out the week while Evadne or The Statue, The Serious Family, and Ticket of Leave Man finished out the same week for the Atheneum players.

The engagement of Lotta Crabtree.--At this time the Opera House troupe was successful in booking Miss Lotta for an engagement of ten nights. Her appearance in Columbus gave a tremendous lift to the city's theater for she was unquestionably one of the most capable and popular actresses of this era. Her real name was Charlotte Crabtree, Charlotte being reduced to "Lotta" which eventually became her billing—Miss Lotta. She was from New York City, but with her parents she went to California when only six years old and made a debut there as a vocalist two years later. Miss Lotta first played New York City in 1864, but due largely to the poor facilities at her disposal she failed to make a good impression and so left on a tour through the mid-west which, in those days, was Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. This tour is what may have brought her to Columbus on May 30, 1865, where she opened with a performance of An Old Trick and Nan, The Good For Nothing.

Miss Lotta was highly praised by both the Journal and the Statesman as a talented and exciting little actress. Up to this time, however, there had been a slight tendency on the part of the press to favor the Atheneum troupe under S. N. Pike. On May 31, the Journal
openly raised the question as to why the Atheneum was so poorly patronized despite performances which appeared superior in quality:

For some cause or other the troupe now performing at the Atheneum does not draw as full houses as their artistic merits deserve. Certainly no company that has ever visited this city has been more complete or has given more universal satisfaction than this one and yet they are compelled to play to empty benches.

It must not necessarily be concluded from this lament that Columbus theater patrons were going to the Opera House. In truth, there was a low attendance generally at this time. If the press notices over the past three months were accurate, the company performing at the Opera House had been suffering in quality for some time and the improved fare now at the Atheneum should have sparked an increase in theater attendance there. The increase, however, was not forthcoming. Meanwhile, the publicity value of Miss Lotta was sufficient to draw most of the potential Columbus audience to the Opera House where, on Wednesday, the actress was playing Pas de Fascination and Family Jars. At the Atheneum the company continued to play Ticket of Leave Man to the end of the week when the company withdrew.

Uncle Tom's Cabin opened Monday of the following week with Miss Lotta as Topsy and Little Marian Smith as Eva. During this production a major change in lighting technique was effected and was noted by the Journal: "We noticed a great improvement in the lights on the stage, they having been changed from the side to the borders overhead." The week was finished out with a performance of Lola Montez, a comedy; Loan of A Lover, on the occasion of Miss Lotta's benefit Friday, and on

77 June 6, 1865.
Saturday a triple feature including *The Old Guard*; *The Omnibus*, and a musical interlude called *Jenny Lind*, a mild burlesque of the famous songstress brought to this country by P. T. Barnum.

The next two weeks at the Opera House were quite average with the usual plays being repeated at frequent intervals. During this time Columbus saw the introduction of the new play *Lord Dundreary In Scotland*, billed by the papers as a musical drama. It was well received and was labeled far superior to *Our American Cousin* wherein Lord Dundreary had originated. The final week of the season featured guest artists Stella Mason and Sidney Smith who played the regular fare with the company until its close on Saturday, July 8, 1865.

Summary

Any summary of the past season's theatrical activities would list the opening of the Columbus Opera House on September 8 as the most significant event. Perhaps from this event alone may be traced a large portion of the management and operational problems that were to beset Columbus theater for the next decade for it was not many seasons after the opening of this theater that it became obvious Columbus could not adequately support two first-class theaters. Presumably the spirit of commercial enterprise and competitive business played a large part in bringing the new theater into being where foresight might have revealed more clearly the risk being taken. Nevertheless, the rather small melon of theater patronage now had to be divided and both recipients would find his share too small.

Considering the fact that the entire nation was wrapped up in the final phases of the war, the surrender of Lee, and the assas-
sination of Lincoln, the theater in Columbus fared pretty well. There were twenty guest appearances of popular artists—one more than the previous year—and the public was treated to Alladin, an Ellsler spectacular which ran eleven performances, a record for a Columbus play. Technically speaking, progress was made in stage lighting when lights were removed from the sides of the proscenium and placed in the borders to create a more natural light source. The plays being presented were very much the same as those of the previous season and the crowds fluctuated according to the identity of the guest star with the exception, perhaps, of Alladin and the undetermined influences of political and military events as mentioned.
CHAPTER VI

THE POST-WAR PERIOD

The Season of 1865-1866

Operational problems.--The decision to close the 1864-65 season in Columbus with the closing of the Kent-Weaver management of the Opera House July 8 was an arbitrary one. For the first time in Columbus history a concerted attempt was made to maintain an active theater through the summer. This attempt was not a premeditated plan, but rather the result of a sequence of managers who held forth at one theater or the other as long as it was financially feasible before giving way to a successor. It is a personal opinion that the series of managerships appearing throughout the summer was not the result of a desire to take advantage of a profitable location, but most likely was the result of confidence on the part of each manager that he could do better than his not-so-successful predecessor in a city that surely ought to be more receptive to theater than the predecessor's fortunes seemed to indicate. On this point their reasoning was quite rational, but somehow fact was not in line with theory in this instance. The problem of not enough heat in the winter (solved for the most part) now became a matter of too much heat in the summer. Air conditioning was still decades away, but managers were willing to try their luck on such simple remedies as were available. As early as June 7 the windows were
removed from the Opera House in an attempt to assure a cool and pleasant breeze. Later cool liquid refreshment was made available to those who desired it.

The Atheneum was re-opened July 11 with the Ellsler company (or at least Ellsler management) and with Harry Ellsler as treasurer. Guest artists were the Martinelli Troupe, a pantomime and acrobatic aggregation which had previously appeared with Ellsler's company. Managers Kent and Weaver, who had closed the Opera House less than two weeks ago, engaged the place for a one-night stand on Thursday, July 13, to play The Iron Chest with Josephine Tyson and Ed Lacy; A Day In Paris, featuring Mollie Williams in six parts, and A Bull In A China Shop with W. S. Forrest and Miss Williams. Mr. Forrest's role was listed as "Old Delph" which was the name of one of his very successful interpretations in Family Jars suggesting that the present play may have been that piece under a new name. The papers made no announcement of this program nor any comment upon it thereafter. On Monday next, the Opera House was under the management of R. Johnston & Company and offered Fanchon with Miss Nellie Grover in the title role. But the drawing card that week was an appearance of Charles S. Bernard, the Great Fire King, and his "Salamandar Supper" wherein he was advertised as eating burning coals of fire and other bizarre items.

Miss Grover continued playing at the Opera House that week offering Robert Emmet, Martyr of Irish Liberty on Wednesday followed by Ireland As It Was, then Irish Assurance with Irish Lion offered Friday.

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1The Ohio State Journal, June 7, 1865.
2Ibid., July 24, 1865.
The surge of Irish patriotism and the activity of the Fenians was having an increased effect upon theatrical fare as is evidenced by these Irish plays and others which were popular for several years.

Sam Lathrop's Operatic and Dramatic Troupe engaged the Atheneum Tuesday, July 25, and opened with The Chimney Corner but without the venerable C. W. Couldock which must have rendered the piece a novelty. James M. Cooke played the part of Peter Proby so often played by Couldock. The Chimney Corner remained through Thursday and on Friday the Journal came out with a cryptical comment that was not complimentary in any sense:

The audience at the Atheneum last night was very light and so was the performance. With the exception of the management, the stars, the stock company, and the orchestra, the Variety show now exhibiting at the Old Drury is brilliant.3

The writer left little which he considered creditable and his reference to variety could have meant the acrobatics of the Martinelli Troupe, the interim entertainment, or possibly the sarcastic description of a would-be legitimate drama.

Again Uncle Tom's Cabin was offered to the Columbus public (August 7, 1865) and once more Little Marian Smith played Eva. The Count of Monte Cristo followed on Wednesday and Thursday featuring Robert Johnston, Nellie Grover, Marian Smith, and C. T. Smith, Marian's father and one-time manager in Columbus back in 1861. The Journal was generous in its praise of the play and stated that not since Alladin had the public been treated to such a display of tableaux and attrac-

3Ibid., July 28, 1865.
tive scenery as was shown in this production. Marian Smith received a benefit Friday night playing Julia in the temperance piece Ten Nights In A Bar Room which was repeated Saturday. Meanwhile, by choice or necessity, the Atheneum closed on July 29 and remained unoccupied by a dramatic troupe until August 28. The week of August 21 was the last week for the Johnston entourage.

Did the Johnston Company at the Opera House complete its engagement and withdraw according to schedule, or did it fear the competition of the regular Ellsler company opening the next week at the Atheneum? Did Ellsler hold off until the Johnston company closed or did he simply lease the Atheneum at the end of August for the regular fall season as was his custom? These are questions of management which can never be answered but which hint to a condition Columbus managers were reluctant to acknowledge for some years—the city was not large enough in population or theatrical interest to maintain two full-scale theaters.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Henry IV was the attraction with which John Ellsler's company opened the Atheneum on August 28 starring the Shakespearean personator, James Hackett, in the role of Falstaff. The performance was repeated on Tuesday, while Merry Wives of Windsor on Wednesday again played Hackett in the character of Falstaff. Mr. Hackett apparently was not engaged for the full week for his final appearance was Thursday in Monsieur Mallet or The Post Office Mistake with no evidence of even a benefit, an unusual arrangement for so prominent a star.

The Journal was especially pleased with the performances of
Mr. Edwin Irving who had been engaged as first comedian to replace James Lewis who, by this time, probably went on to New York. Mr. Lewis' departure from the Columbus troupe was a great loss in the eyes of the public, but if the *Journal* was correct, Mr. Irving was making remarkable progress in filling the shoes of Lewis:

Mr. Edwin Irving, following as he does in the wake of Jimmy Lewis, the most popular comedian that ever appeared in this or any other city in the west has, . . . an uphill road to travel, but from the talent already displayed by this gentleman he bids fair to succeed the old favorite in the esteem of the habitues of the Atheneum as near as 'tis possible for a stranger to do.\(^4\)

A play written by Lester Wallack called *Rosedale* or *The Rifle Shot* brought the actor Lawrence Barrett before Atheneum patrons on September 4 in the character of Elliott Grey. Mr. Barrett was one of many actors who joined the Colors at the outbreak of the war and distinguished himself on the battlefield. For several seasons prior to hostilities he had played leading man at the Howard Atheneum and Museum in Boston. Clara Morris describes Barrett's behavior on stage:

Mr. Barrett was wrapped up, soul and body, in the proper production of the play at hand. He was keenly observant and he was sensitive. When an actor had his mind fixed upon a smoke or a glass of beer and cared not one Continental dollar whether the play failed or succeeded so long as he got his "twenty dollars per--", Mr. Barrett knew it and became dictatorial in his efforts to force the man into doing his work properly.\(^5\)

*Rosedale* played until Friday when *Merchant of Venice* featured Barrett as the famous money lender. This was Barrett's final appearance. Meanwhile F. L. Kent and Mr. Warden returned to the Opera House


\(^5\) *Morris, op. cit.*, p. 211.
and, featuring Harry Seymour, began a series of plays among which were Richard III; The Hunchback of Notre Dame, and Courier of Lyons. The week of September 11 to September 16 was the final week for Mr. Els­
ler's company at the Atheneum with Joseph Nagle of the company starring in all performances which began Saturday with Schiller's Robbers. A drama entitled Dream at Sea, offered Monday, was followed by Ticket of Leave Man which remained on the boards until Friday when it gave way to Ocean Child as the closing production.

The press notices announced for Monday, September 18, the appearance of Miss Mary Gladstone and W. H. Leak who were to open at the Opera House in a play with the non-committal title, Love. Their performance did not materialize, however, and the Journal briefly announced the next day that "Gladstone and Leak failed to appear for an unknown reason and unspecified plays were substituted." But the Opera House carried on with presentations by the company beginning with a French drama Isabelle, staged Tuesday and Wednesday, and a military drama called The Veteran's Return on Thursday along with The Soldier's Daughter as the comedy.

The engagement of Kitty Blanchard from September 22, 1865, to the last day of the month brought nothing new to Columbus audiences, but rather a repetition of the most traditional and overworked plays which had appeared there over the past decade. Nevertheless, four days later the Journal remarked that "a crowded house testified their appreciation of the splendid acting of Miss Blanchard last evening as 'Capitola' in

6The Ohio State Journal, Sept. 19, 1865.
"The Hidden Hand." The Lady has already become one of the greatest favorites that has yet visited us."7

The last time Christine Zavistowski appeared on the Columbus stage she was embroiled in a financial dispute with the manager who engaged her which greatly abbreviated her benefit and closed the theater for the season to say nothing of the fine for assault and battery which she sustained.8 She and her ballet and dramatic troupe were now playing the Opera House under F. L. Kent's management and The French Spy was their opening performance October 2. The next night was to be a great occasion for cast and audience as Ulysses S. Grant, the hero of Appomatox, was expected to be present along with members of his staff. The auditorium was to be beautifully decorated with colors and a huge banner bearing the greeting "Hail to the Chief" appropriately hung therein. Dumb Girl of Genoa was the piece, featuring Mlle. Christine, and the event was to be started with a Grand National Medley Overture. Interestingly enough, the papers of the following day failed to report either their joy in the general's presence or their disappointment at his absence.

A change of pace was in store for Opera House audiences the following week marked by a return to the classical drama and the performances of Mrs. Emma Waller. Mrs. Waller began with a character in which she excelled--that of Meg Merilles in Guy Mannering. The following night (October 10) Naomi, The Deserted was offered after which Kotzebue's The Stranger occupied the stage with Josephine Tyson supporting

7 Ibid., Sept. 26, 1865.
8 Supra., p. 123.
Mrs. Waller. On Thursday the audience was treated to one of Mrs. Waller's Shakespearean portrayals—male of course—that of Romeo:

The performance of Romeo and Juliet last evening proved that Mrs. Waller is one of the very few ladies who can successfully assume a male character. That of Romeo is of a different nature and yet we were totally unable to detect the slightest point in which its impersonation could be bettered and it is an exceedingly rare thing to see her representation equalled even by the most prominent actors of the profession.9

Following her benefit performance of Duchess of Malfi, the Journal exalted her abilities far above the regular fare that had been seen in Columbus:

"The Duchess of Malfi" presented last evening at the Opera House . . . was the best and only artistic dramatic performance, the rendition of Hackett and Barrett excepted, that has been given in the city of Columbus for twelve months.

It was too great a contrast with puerile and feeble attempts at acting which we are nightly called upon to notice that our descriptive powers are inadequate to do the play justice.10

Three years had passed since Columbus last saw the Webb Sisters and their engagement October 17 was a cause for some delight. The two sisters opened with a performance of Fanchon with Miss Ada playing the title role and Miss Emma as Mother Fadet. There followed two weeks of comedy and protean farce interspersed with dance and witticism after the Webb tradition.

The successful run of the Webb Sisters was succeeded by another-

9The Ohio State Journal, Oct. 13, 1865.
10Oct. 14, 1865.
er Columbus favorite, Lotta Crabtree, who began a series of performances Monday, October 30. The Journal critic remarked as follows:

There must be something very attractive about an actress who can draw together such an audience as was congregated at the Opera House last night. All the youth, beauty, and intelligence that could find sitting room assembled in this pleasant place of amusement to witness Lotta, the "Gem" in her comical dances, songs and transformations. It is needless to attempt a criticism of this petite artist's performances. Though there are numerous opportunities in the line of characters which she assumes for improvement such is her happy manner, her wayward, rollicking, artless movements and gestures that all thought of regret or censure is lost in admiration for a mere child who, by her energetic renditions, entrances and delights, overwhelms audiences night after night.

Said the Journal on November 2:

If Miss Lotta's previous representations called forth showers of applause, the demonstrations last night were violent storms compared with those that have heretofore greeted her. In everything she does, even to the slightest look or deed, is provocation of laughter.

What was billed as a new version of Uncle Tom's Cabin, with Miss Lotta as Topsy, was presented on Friday for her scheduled benefit. The play was offered in lieu of The Seven Sisters of Satan previously advertised, but, owing to the non-arrival of the necessary scenery, "the daughters" had to be postponed. The big spectacle was finally readied for Monday, November 5, with Miss Lotta playing the part of Tartarine. The production was described as possessing magnificent scenery, superb costumes, brilliant music, and wonderful mechanisms replete with a Grand March, dances and choruses including the last grand scene of "The Birth of Cupid in The Bower of Ferns," all produced at an immense outlay of money. The setting included mirrors of plate glass which were used to form a lake of silver, and
moving fairy cars were shown—all to conclude with a magnificent shower of gold. Thus was the production described by the Journal.\textsuperscript{11}

Actually, this occasion was the second production of The Seven Sisters which had been presented February 2, 1863 by John Ellsler. In that instance the opening had to be delayed because of the time necessary to set up the stage and the production was described in glittering terms synonymous with those referring to the present performance. The climactic scene was modified somewhat to feature the "Birth of Cupid," whereas Ellsler's production in 1863 had advertised "The Birth of the Butterfly in the Bower of Ferns." The enthusiasm for the current production caused the Journal reporter to state that it was "... having the most successful run of any play put upon a Columbus stage within the past five years."\textsuperscript{12} If a "successful run" is judged by the number of performances, Ellsler's presentation three years ago ran nine consecutive nights while the present show ran but seven, a fact which likely escaped the Journal writer in his unbounded enthusiasm.

Saturday night was the last for the grand spectacle and on Monday Miss Lotta took her benefit with Andy Blake and a protean farce calling for her talents in seven parts. Meanwhile Messrs Kent and Marden were terminating their occupancy of the Opera House and forming a co-partnership with Mr. Ellsler to open in Meadville, Pennsylvania, on November 20 with Miss Lotta as the star. Concurrently Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean were to commence an engagement of four nights at the Athenaeum on November 20 for which Mr. Ellsler was giving that building a

\textsuperscript{11}Nov. 5, 1865.

\textsuperscript{12}Nov. 11, 1865.
refitting. In addition to other improvements, the parquette would be re-seated with cane-bottomed chairs and the dress circle equipped with cushioned seats to render that theater as comfortable as the Opera House. This latter edifice, at the close of Manager Kent's activities, was given over to Italian Grand Opera for the remainder of the month.

When the Keans began their engagement on November 20 they chose *The Merchant of Venice* with Mr. Kean as Shylock and his wife as Portia. Prices were raised for this engagement likely because of the cost of engaging players of such caliber as the Keans, but, possibly also, because of the recent expense of refitting the theater. Parquet seats were raised to one dollar with reserved seats at $1.50. The Family Circle was advertised at seventy-five cents. The *Journal* described the performance of Mrs. Kean as most interesting:

Mrs. Kean, as Portia, at first did not meet the expectations because, perhaps, she was to enact simply a woman which she did so naturally that the spectators forgot she was on the stage. But when she came to the powerful parts of the drama where the woman develops into the heroine, the sentiment changed at once and all were convinced that the laurels so well earned in England and America in times gone by were still worthily won.¹³

The Keans played *Hamlet* the next night with Kean in the title role and his wife playing the Queen. The reviews mentioned an occasional weakness in enunciation on the part of Kean while a Miss Chapman, in the part of Ophelia, was described as "very unimpressive." A small crowd witnessed *Louis XI*, a Boucicault adaptation, Wednesday night and, again, the unlucky Miss Chapman was scored for rendering the Dauphin as "anything but forceful or pleasing." The concluding

¹³Nov. 21, 1865.
performance of the Kean engagement on Thursday was a benefit for Mr. Kean who appeared as Cardinal Wolsey in a portion of *Henry VIII*. Friday and Saturday were given over to stock company productions after which the company returned to Cleveland and the Academy of Music.

Monday, November 27, was marked by the re-opening of the Opera House under the management of R. Johnston who had managed there last April and again Nellie Grover was his featured player. Audiences were not good, however; and the press lamented this fact claiming that "the audiences in attendance at the Opera House are by no means as large as the merits of the performances nightly given by the present efficient company deserve."\(^{11}\)

Mme. Marie Methua Scheller was to join the Johnston company on December 11, but failed to appear in time and farces were substituted for her intended program. Mme. Scheller made her initial appearance on Tuesday in *The Pearl of Savoy* and played Wednesday in *Lady of Lyons*. Marie Scheller, a German actress, made her American debut at the Old Stadt Theater, New York, in 1858 and, after a short retirement, she starred in the Boston Theater in 1864 in *Lorlie*. It was this same play Mme. Scheller chose for her benefit Friday night. *Romeo and Juliet* was played on Saturday, but the performance drew criticism on the grounds that the supporting company lacked the strength to adequately render classical plays. Other weaknesses drew the attention of the *Journal* critic:

There were several serious flaws in the performance last Saturday. Some of the actors were not fully up in their parts and during the balcony scene the broad gas-

\(^{11}\)The *Ohio State Journal*, November 30, 1865.
light was very much out of place when Juliet was constantly talking of the night.\textsuperscript{15}

Lucretia Borgia once more made a bid for Columbus favor when, on December 19, Mrs. H. A. Perry was guest star. Mrs. Perry was the second wife of the talented actor Harry A. Perry who, unfortunately, was so given to drink that he destroyed a promising career when he died only a year after marrying Agnes Land Rookes, the actress presently at the Opera House.\textsuperscript{16}

Mrs. Perry's second offering at the Opera House was The Stranger followed that same night by The French Spy in which Mlle. Lissette Bernardo, as a guest star, played Mathilde. The French Spy was repeated on Thursday following Fazio, The Italian Wife with Mrs. Perry as Bianca. Said the Journal on December 21:

Mrs. Perry is receiving fair support from the company, but were all the artists at this establishment as thorough in their personations as are Messrs. Johnston, Turner and Hutchinson and the Misses Grover and Howland, the performances would be far more satisfactory to both the star and the public.

Mrs. Perry took a benefit Friday playing Black-Eyed Susan sustained by Johnston and Miss Grover, and Saturday she concluded her engagement with La Tour De Nesle, an historical drama from Alexander Dumas.

The Christmas Day feature which carried through New Year's Day was a spectacle drama entitled Satan's Page or Beelzebub On Earth. Miss Bernard was starred as Millie, Nellie Grover as Lillian, and J. B. Turner played Beelzebub. The piece was definitely of the sensation school, full of improbabilities and without plot or literary merit.

\textsuperscript{15} Dec. 18, 1865.

\textsuperscript{16} T. Allston Brown, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 286.
However, it was placed upon the stage with great care and expense technically speaking. The Journal, nevertheless, was not impressed with some of the parts and remarked that "Miss Bernard does the "Page" acceptably though the cast had been more effective were Miss Grover substituted in her stead and Miss Bernard assigned the role now personated by Miss Grover." That very day the Journal loosed some caustic remarks which well evidenced the writer's disdain for the current bill:

"Beelzebub on Earth" at the Opera House is blessed to an extra-ordinary degree with the gift of continuance. Whether Beelzebub likes the people or the people admire Beelzebub we cannot determine. Certain it is the spectacular and sensational are the rage at the Opera House. "Satan's Page" was played to a fair house Saturday evening and it is to be repeated tonight with "Jack Sheppard" as an accompaniment. Miss Nellie Grover is to take the part of the "Page," but this cannot redeem the drama. It is to be hoped that both "Beelzebub" and "Jack Sheppard" will be presented tonight for the last time on our boards.

With the holiday specialty completed, the Opera House company settled down to a quieter program, perhaps too quiet judging from the week's bill. Miss Kitty Blanchard, who had played Columbus in September was the guest artist and the young actress presented an almost identical bill to what she had offered in September. Yet it seemed the public was quite satisfied and the Journal welcomed the change from the previous engagement. However, Wednesday's performance of The Hidden Hand fell short of expectations where the supporting talent was concerned and the reviews were quick to point it out:

Mr. Jackson, who has evidently mistaken his calling, was moderately good as Wool. We cannot, in truth, say as much in

17 Dec. 28, 1865
18 Jan. 1, 1866
favor of Morgan and Mortimer who were never known to do or say anything even passively tolerable. Most of the other minor characters were acceptable.19

The next day, following The Market Girl, the Journal continued:

Mr. Jackson did Tom very fairly, but Harry fared badly in Mr. Morgan's hands, who spoke the words as if they were red hot and scorched his palate as he gave them vent. We missed the manly figure of Mr. Mortimer last evening and sincerely trust that he has abandoned a profession for which he has no capacity and which will certainly suffer not by the loss.20

Miss Kate Fisher was another popular actress who specialized in equestrian drama and brought the old favorite Mazeppa back to the Columbus stage. Her initial performance at the Opera House on January 8 occasioned her playing a total of nine characters in the comedy Three Fast Men which was repeated the next night. For the remainder of the week she played Mazeppa to fair houses and featured her trained horse Wonder. During this same week the Atheneum was reopened by the John Ellsler Company from Cleveland which presented John E. McDonough, reputable New York actor, and Sophie Kuhn as guest artists in the Boucicault play Arrah-Na-Pogue which ran the entire week. The performances were commendable, less a few technical oversights on opening night which were picked up by the Journal review:

Mr. McDonough both plays and sings well. One thing occurs to us in this connection: when a fire is lit for the express purpose of enabling Shaun to read his note wouldn't it be well to read the note at the fire? If Shaun would try the experiment before a campfire he will find the horizontal position best, but perhaps Shaun is not responsible for this. Stage directors are somewhat arbitrary.21

19Jan. 4, 1866.
20Jan. 5, 1866.
21Jan. 11, 1866.
The Thursday performance of Boucicault's drama was nicely done and the reviewers hastened to say that all supporting players did well, that is with the exception of Jackson and Morgan:

The former attempted Rudzloff and made nothing of the part. It was neither good, bad, nor indifferent and, as nothing, we pass it without further remark. But of all the butchery without blood genuine playing alive that we ever saw or heard of, the execution by Mr. Morgan of the Castillian last evening eclipsed all. Without any ill will towards the unfortunate owner of a voice that would sicken an itinerant vendor of clams and throw a haut-boy into convulsions in truth we only commiserate the unfortunate young man we do most emphatically protest in behalf of the public against that cracked, inharmonious, uncertain, heart-rending, and ear-piercing voice.22

An error in printing gave the Journal one more opportunity to castigate the hapless Morgan:

We owe Mr. Morgan an apology. In our notice of Thursday evening's performance we wrote "but of all the butchery in cold blood, genuine playing alive we ever saw or heard, the execution by Mr. Morgan of the Castillian eclipsed all." Instead of which the printers made us say, "but of all the butchery without blood, genuine playing alive." We hasten to make the correction for as the sentence read it was nearly as insipid and unintelligible as was Mr. Morgan's acting and articulation.23

The week following, Edwin Forrest, described by Brown as "the greatest of living tragedians and exponents of Shakespeare," was engaged by the Opera House. His initial presentation was Sheridan Knowles' Virginius which was followed by Othello and then Richelieu on Thursday with King Lear Friday. Forrest had brought his own company to support him although it was augmented by the resident troupe, Mr. Johnston and Miss Grover assuming significant roles in each piece.

22Jan. 12, 1866.

23Jan. 13, 1866.
However, the supporting players were not what Columbus was expecting in the retinue of so eminent an artist. Both papers cried aloud against what they considered an injustice to both star and audience. The Statesman expressed its disappointment therein on January 17 with its review of Othello:

Mr. Forrest's impersonation of Othello bore the impress of the genius as well as of the artist. It was utterly devoid of rant, froth, or fury. He tore no passion to rags and tatters, but in the midst of the wild storm, was a master of the tempest he had raised or that others had raised for him. Of the representations of Iago and the other subordinate characters by Mr. Forrest's supporters, we have nothing in particular to remark. Generally their impersonations were fair but did not, in our view, rise above what may be seen on almost any stage whenever Othello is played.

The Statesman's comments on Forrest's acting give strong evidence of an already prevailing disapproval of any tendency to "claw the scenery" an acting trait by which modern scholars like to identify even the very late nineteenth century acting. That much ranting and raving did prevail on the stage at this time cannot be denied, but it is an error to assume that it was universally accepted. Frequent comments by the press on this mode of acting strongly imply that it was falling into disfavor by mid-century and that its continued use was often demanded by a minority whose tastes seemed to dominate.24 These "Gods of the Gallery," as they are so often called by the press (and somewhat scornfully), apparently demanded a more "arty" style of acting over a realistic style and so this extremely oratorical mode continued. It is difficult to explain how a minority taste could so impose its will in the face of a majority preference at this time ex-

24 Supra., p. 125.
cept to fall back upon the most obvious explanation—"he who controls the purse-strings controls the policy."

Edwin Forrest's engagement at the Opera House did not help the attendance at the Atheneum that week where J. E. McDonough was performing in the Irish drama, Peep O' Day. On Thursday the Atheneum bill was changed to Jack Sheppard with the advertised attraction of "two Jacks." The practice of splitting a role between two popular actors, both appearing alternately in the same performance, was obviously a technical maneuver to draw crowds. While it was not what could be called common practice, it was done often enough to gain acceptance at this time. On benefit night McDonough returned to Arrah-Na-Pogue for what was his concluding performance with the Ellsler company.

The Atheneum began performances with a clear field the following week as the Opera House was given over to Zanfretta's Pantomime and Ballet Troupe, the Atheneum attraction being the opening of Uncle Tom's Cabin January 20. John Ellsler was playing Uncle Tom and with him was his small daughter, little Effie Ellsler, playing Eva. This role was one of the very first played by Miss Effie who was one day to earn a place for herself in the theater. It was in 1881 that she made a record run of 486 consecutive performances in Steele Mackaye's Hazel Kirke in which she created the title role of the poor milliner's daughter. With Miss Ellsler in the original cast of Mackaye's play were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Whiffen, C. W. Couldock, Frank Weston and Effie Ellsler's younger sister, Annie. Miss Effie played the role more than 1500 times.25

Joseph Proctor was introduced to Columbus audiences on January 22 by the Ellsler troupe in presentations of *Nick O' The Woods, Ambition*, and an Indian drama, *Outalanchet, Lion of the Forest*. Mr. Proctor's engagement was climaxed the next week with a sensation drama entitled *Never Too Late To Mend* which ran Monday through Wednesday starring Proctor and Mrs. Ellsler. Stock company productions with Joseph Nagle finished out the week while awaiting the new guest artist, Miss Emilie Melville, who opened Tuesday, February 6, in *Fanchon*. Full houses greeted Miss Melville's performances and she was engaged an additional week closing on February 17. On the second day of Miss Melville's performance, the *Statesman* remarked, "Miss Melville, whatever she may be in other characters, is as good a 'Fanchon' as Maggie Mitchell whom she closely resembles in face, figure and acting."

If there were those in Columbus who feared that C. W. Couldock and his daughter might have forgotten them this season, their fears were put to rest when the Couldocks opened on February 19. The regular Couldock repertoire was again offered, but on Tuesday of the second week the Couldocks introduced an entirely new play entitled *The Council of Ten*. The *Statesman* briefly summarized the nature of the play by saying, "The scene is played in Venice during the despotic reign of the famous Council of Ten and, of course, abounds in the thrilling and startling incidents so frequent at that period of history in the Venetian Republic."
The Journal, however, did not care for this particular selection:

There are but few pleasantries in "The Council of Ten." Though the dance affords some relief, people will admire the play for its power but will not recollect its scenes so vividly portrayed with pleasurable emotions. Excellent as the Couldocks may be in the portrayal of the sternest passions, the people would rather see them in their personations of those characters in which the animating principle is love instead of hate.28

Milky White was the feature Wednesday and Thursday, and on Friday, March 2, the Couldocks returned to the second of their most popular plays, The Chimney Corner. The previous performance of a play entitled Old Phil's Birthday, also offered for the first time, had delighted the audience and loomed as a strong competitor to The Chimney Corner for public affection, but the Journal settled the point on March 3 by remarking, "We cannot say more of Mr. Couldock's Peter Probity than that Old Phil, hitherto the great favorite during the engagement, was dethroned and Peter Probity crowned 'best of all'."

The Couldocks' concluding performance Saturday, March 3, was Jessie McLeine or Lost In London to which the papers were somewhat indifferent, though they acknowledged the public's enthusiastic reception which the press attributed more to the actors than to the play.

When Julia Daly opened at the Atheneum on March 6 she played the part of Pamella in Our American Cousin. The performance of this play was the first in Columbus since its unhappy association with the assassination of Lincoln on April 15, 1865, at Ford's New Theater in Washington, D. C. Its most recent showing in this city took place on January 2, 1865, with Laura Keene playing Lord Dundreary. In any event

28Feb. 28, 1866.
no reference was made to any of these facts in the Journal's account the following day, either by choice or failure to recall, the paper devoting its attention to Miss Daly as an actress. Miss Daly's husband, Sam Ryan, was also with the company and played to her support occasionally. His appearance, however, always meant a rush of Irish farces which served as afterpieces to Miss Daly's performances.

On March 12, the Opera House re-opened under the management of R. Johnston who had it under lease the last time it was a legitimate house and his guest artist was Kate Fisher who opened with Mazeppa while the bills announced the introduction of R. E. J. Miles' trained horse Minnehaha. The following night Miss Fisher was billed in Cataract of the Ganges, an equestrian piece introduced to Columbus for the first time and advertised as having a cataract of real water. Difficulties of a technical nature arose, however, and the opening performance was not up to the public expectations. The second night everything functioned satisfactorily. Thursday saw the return of Mazeppa with Putnam following on Friday for Miss Fisher's benefit. Saturday was an occasion for three pieces at the Opera House—Forty Thieves; Claude Duval, and Jack Sheppard—all with Miss Fisher and with Miles' trained horse. During that same week, the Atheneum starred

29 March 7, 1866.

30 This had to be a new horse since the original Minnehaha (Queen) had died of injuries during the 1863-64 season (Supra., p. 112) and another was used in a later appearance (Supra., p. 120).

31 The Ohio State Journal, March 11, 1866.

32 The use of Miles' animal encourages one to speculate over why Miss Fisher did not employ her own horse, Wonder, with which she had appeared here in January of this same year.
Julia Daly in *Female Detective*, *The Hidden Hand*, and *Our American Cousin*, the latter followed by Sam Ryan in *A Glance At New York*, the melodrama based on the rivalry of volunteer fire companies which, at that time, were not only fire fighters but also rude social and political forces.

March 19 was the date chosen by Mr. Elssler on which to once more overwhelm the public, and at the same time tax the descriptive powers of the local press, with the unveiling of a grand spectacle. In this instance it was *The Naiad Queen*, an extravaganza that used every member of the company to advantage and particularly featured Mrs. Elsler as the Queen with Mr. Elssler and Mr. Nagle in strong roles. *The Naiad Queen* played for a total of twelve nights to crowded houses surpassing the record Columbus run of eleven nights set by *Alladin* in March of 1865. At its final presentation on Saturday Mr. Elssler was given a complimentary benefit at which time the company concluded its season.

Whether the rival company at the Opera House had other professional reasons for closing out on the eve of *The Naiad Queen* or whether they simply did not care to meet the competition of Elssler's spectacle is a moot question. No undue criticism of the company should be forthcoming in either case, however, as there had been, and would continue to be, a mutual respect and cooperation among managers frequenting Columbus theaters as the press accounts plainly show. This circumstance should not imply managerial weakness or the absence of competitive spirit, however, which, on the contrary, was quite intense at times.
In any case, the Opera House was reopened on the Monday following the Ellsler extravaganza under the management of C. T. Smith, a man already known in the city as actor and previous manager. His stage manager was T. A. Dow who had been a member of the previous company and had starred, along with Kate Fisher, in the recent production of *Forty Thieves*. The company was basically the same as had been serving under Johnston; in fact, it included Johnston along with Nellie Grover, Marian Smith, J. W. Carter, H. Howland, and Mrs. Bradshaw with her daughter, Blanche, who had been with John Ellsler for so many seasons. It was Mrs. Bradshaw who befriended Clara Morris when the latter was an inexperienced beginner under Ellsler's management.\(^{33}\)

The opener at the Opera House was *East Lynne* featuring Miss Alice Gray and W. E. Sheridan, the latter a tragedian from Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati. Miss Gray was originally from Boston and was playing in Cincinnati from whence she came to Columbus. *Camille*, Kotzebue's *The Stranger*, and *Lucretia Borgia* were the dramatic highlights of Miss Gray's week in Columbus. The *Journal* complimented Miss Gray on her acting but not her choice of the play *Lucretia Borgia*, saying, "The character [Lucretia] is a masterpiece in its way, and much as we may condemn the play of such outrageous sentiments, we must admire the consummate skill of the actress in rendering one of the most difficult conceptions."\(^{34}\) Only fair-to-poor audiences were currently in attendance at the Opera House.


\(^{34}\) April 14, 1866.
Little Marian Smith appeared as Mary Morgan in the production of *Ten Nights In A Bar Room* Monday, April 16, and on Tuesday the company offered *Monte Cristo* as a spectacle drama. However spectacular the latter might have been that night, it was, nevertheless, replaced the next night by *Jocrisse, The Juggler* followed by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Nellie Grover and R. Johnston starring in both pieces. The reviews spoke well of the principals in *Jocrisse* but lamented the fact that some of the potentially effective scenes were spoiled by the awkwardness or incapability of the players. The audience, according to the *Journal*, felt that some of the players were intoxicated, an idea which did not heighten its pleasure.

Emilie Melville made her second Columbus appearance in this season on Monday, April 23, in a production of *Fanchon*, the piece with which she had opened on February 6. On Tuesday the bill was changed to *Little Treasure* and *Jenny Lind*, the latter classed as "threadbare" by the reviews. *Daughter of the Regiment* and *Little Barefoot* were staged Wednesday and Thursday with a three-act original called *Day Dreams* scheduled for Miss Melville's benefit on Friday, along with the comedy, *Family Jars*. The *Hidden Hand* was to be presented Saturday evening, but at the appointed hour nothing took place. The Monday *Journal* attempted an explanation:

A great many people went to the Opera House on Saturday night to see "The Hidden Hand," but in the very expressive language of Artemus Ward, "not much." There appeared to be a disagreement in some way behind the scenes and no performance took place, and as it is our business to record performances when they take place, rather than to assign reasons why they do not . . . we have nothing more to say.
only that we much regret any occurrence that will tend to disturb the pleasant run of our theatrical season. No announcement is made for tonight.\textsuperscript{35}

On Thursday, May 3, the Journal reviewer wrote, "For the first time within the common memory of man, which extendeth not beyond six months, our city last night was without a place of amusement open."

\textbf{In summary.}—In spite of a rather abrupt and unexplained closing, the past theatrical season in Columbus, Ohio, had been the best since the outbreak of the war. This conclusion is based on the fact that there was an increase in guest appearances over the past season and a greater variety in the dramatic fare offered in spite of the continued playing of a number of old stand-bys such as \textit{Lucretia Borgia}; Mazeppa; \textit{The Hidden Hand}, and \textit{Our American Cousin}. The dramatic climax of the season was John Ellsler's production of \textit{The Naiad Queen}, a spectacular which taxed the resources of the company in presenting it and the vocabulary of the press in describing it. In addition, the city had been reasonably successful in maintaining some semblance of a summer theater program, erratic though it was at times.

As for the press, it was becoming increasingly critical of both acting and staging and the daily reviews were evaluating more specifically and accurately the merits of the season's sequence of plays and players. So far there had been ample patronage to support both the Atheneum and the Opera House, or so it appeared, as there seemed to be less complaint about attendance. This statement in no wise implies crowded houses at all performances for there were sparse audiences from

\textsuperscript{35}April 30, 1866.
time to time. The full pressure of having two theaters in the city was yet to be felt in the seasons to follow.

The Season of 1866-1867

To all intents and purposes the theatrical season of 1866-67 was a continuation of the previous one or, one might also say it began with a summer season, for it was in the heat of July that Ellsler's Atheneum was opened under the management of one Will Nutt. The treasurer of the new group was announced as A. M. Merrick with H. Weaver as stage manager, the featured artists of the moment to be Miss Naomi de Margueritte and J. W. Thompson with his trained dogs. Miss Naomi was a comedienne and pantomime specialist and began her engagement with a series of comedies none of which had been on the Columbus boards in recent years and might have been selections of her own or at least from among the obscure. The first of these was Who Killed Cock Robin followed on Tuesday by The Wedding Day. The latter performance was accompanied by Mr. Thompson and his trained dog in a piece called Dog of the Old Stone Cross while on Wednesday Miss Naomi performed a "tableau-pantomime" entitled The Star-Spangled Banner, likely designed for this particular day, it being the Fourth of July.

The July 4 performance must have been Miss Naomi's concluding appearance for nothing further was said in the papers concerning her. Meanwhile, Mr. Thompson presented himself and his canine partner in the Military drama The Deserter and His Dog while Blanche Bradshaw was seen as Kate O'Brien in Perfection or Maid of Munster. According to announce-

36 The Ohio State Journal, July 2, 1866.
ment, the week was to be concluded with Mr. Thompson and his trained dog in *The Vision of The Heath*; however, the *Journal* review clearly indicated that a last-minute substitution had been made:

The audience at the Atheneum on Saturday night was about as large as that of the previous evening. "The Dog of the Old Stone Cross" was repeated with the same cast as on Tuesday evening, but not rendered as well at any particular. There was a listlessness that was hardly pardonable among the persons appearing in the subordinate and in many of the principal characters which detracted much from the merits of the play. The plot is very bad, the story improbable and unsatisfactory, but as it gives opportunity for striking tableaux and the struggle between Belair and the dog it was well received.37

No further attempts were made to maintain a theater program that summer, the intense heat in the absence of adequate cooling facilities, plus outdoor attractions, making such activity inadvisable. But on September 18 Mr. T. J. Raymond engaged the Opera House and opened with *East Lynne* starring Lucille Western. She was sustained in major roles by T. Hamilton, W. Leak, and Mrs. M. E. Gordon. The feature was repeated on Thursday before giving way to *Lucretia Borgia* and Don Caesar de Bazan with a Saturday repeat of *East Lynne* which was Miss Western's final presentation before going on to Cleveland. Miss Western was known in private life as Mrs. James H. Mead and she was described by Clara Morris as "a born actress:"

In "Lucretia Borgia" she presented the most perfect picture of opulent, insolent beauty that I ever saw, while her "Leah, The Forsaken" was absolutely Hebraic; and in the first scene where she was pursued and brought to bay by the Christian mob, her attitude, as she silently eyed her foes, her face filled both with wild terror and fierce contempt, was a thing to thrill any audience and always received hearty applause.

37July 9, 1866.

It would seem from past experience that the engagement of Miss Lotta by the Opera House company would have created a surge of enthusiasm among Columbus theater-goers. If one was expected, it hardly materialized, a fact most obvious in the review which paid only moderate to poor attention to the program of "The California Wonder." Such reaction can be due to many factors not the least of which could be a new and untutored hand at the reviewer's pen. There was some enthusiasm; there were no derogatory comments, and sometimes there were no reviews at all but, most of all, there was nothing of the "puffery" that had existed in the season previous. Was Miss Lotta not up to her past engagement? It was possible but not at all likely.

The little actress opened on October 1 in an Irish piece entitled Andy Blake followed by Nan, The Good For Nothing. In the first piece she played a male role—that of Andy. Pet of the Petticoats played the next night along with a repeat of "Nan." The remainder of the week saw performances of The Governor's Wife; Family Jars; Ireland As It Was; Pocohontas; Female Detective; Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady, and her concluding piece, Our Gal.

Following Lotta's departure, the company undertook Boucicault's popular comedy, London Assurance. The play was not well received as far as attendance was concerned which called forth this comment:

The comedy London Assurance was played last night at the Opera House to a very small audience. Mr. Elsler played it last winter to the same kind of house. We are at a loss to account for this neglect of the sterling comedy and arrive only at a conclusion not at all complimentary to the people.39

39The Ohio State Journal, Oct. 9, 1866.
The Serious Family was billed for Tuesday and it likewise played to a very poor house due, presumably, to the fact that it was election night and such events in those days were occasions for greater excitement and activity than they seem to be today. Still Waters Run Deep was offered on Wednesday with Ten Nights In A Bar Room replacing it the following night. Then, on Friday Mr. Raymond and Mrs. Gordon were seen in Violet of The Life Of An Actress, based on events in the early life of Rachel, the leading French actress of the day, written by Dion Boucicault. Little Treasure constituted Mr. Raymond's benefit on Saturday along with a burlesque called Richard III on Horseback, the latter reviewed as "decidely out of place, spoiled by haste, and a windy nothing at best."\(^4^0\)

Several husband-and-wife combinations had appeared in Columbus theaters at frequent intervals, but it is not likely that any of them were as recently so as the artists engaged by Mr. Raymond for the next two weeks. Miss Mary Mitchell, sister of the famous Maggie Mitchell, was to appear on the Opera House stage with her husband of three months, the actor John W. Albaugh. Mary Mitchell had not succeeded in making quite the name that was her sister's, but she was, nevertheless, popular and experienced. The couple opened October 15 with Lady of Lyons followed by Eustache Baudin and then Aurora Floyd.\(^4^1\) Following The Octoroon, Miss Mitchell took a benefit Friday with The Bonapartist which failed to arouse the Journal's pleasure:

"The beautiful play of The Bonapartist," as we have it on the bill, has one merit: it preserves the unities. It is

\(^4^0\)The Ohio State Journal, Oct. 15, 1866.

\(^4^1\)Ibid., Oct. 14, 1866.
unvarying execrable, not to say damnable. No amount of good acting (and the acting, be it remarked, was, for the most part, very fine) could make "The Bonapartist" acceptable. It might be improved and enlivened a little in the first act by injecting forty or fifty pages of Allison's "History of Europe" into the dialogue. There is not one word of wit, sentiment, humor, or imagination in the play. It is a dull dead-level, tedious misery from beginning to end.\footnote{Oct. 20, 1866.}

Shakespeare's Richard III was offered Saturday with Mr. Albaugh as Richard and Miss Mitchell as Queen Elizabeth. The next week the starring couple opened with Our Mutual Friend, a dramatization from Charles Dickens by Rowe which was enthusiastically received by the press and large houses which caused it to remain on stage two more nights before being succeeded by Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Macbeth. The week's performances were warmly received and commended with the exception of The Dumb Belle, a farce which followed Macbeth and was apparently brought to near ruin that night by careless dialogue and poor acting. It was the careless dialogue in particular that called forth a rebuke from the press leveled at actors who were too free with the script:

The practice of interpolating sentences and exclamations into these farces by some performers, which are of doubtful propriety or which are capable of a double construction is reprehensible and should not be permitted before an audience where there are ladies. Mr. Wise should confine himself strictly to the text or else weigh well the effect in force of the language he intends to inject into a play. An exclamation used by him Saturday night was not of itself bad, but spoken in connection with the play and only half heard by the audience was capable of a damaging interpretation and grated harshly on the ears of an intelligent audience.\footnote{Ibid., Oct. 29, 1866.}

With the close of the Mitchell-Albaugh engagement the Columbus theater patrons turned with anticipation to the new guest artist,
Matilda Heron, whose long absence from the Columbus stage fared well to make her a near stranger. Her program for the week consisted mainly of plays in the classic or semi-classic vein. *Gaeae*, *The Jewish Mother* succeeded *Camille* and was, in turn, replaced by *The Stranger*. *Medea* and *Oliver Twist* completed her repertoire, her engagement ending Saturday, November 3.

Although the War of the Rebellion had been finished for over a year, there was still existing strong feeling equally shared by both North and South. In the North the four-year struggle was still very much a rebellion in the strict sense and currents of patriotism and loyalty were easily disturbed by the slightest hint of sympathy for the Southern Cause, real or imagined. The consequence of a gesture or a casual remark, often quite innocent in itself, would often bring down severe repercussions. Such were the circumstances which prompted an article to appear in the *Ohio State Journal* of November 5 at the close of Miss Heron's week at the Opera House. After praising Miss Heron's performances of the past week while at the same time pointing up the absence of her grace and skill so evident in the years of her prime, the article accused Miss Heron of shifting her loyalty to the South on the strength of her remarks written in a note which accompanied a set of antique lace supposedly given to the cause of Southern relief. The incriminating remark came near the close of the note and read: 

"In giving this dear relic to the Southern matrons and orphans I feel I am giving a bit of my heart. I kept it out of the celebrated set I recently sold for my only child. In giving it to the orphans of the American heroes, I feel it dedicated to as holy and sweet a purpose."
The Journal ended its rebuke of Miss Heron by stating that "the war is too recent . . . for a loyal people to stand calmly by and hear rebels glorified with the title 'American Heroes'."

When the theatrical troupe of John Ellsler finally arrived in Columbus it was to play for one week only. This development was somewhat of a disappointment in light of the anticipation stemming from the announcement of the troupe's reorganization carried by the Journal of August 31. At that time the membership of the company was given to include Mark Bates, E. M. Day, B. M. Benham, Alfred Young, Simcoe Lee, Edwin Irving, George B. Hudson, John Ogden, R. Stevens, Ed Clifford, I. Packard, H. Meyers, S. Coleman, T. V. Jones who was prompter, James Fleming, machinist; Mrs. Effie Ellsler, Mrs. Eliza Young, Mrs. Heddy McKee, and the Misses Clara Morris, J. E. Irving, Lizzie Herbert, Ada Jones, Mary Wall, Ellen Ardent and a Miss Baker.

The guest artist was Mlle. Vestvali who began a week at the Opera House under John Ellsler with Gamea, The Hebrew Mother, the title being a slight variation from that of the play enacted by Matilda Heron just six days previously. Clara Morris was in the principal supporting role as Sylvia. The romantic drama Bel Demonic followed on Tuesday with A Fool And His Master played Wednesday. All three pieces announced the lead as being "with song" and the title role of Gamea was announced as being "with operatic gems." The Thursday bill consisted of Love, The Conqueror, accompanied by Seeing Irving, a ridiculous

\[\text{\textsuperscript{178}}\text{ibid., Nov. 5, 1866.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{179}}\text{Note that Miss Heron played it as "Gamea, The Jewish Mother." Supra., p. 177.}\]
home-made farce featuring J. E. Irving who had, by this time, become the city's favorite comedian.

Friday was Mlle. Vestvali's benefit when she played to a crowd that was described as being comparable to that of Edwin Forrest's appearance last winter. Her program consisted of The Brigand and the curse scene taken from the third act of Leah, The Forsaken. It was obviously a busy night for two more plays were offered—Nan, The Good For Nothing with Mrs. Mark Bates, and A Glance At New York in which John Ellsler appeared as Dutchy. The week had been a profitable one at the Opera House and large crowds were pleased with the German-born actress, Elise Vestvali Lund, appearing with the city's most popular acting company.

A week of miscellaneous non-legitimate entertainment played Columbus before the Opera House was reopened by J. T. Raymond on Monday, November 19. The artists were then announced as Lucille Western, who had played there in September, and McKee Rankin, although bad weather prevented Mr. Rankin's appearance on the stage until the following night. It is likely the entire Monday program was postponed a day for it was scheduled again for Tuesday and the Tuesday papers carried no comment on Monday's proposed performance—something unusual for this particular time. Leah, The Forsaken was the play presented and it was followed Wednesday by Green Bushes or The Huntress of Miami. Only a fair audience was present to see Green Bushes, a fact explained by the Journal as being due to the disfavor attributed to Indian plays since so many had been badly rendered in Columbus. However, Miss Western
was credited with giving the character of Miami "a vividness and a strength that makes it a first class personation." 46

Although being a successful actress, Lucille Western, like many others of her profession, was not very happy. This circumstance was aggravated, according to Clara Morris, by a thoughtless husband given to gambling:

... She must have found it depressing at least, when her husband formed the habit of counting up the house by eye (he could come to within five dollars of the money contents of the house any night in this way), and then going out and losing the full amount of her share in gambling ... She wept and used herself up. Then, to get through her heavy night's work, she took a stimulant. 47

On Tuesday, November 27, Flowers of the Forest was presented, giving way on Wednesday to what was intended to be a performance of Satan In Paris with Miss Western in six characters, but the books failed to arrive in time to prepare it and Lucretia Borgia was substituted before a very poor house. Thursday was the day for a matinee performance of Lady of The Lake, probably the same piece taken from the writings of Walter Scott played in the city some time previously and in the evening Leah, The Forsaken was repeated before a good house. Benefit night was given over to The Stranger and Honey Moon and the engagement of Miss Western and McKee Rankin was concluded on Saturday with Nancy Sykes (from Oliver Twist) and Robert Macaire.

It was just two weeks ago that John Ellsler closed a short engagement at the Columbus Atheneum. On Monday, December 3, he was back again with his company and the star New York actress and tight-rope

46 The Ohio State Journal, Nov. 22, 1866.
47 Morris, op cit., p. 127.
artist, Mlle. Marietta Ravel, playing The French Spy. Her repertoire consisted almost entirely of this play plus Wizard Skiff, The Maniac Lover, and Broken Sword which the actress played wherever she went. In Columbus the press was not overly excited about The Broken Sword and expressed an opinion that it "verges very near the soft, sensational school, romantic but without power." The Ohio State Journal of December 6 went on to say briefly:

The dumb boy, Myrtillo, as personated by Mlle. Ravel is a fine character, but does not stand as prominently forward as other characters in which she has appeared here. The company was evidently out of their element and should have given the more difficult drama of the legitimate school a much better rendering.

Clara Morris and Mark Bates played supporting roles in this play, the Journal's criticism probably referring to lesser members of the company.

Mlle. Ravel continued her tight rope specialty on Thursday and Friday appearing between The Dumb Boy of Manchester and the comedy Nan, The Good For Nothing, she starring in the former and Mrs. Mark Bates with Mr. Irving playing the comedy. Friday's performance was a benefit in which the versatile actress split her program evenly between acrobatics, with which she opened the show, and Angel of Midnight, advertised as a metaphorical drama. Mlle. Ravel returned to The French Spy for her final performance Saturday night and the James Fenimore Cooper story, Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish, after which she departed for Boston with M. W. Hanley, her manager.

This single engagement of Mlle. Marietta Ravel also completed the present appearance of the Ellsler company which, as far as can be
determined, returned to Cleveland or traveled to Canton, Ohio, where Mr. Ellsler managed the Opera House there. It is quite difficult to specify where the company played next even to this detail as the troupe was visiting a number of cities in Ohio and western Pennsylvania in a fashion quite clearly reflecting the Combination System. During the same week that Mlle. Ravel played at the Atheneum, the Opera House was vacated by Manager J. T. Raymond most likely in order to play another city as well as to avoid the competition of Mlle. Ravel. Mr. Raymond returned to Columbus with his company on the following week and opened the Opera House with a week's engagement of Lawrence Barrett.

Mr. Barrett had previously appeared in Columbus in September of 1865 playing with Ellsler's company. He had intended to open with the same piece he had used as an opener before, namely Lester Wallack's Rosedale, but for an unspecified reason Richelieu was substituted the first night, Rosedale following on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Griffith Gaunt, by Augustin Daly, and All That Glitters Is Not Gold completed the week for Mr. Barrett who also recited a poem on Saturday night entitled Shamus O'Brien, its authorship not given. From this engagement Mr. Barrett reportedly went on to Boston from whence he shortly departed for Europe.

During the next week the Atheneum and the Opera House were both seeking public favor. The Atheneum was reopened under Frank Whitcher on December 24 with the McKeon Buchanan Dramatic Company, a troupe built around the star, McKeon Buchanan, and his daughter. They opened with Richelieu, the play with which Lawrence Barrett had opened the previous week. Meanwhile the Opera House announced the arrival of
Maggie Mitchell, who had been so popular last October, and presented her in Fanchon. The next day was Christmas and both theaters gave special matinees, but the public was given little choice of entertainment for Ten Nights In A Bar Room was the feature at both theaters. The evening was different, however, as Miss Mitchell continued in Fanchon while Mr. Buchanan and his daughter at the Atheneum played the sensation drama, Waiting For The Verdict. As it was, the latter performance turned out to be the closing show for the Buchanan troupe who found the going a bit rough with Maggie Mitchell in town.

The manager of the McKean Buchanan Dramatic Company decided on Tuesday night to discontinue performances at the Atheneum. The troupe was not received with favor because the Maggie Mitchell engagement at the Opera House was and is the attraction. The company is a good one and, as we remarked in the previous notice, played carefully and dress very well. They leave the city in a few days to fill other engagements. It is but simple justice to the company to say that it will disappoint people less and please in more particulars than any traveling dramatic company that has visited the state this season.49

In the meantime Miss Mitchell at the Opera House played Little Barefoot on Wednesday and Pearl of Savoy Thursday and Friday nights, Friday's performance being her benefit and closing as well as the final night of the company under Mr. Raymond's management.

Where Mr. Buchanan spent the remainder of the week after closing on Tuesday is not a matter of record, but he could not have gone far away since New Year's Eve, falling on Monday, found the actor and his daughter, Virginia, once more performing Richelieu at the Atheneum. New Year's Day saw a matinee performance of The Octoroon with Richard III offered that evening. Excellent audiences were reported through-

49 Dec. 27, 1866.
out the week to see Jack Cade, Macbeth, and Uncle Tom's Cabin. On Saturday, January 5, the Buchanan Company concluded its engagement with Pizarro or The Spaniards In Peru (more often subtitled "The Death of Rolla") and Nick O' The Woods.

It is interesting to note that the press often showed a tendency to criticize by inference rather than by direct rebuke, especially in matters of protocol and compliance with the social and moral code. The reader cannot help but feel that certain conditions must frequently exist simply because the press draws special attention to instances wherein they did not exist. There is great likelihood that the theater of this era was being harried by verbal indiscretions either sanctioned in the choice of play (many of which had difficulty meeting prejudiced standards) or resulting from liberties taken by the actors. There is also the constant need to alleviate the suspicions of a wary public who often were laboring under an inflated moral code or were still smarting from the memory of actual theatrical sins previously committed. On January 2, for example, the Ohio State Journal reassured the citizenry by writing, "The people having now seen Mr. Buchanan and company, having satisfied themselves of the positive merit of all, can go to the Opera House each night with the assurance of seeing something excellent and of hearing nothing to offend."

The following week Mr. John Raymond again leased the Opera House to feature his company with Mrs. D. P. Bowers who opened January 7 with Lady of Lyons, supported by J. C. McCollom as Claude Melnott and Mr. Raymond in the part of Colonel James. The audience for this performance was described as being respectable in size but not as large as it
should have been for one of Mrs. Bowers' reputation. "This was attributable," declared the Journal, "simply to the fact that the piece chosen for presentation has been so often indifferently presented upon the Columbus boards that the public has little relish for the play, be it ever so well acted."  

Mrs. Bowers, whose maiden name was Crocker, made her first stage appearance at the Park Theater, New York, in 1846, at which time she married David P. Bowers, an actor, whose death occurred ten years later as a result of heart disease. She later married J. C. McCollom, a former member of Ellsler's troupe, who was now playing in support of Mrs. Bowers. The guest star appeared as Julia in The Hunchback the second night of her present engagement, continuing Thursday with East Lynne and on Friday Lady Audley's Secret for her benefit. Fazio was presented on Saturday and repeated Monday to begin Mrs. Bowers' second week at the Opera House. The week continued with Jewess of Madrid, Love's Masquerade, and Day After The Wedding, a farce in which McCollom and Mrs. Bowers performed for the occasion of Mr. McCollom's benefit. This performance concluded the engagement of Mrs. Bowers and the remainder of the week was given to benefits for the company and Manager Raymond.

On the same Thursday that Raymond's company was playing a benefit at the Opera House, the Atheneum (State Street Theater) was reopened announcing a slightly different type of theatrical fare. The Atheneum, popularly referred to as "Old Drury," a title of affection

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50Jan. 8, 1867.

51T. Allston Brown, op. cit., p. 42.
given to so many mid-western theaters by their patrons, had undergone some refurbishing under the supervision of one John Weaver who opened that place of entertainment beginning with a performance of Jenny Lind starring Anna Sinclair. Said the Statesman:

Let it be remembered that Mr. John Weaver, lessee and manager, will open "Old Drury" this evening for the season. This has always been a popular place of resort for the citizens of Columbus and as it has been thoroughly repaired and fitted up including the warming fixtures which heat the house in the coldest weather so that a person sitting in any part of the building keeps comfortable and warm—it cannot help drawing good houses. We have noticed the rules and regulations adopted by Mr. Weaver for the management of his company and they are as near perfect as can be observed. He proposed to produce a variety of moral dramas, operatic burlesques, vaudevilles, laughable farces, spectacles, pantomimes, ballets, dancing, singing etc.—and guarantees that nothing shall be said or done to offend the most fastidious.52

Less than two weeks later the Journal referred to the Weaver troupe as playing to only "fair houses."53

A week had passed since the last legitimate stage production at the Opera House when McKeen Buchanan returned to Columbus for his second engagement in less than a month. Under the management of Frank Whitcher the company opened Monday with Boucicault's London Assurance which played to a fair house. Tuesday's bill was Uncle Tom's Cabin succeeded on Wednesday by another Boucicault piece, The Octoroon, in which daughter Virginia played Zoe and Mr. Buchanan was seen as Wah-no-tee. The announcement for Thursday, February 15, called for a

52Jan. 17, 1867.

53Feb. 1, 1867.
performance of Rob Roy, but a change of bill was necessary and Ten Nights In A Bar Room was substituted. Said the Journal:

Much to the disappointment of all parties, "Rob Roy" was not presented at the Opera House last night as announced. Mr. Buchanan had gone to Newark and was detained on his return trip by the train being behind time. The company was dressed for "Rob Roy" and waited for some time... but the train was two hours late and "Ten Nights In A Barroom" was substituted and presented quite as well as before by the same company.

We are free to say that Mr. Buchanan's Charles Denmore could not meet the expectations of the audience. There were some fine points in the acting, but the personation lacked the great something that made other characters played by him so attractive. We repudiate entirely the style in which he rendered the very familiar soliloquy. From the elocutionist's standpoint it was simply wretched. Buchanan's acting is like Governor Anderson's speech making—one never knows when or where to look for fine points. They come when you least expect them, and when you are expecting they come not at all.54

With the exception of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Tuesday night, a play which could be counted upon most always to draw a good house, the engagements in Columbus over the past several weeks suffered considerably for lack of patronage. A brief comment in the Statesman read: "The theatrical business is on the decline throughout the country and many prominent theaters are already closed."55 If true, the conditions with which Columbus managers were having to struggle were not entirely local nor due to mediocrity behind the footlights although what was being produced at this time, while adequate, was not the best that Columbus had seen over the years. Even management itself

54 Feb. 15, 1867.
55 Jan. 28, 1867.
was subject to question as was the case of Mr. Raymond as mentioned in the *Journal* of January 18, 1867:

There was a very slim audience at the Opera House last night on the occasion of the benefit of the dramatic company. We are at a loss to account for this falling off of attendance at this popular place of amusement, unless it is in the management of Mr. Raymond. Personally, we rather like Mr. Raymond, but to be honest about the matter, if he has control of affairs in that institution, it will entirely "play out."

*Camille* was played by Buchanan and his company on Friday, February 15, with daughter, Virginia, in the title role. Saturday's *Journal* paid her reluctant praise saying she was not as good as Miss Western or Matilda Heron of a few months back, but that she did well.

*Robbers*, written by Schiller, was the final performance Saturday after which the company departed for Zanesville, Ohio. The *Journal* hurled an editorial missile after them as follows:

Quite a large audience at the Opera House on Saturday night bade good-bye to the McKean Buchanan Dramatic Troupe and to witness the worst presentation of Schiller's "Robbers" ever seen in this or any other country. The actors seemed highly delighted at something, perhaps with the thought of leaving town and a high old time they had of it.\(^5^6\)

For the remainder of the month the city of Columbus was without legitimate theater. Weaver's troupe was performing variety at the Atheneum before mediocre-to-poor audiences, while Dick Sands' Variety Troupe played a few days at the Opera House before moving on to Dayton, Ohio, on March 3. The Sands troupe embarked upon a practice of giveaways, advertising "one hundred costly and beautiful gifts" to be presented nightly to persons holding the correct ticket. It was obviously an effort to boost ticket sales and increase attendance. The

\(^{56}\) Feb. 18, 1867.
measure was not adequate it seems, for the company moved on as stated. As the theatrical season approached its conclusion it began to reveal more and more the economic difficulties which seemed to undermine it. However, there was one big occasion yet to come—the presentation of The Black Crook.

It was Thursday, April 11, 1867, when the theater patrons of Columbus had their first opportunity to see The Black Crook, the play which was creating such a sensation throughout the eastern states. Its arrival had been anticipated since March 23 when it was revealed that John H. Meech of Buffalo had concluded a contract with Charles H. Barras, author and owner of the popular spectacle by which Meech had secured for the sum of $8,000 the privilege of playing this attraction in Columbus, Dayton, Cleveland, and ten other cities of the west and south. The publicity listed among the play's attractions "a full corps de ballet, entirely new and gorgeous scenery, intricate and novel mechanisms . . . submarine and nondescript monsters, rich devices and pyrotechnic designs, calcium and drummond lights, and new and beautiful music."57 The city-wide enthusiasm over the arrival of the great spectacle was summarized by the Statesman:

There has been nothing equal to the sensation which the announcement of . . . The Black Crook has created in our city. It pervades all circles from the highest to the lowest and if its representation were delayed a week longer some of our young ladies would burst their corset strings with curiosity . . . There are those who say it will not be near as rich in scenic effect as in the east. This is a mistake. Every portion of the armour, every bit of the scenery, everyone of

57 The Ohio State Journal, April 11, 1867.
the dresses are the exact duplicate of those in use at Niblo's Garden and we will have The Black Crook in all its glory equal to the New York production.58

The Black Crook in all its splendor opened at the Opera House under the management of John Ellsler whose reputation did not detract from the success of the run and the fact that Columbus had not seen any legitimate theater since McKeans Buchanan in February made Columbus eager for a theatrical run of major significance. For reasons now unknown, the famed "Demon Dance" featuring the "Premiere Danseurs Absolute" was not seen until Monday when patrons were introduced to Mlle. Augusta, Signoretta Jovetta, Mlle. Elise Cheri, Mlle. Josephine, and Miss Fanny Prestige, the latter having appeared in previous Columbus productions.

The spectacle ran for a total of nine performances in what was originally advertised as "a limited engagement." In spite of the great stir created elsewhere by this entertainment which capitalized on the female form so scantily clad for the standards of this age, Columbus citizens took it in their stride. In this respect the press assured the public that the production was no more unusual than the Naiad Queen staged last winter; in any case attendance was good either in spite of the play's reputation or because of it. The peculiar reaction of human nature to such a challenge as The Black Crook was immediately sensed by the Journal which commented as follows:

The announcement that The Black Crook was to be presented at the Opera House on Thursday night produced a sensation. Everybody immediately resolved to go "by proxy." It might not be quite proper to go in person and substitutes were at

58April 11, 1867.
once secured. Before Thursday night came everybody thought better of the first resolve and last night original and substitute both reported promptly.\textsuperscript{59}

The Statesman was most enthusiastic; in fact one might suspect that the Statesman reporter was a bit disappointed that the spectacle was not quite as "naughty" as rumor had it:

But what shall we say of the scenic beauties of the piece and to fit which the dialogue was written? It absolutely passes description ... There the power of fancy seemed to have exhausted itself in a display of such wonderous beauty as to almost pass comprehension and belief ... Indeed where so many magnificent pictures were formed it is almost impossible to tell of them ... There is not a line or word in the dialogue objectionable nor is the wardrobe so scant as has been reported. In fact, "The Black Crook" will prove as fashionable a sensation here as in New York.\textsuperscript{60}

In spite of the seemingly boundless enthusiasm for The Black Crook expressed in the newspapers, there was some indication that it may have been a bit disappointing. The Journal hastened to qualify its enthusiasm of the previous week by noting that "during the first week the audience was large, but after that time they were only medium and some nights rather small. The Black Crook has not been the success that The Naiad Queen was last winter."\textsuperscript{61} No specific explanation is given for this unfavorable comparison. From a moral viewpoint there may not have been as many "daring souls" as were anticipated. It is more likely that, fine as it was, it was impossible to live up to its advance notices and the public, its collective head

\textsuperscript{59}April 12, 1867.

\textsuperscript{60}April 12, 1867.

\textsuperscript{61}April 22, 1867.
amid clouds of great expectations, was disappointed. In such cases—and they occur quite often—resentment is likely to set in and manifest itself in more severe criticism than might otherwise be offered. The simplest explanation is the tendency of the newspapers of this era to go to ridiculous extremes in advertising the merits of any such attraction.

The origin of The Black Crook is familiar to anyone knowing something of the nineteenth century American stage and it has become one of the legends of our theater. The story begins with a group of artists who arrived in this country from England in order to present a ballet entitled La Biche au Bois at the Academy of Music in New York. Unfortunately the Academy burned down May 22, 1866, on the eve of their arrival and expediency suggested that they sell the ingredients of the show to William Wheatley, manager of Niblo's Garden.

Charles H. Barras, a familiar figure in Columbus theaters in the early years of the war, had written a play called The Black Crook which, according to the story, he had several times tried to get into production but without success. After conferring with Wheatley, Barras' play was completely rewritten to incorporate the personnel and properties of the luckless ballet. There was little left that was recognizable of Barras' original play except the title, but the end result was an elaborate and daring extravaganza that was destined to astound the theater-going public and affect stage entertainment down to the present day. Following its premier in New York, the Tribune summed up the production's merit in one significant statement: "The
scenery is magnificent; the ballet is beautiful; the drama is—rubbish."

Of course the focal point of the play—and of the eyes of the spectators—was the group of scantily clad dancing girls heretofore seldom, if ever, seen on the legitimate stage. Hughes indicates that The Black Crook broke all existing long run records playing 475 performances in and about New York in sixteen months, with a gross income of more than $1,100,000 of which the author, Charles Barras, received a tidy share.

It was an ironical turn of fate—this sudden success and great wealth—when just a few years previous Mr. Barras, mediocre actor and hack writer, was grief-stricken over the illness of his wife, the lovely Sally St. Clair, whose failing health he could not aid because of the lack of money. Clara Morris recalls the sorry circumstances in her memoirs:

That same night I heard that a dread disease already abode with her . . . and would not be shaken off but clung ever closer and closer; and, oh! poor Charles Barras! Money might have saved her then . . . and God only knows how desperately he struggled, but the money came not. Then, worse still, Sally herself was the breadwinner, and though Mr. Barras worked hard doing writing and translating, acting as agent, as nurse, as maid, playing too in a two-act comedy "The Hypochondriac," he still felt the sting of living on his wife's earnings. And she had, too, a mother and an elder sister to support; therefore she worked on and the disease worked with her.63

In New York, several years later, Miss Morris encountered the wealthy author of The Black Crook, but the money, once so desperately

62Hughes, op cit., p.200.

63Morris, op cit., p. 150.
needed, had come too late to help his wife. She died in Buffalo April 9, 1867.

I—I'm rich now, Clara. I've got a fine marine villa and in it are an old, old dog and a dying old woman. They both belonged to my Sally, and so I'll keep hold of them as long as I can, for her sake... He pressed his lips tight together for a moment, then suddenly he burst out: "By God, when a man struggles hard all his life, it's a damn rough reward to give him a handsome coffin for his wife!" Miss Morris could not keep back the tears. "Don't, my girl, don't cry, she can't come back, you know," and shaking my hand he left me thinking I was crying for Sally who was safe at rest and had no need for tears while, instead, they were for himself—so old, so sad, so lonely, such a poor rich man! Did he know then how near death was to him? Some who knew him well believe to this day that the fatal fall from the cars was no fall, but a leap—only God knows.

On May 25 an amateur dramatic organization composed primarily of Columbus people calling themselves the "Western Dramatic Association" engaged the Opera House for a single performance of Robert Emmet, to be followed by the farce, Paddy Miles' Boy. The motive behind this venture was to raise money for the Southern Relief Fund, the proceeds destined for the aid of the stricken South. A sparse 250 people were reported to have attended and concerning the performance the Journal preferred to remain silent until goaded into comment by a letter to the editor. The Journal replied as follows:

We have before us a communication from a member of the dramatic association who is dissatisfied because we did not in the Journal of yesterday morning either praise or criticize the performance of the association on Saturday evening. If we had said anything in reference to the entertainment we would have been compelled to criticize it in a manner we thought proper not to do. We supposed that the performers were amateurs who had no idea of taking the stage for life and were not, for that reason, properly the subjects of criticism. We also considered the object which the association was trying to serve, a good one, and that its

64 Morris, op. cit., p. 153.
members were governed by benevolent motives. These were the reasons which actuated us in not criticizing the entertainment. The dramatic association certainly would not expect us to praise a performance which we did not think worthy of praise. We are sorry that "a member" has compelled us to express our disapproval.

To all practical purposes the program of the Western Dramatic Association on May 25 marked the end of legitimate theater entertainment for the 1866-67 season. It is difficult to put a finger on the exact cause, but the fact remains that the present theatrical season in Ohio's capital city compared rather poorly with the previous one. Attendance was falling off and the papers, noting this, sought to find a reason for it but could offer nothing better than an indifferent public. For one thing, there were only fourteen guest appearances which was approximately a third less than occurred the year before.

A possible cause of the relatively poor season was the absence of John Ellsler's company. Ellsler came to Columbus only three times and each time remained only a week or less. Ellsler was apparently finding the Road more profitable than the capital city, for his mode of operation now was to move about the state using his company in support of a guest artist whom he had under contract. He was no longer content to spend the first four months of the year in Columbus as a resident company as had been his policy in the past. Meanwhile T. J. Raymond tried to maintain a resident company but seemed unable to do so with any real success.

The climax of the season was the staging of The Black Crook, which ran for a total of nine performances under Ellsler's management.

May 28, 1867.
But in spite of the eagerness with which it was awaited and the advance publicity, the spectacle did not make the stir in Columbus that might have been expected. Nevertheless, it was by far the best theatrical attraction of a rather poor season.
announces that I am to have charge of his orchestra.

I desire to say that Mr. Derwort has made no arrangement whatever with me and I have no desire for, or intention of filling that position.

(Signed) Karl Schoppelrei

The very next day, October 24, another card appeared in the Journal signed by W. H. H. Derwort:

A Card. I am happy to state that I engaged Professor Karl Schoppelrei through Mr. J. J. Vogelsang, leader of the brass band which was considered valid, hence I hired him.

Two days later the State Street Theater opened with The Deserted Wife and Jenny Lind as the afterpiece and whether Professor Schoppelrei was at the podium or not was never reported. However, the reviews had something to say about the quality of the performance, the Statesman being the most critical:

The crowded house on Saturday night showed Manager Derwort that our citizens will support him liberally if he but cater properly to their amusement. We were in hopes that we would be able to speak in terms of unqualified admiration of the initial performance at the State Street Theater and are deeply sorry that it is not so. The opening play is not of a kind that will attract a Columbus audience though even it might have passed muster if the words of the author were spoken, but we submit that Mark Clifford did not know a line of his part and that the language he substituted was not at all that of the author ... We suppose some allowance must be made for the hurried manner in which the whole affair was put on the stage ... There is a general disposition on the part of our citizens to make Mr. Derwort's enterprise a paying one, but he must return the compliment and put on the stage a first class entertainment and compel his people to study or get those who will. He has talent plenty in his company and it must be brought out. No mediocre performance will pay in Columbus.¹

Mr. Derwort was one of the theater managers of the late sixties who recognized the growing popularity of variety entertainment despite

¹Oct. 28, 1867.
CHAPTER VII

THE YEARS OF STRUGGLE

The Season of 1867-1868

The management of Mr. Derwort.—For approximately five months following The Black Crook there was little legitimate theater in Columbus. Contrary to the previous year, a summer season in this city did not appeal to managers who were having difficulty enough attracting audiences in the regular season. A fair sprinkling of minstrel shows and circus fare provided some diversion through late summer and early fall, but dramatic troupes were either inactive or busy elsewhere.

The Journal noted on July 20 that Ellsler's company would play Akron the following week. Other companies were reported in cities east and west, but Ohio's capital was either being overlooked or avoided.

During at least a portion of this inactive period in the early fall of 1867 the Athenæum was undergoing repairs. The name of W. H. H. Derwort appeared in the Journal of October 22 as lessee and manager of the State Street Theater (the Athenæum by its old name) and assuring the public that the theater would open following "complete repair and decoration at a cost of $2,000." Also advertised was "an efficient and powerful orchestra under the baton of Professor Karl Schoppelrei." The following day a card appeared in the Journal:

A Card. I see by an advertisement in the "Journal" and "Statesman" that the manager of the State Street Theater

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the traditionally poor reputation of the regular variety houses. He was apparently the first Columbus manager to incorporate variety material in legitimate programs beyond the old practice of an occasional interim song or dance. His format for entertainment called for a featured play followed by a variety bill headed by a name performer in any one of the usual variety skills. The evening performance thus totalled up to a drama and variety show composed of songs, dances, and even acrobatics.

On Monday, October 28, Derwort presented The Fiend of Society written by Fitzsimmons who had also starred in The Deserted Wife, and on Tuesday was played The Dumb Man of The Mountain, also featuring Fitzsimmons. Whether or not all these plays were written by the individual identified in the billings only as "Fitzsimmons" is not known. The star was billed as a reknown actor and author, but, nevertheless, the press was cool to the productions and the houses were but fair.

A virtual reopening was effected on Wednesday with an entirely new company featuring Fanny Morgan Phelps in the play The Actress By Daylight with Bonnie Fishwife as the farce. Said the Statesman, "Good houses will undoubtedly greet Miss Phelps during the five evenings that she remains in the city if Manager Derwort will furnish her with the proper support." Friday and Saturday saw Miss Phelps in Somebody Else, the star taking a benefit; then followed The Hidden Hand and Victorine. Moderately small audiences prevailed in each case.

On Wednesday, November 6, the Opera House opened with Elizabeth, Queen of England featuring Mrs. W. F. Lander as Elizabeth and J. H.

2 Oct. 31, 1867.
Taylor as Essex with Mary Stuart presented the following night. Mr. Derwort's company had voluntarily suspended operations during the run of this rival bill and on Monday, on the advice and request of friends and associates, he moved his troupe to the Opera House at the close of Mrs. Lander's two-night engagement, apparently placing himself under the management of one Mr. Demero who was listed in the papers as sole lessee and manager of that establishment.

Why this move was advised is not clear, but there are several possible reasons. The Journal noted that "... Manager Derwort has, at great expense and in accordance with the wishes of numerous citizens, leased the Opera House and will this evening open it for the regular dramatic season with a first class company." It was just a week before that Mr. Derwort had underwritten extensive repairs to the Atheneum and opened it "at great expense." On that occasion he had staged a preliminary inspection for a party of gentlemen to observe the improvements he had made there and the Journal reported the building as looking"... like a new theater inside and out. The whole interior has been repainted and refitted and is now as clean and handsome as the Opera House." Again, there is no indication of precisely why this move to the Opera House was made.

Damon and Pythias was the billing for November 11 and featured A. R. Phelps of California as Damon and N. S. Leslie as Pythias. Richelieu followed on Tuesday, Mr. Phelps playing the Cardinal, and on Wednesday Othello was staged. Again the Journal spoke out in favor of

3Nov. 11, 1867.
4Oct. 26, 1867.
Manager Derwort's productions saying, "Mr. Derwort has freed his troupe of the characteristics which were distasteful to our citizens and now that he is trying to gratify their tastes he should receive their patronage."5

A reader of the Ohio State Journal or The Ohio Statesman at this time would not be long in concluding first that Mr. Derwort was having difficulties reaching his audience, and secondly, that the press was making every effort, editorially, to render him assistance. Reviews brief and devoid of puffery were straightforward in praising the quality of his productions and the wisdom of patronizing the Opera House. The esteem in which the public held Mr. Derwort was made clear by the offer of a complimentary benefit which appeared over a host of signatures in the Journal of November 16, 1867. The previous issue of the Journal carried a letter which read as follows:

Opera House, Columbus
November 15, 1867

Mr. W. H. H. Derwort
Dear Sir:

Learning that the citizens have tendered you a complimentary benefit tomorrow, Saturday evening, November 16, allow me for Miss Ida Busley, Mr. N. S. Leslie, Mr. Aredine, and myself who form the California Combination to volunteer our services for the occasion.

Yours truly,
(Signed) A. R. Phelps6

In spite of the apparent esteem in which Mr. Derwort was held in the opinions of Columbus citizens, the benefit tendered him was a miserable failure, a scant 250 persons making up the audience. In

5Nov. 13, 1867.

6Nov. 15, 1867.
addition, internal difficulties also prevailed as indicated in the report of the *Statesman* of November 18, 1867:

The complimentary benefit to Manager Derwort came to a sudden termination on Saturday night at the Opera House. Mr. Derwort has been doing a tearfully bad business ever since Miss Phelps' engagement closed and even that was not what it should have been. Not what the extraordinary talents of that lady should command, but while she was superior, his stock company was terribly bad and people would not support him. He, in a great measure, improved his company, but the ban was out and he has not been able to pay his way. On Saturday night there was about sixty dollars in the house, not enough to pay the day's expenses. The actors who had not been paid, seeing this, and feeling unwilling to play for the benefit of the landlord and printer, struck and refused to appear without being paid at least a portion of the money due.

At the hour for ringing up the curtain Mr. Derwort came forward and announced that he had struggled hard to present first class entertainment to the citizens of Columbus, but because he had not been supported as he thought he should have been . . . he would be obliged to close the house. Those who had paid, he said, would receive their money at the box office.

As he retired there was a rush for the doors. As the audience came out without first receiving checks they made a demand on the treasurer for their money. He properly refused to pay until they returned their tickets, checks, or some evidence of having been in the house. Then came trouble. The danger of a huge old row was becoming imminent. When the police were called the treasurer commenced repaying the entrance money and the mighty hubbub was reduced to a struggle to be first at the ticket office. Coats were torn, corns were trod on, and tempers ruffled. The treasurer finally paid out all of the money he had received though a good many didn't get their money back, and the Opera House closed for the season.7

This unfortunate and embarassing affair evidently closed out Mr. Derwort at the Opera House for it remained unoccupied for nearly a month when, quite by luck, the famous Madame Ristori was billed there for a brief engagement. A short run of Sherman's Minstrels at the State Street Theater was the sole theatrical attraction in the interim.

7Nov. 18, 1867.
It was an epidemic in Havana, Cuba, that resulted in Madame Ristori's appearance in Columbus on December 14 and 15, 1867. The famous actress and her family with her dramatic company had completed arrangements for visiting Havana when Mr. Grau, her manager, received a cablegram conveying the news that sickness prevailed over a great part of that city and urging him to defer the trip until February. Mr. Grau at once arranged with the principal cities for short engagements in order to put in the time profitably as the change in plans would otherwise mean a great loss. Thus Columbus was successful in getting Madame Ristori and company which, under other circumstances, would have been highly unlikely.

Ristori favored Columbus with two colorful roles from her repertoire—Mary, from Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland and the companion piece, Elizabeth, Queen of England, by Giacometti, in which she played her most popular role, that of Elizabeth. The Ohio Statesman went to great length in giving the famous actress the publicity it felt she deserved:

Tonight the people of Columbus will, for the first time, have the opportunity of seeing the great Ristori. She is in the drama what Caesar, Napoleon, and the great Frederick were in the art of war. She is the greatest living dramatic genius. She excels Rachel and, if ever matched, was only matched by the sublime Mrs. Siddons. When the vast audience that will doubtless assemble at the Opera House shall look upon this wonderful artist they will see a woman whose great gifts and talents raise her from the humble condition of a mere appendage to a traveling company to regal eminence in her difficult profession. . . . They will see the very queen of the drama upon whom all the potentates, nobles, and peoples of the civilized world have gazed with admiration.®

®Dec. 14, 1867.
Whatever the reason may have been, the Statesman's puff was to no avail. The Monday morning Journal recorded an audience that was "very small, much smaller than we had expected to see" and went on to lament the cold and uncomfortable room in which the audience had been forced to sit. The fact that Madame Ristori performed her role in Italian might have kept away some who might otherwise have attended and yet, had these persons witnessed the performance they would likely have been as impressed as was the Statesman reporter:

Not only does her great talent flash through the play, but her close study of history is made evident by the attention given to the most minute article of dress, not only for herself, but for all the characters in the play. Looking at her, though she speaks a language we do not understand, one forgets Ristori and remembers only the suffering Queen of Scots.9

While the Opera House had been closed since the departure of Ristori in December, a company calling themselves the National Theater opened there on February 19 with Lucretia Borgia starring Miss Rachel Denvil.10 The manager of this troupe was B. F. Dugun with Major H. Lindley as stage manager, John T. Lester as treasurer, and Professor Puehringer as orchestra leader. The company played a number of popular pieces evenly balanced between the classical and the current favorites until its closing March 12, 1868. Strangely enough, the reviews, while favorable, were extremely brief and gave only the name of Rachel Denvil as the principal player. There was no indication of who played in support. "As we have said before, the company now playing at the Opera House is one of the best that ever visited the city and we hope

9Dec. 16, 1867.

10The Ohio State Journal, Feb. 18, 1868.
to see a rousing house tonight," so said the Journal of Tuesday, March 3. There was no further elaboration from the Journal and the Statesman was even less expressive.11

It is quite possible that the Journal did not care for Rachel Denvil and her company in spite of the favorable tone of the few comments that publication made, for when John Ellsler opened a ten-night engagement at the Opera House on March 25, the Journal remarked the next morning, "Now that Ellsler is here with a good troupe and a good orchestra we expect to see fine houses at the Opera House."

Ellsler opened with Under The Gaslight, a sensation success by Augustin Daly reputed to be the first of many plays to use the situation wherein hero or heroine is tied to the railroad tracks just as the train is due. Odell says of the New York production which premiered at the New York Theater in 1868, "Despite the fact that on the first night the machinery of the great railroad scene failed to work properly, the audience was held in tense excitement and the play from the outset was a success."12 The play was repeated at the Opera House the next night and on Friday Ellsler's troupe presented The Streets of New York with J. Wesley Hill as Tom Badger. Floating Beacon or The Norwegian Wreckers and A Glance At New York constituted Saturday's program with Clara Morris featured in the former. The remainder of the engagement was given over to Under The Gaslight, Mr. Ellsler receiving a complimentary benefit on Friday.

11 The Ohio Statesman, March 3, 1868

Domestic custom—or possibly regulation—interfered with a smoothly running performance the night of March 31 but probably had been interfering with previous performances. At any rate the Journal reporter was sufficiently disturbed to comment:

The cheap boarding house people were out in full force and consequently about one third were obliged to leave during the last act in order to get in before closing time. This marred the close of the performance, but the fault was with the audience and not the people on the stage.\textsuperscript{13}

In September of this same year the problem arose once again and this time the Journal commentary was a bit more direct:

It seems necessary in the interest of good breeding and the public comfort to beg the early boarding house people to remain in their seats until the close of the last act in order that some of the finest effects of the play may not be marred. If they must go home by a certain hour why in the name of decency don't they go between acts?\textsuperscript{14}

The final appearance of a dramatic troupe in Columbus in the 1867-68 season was made by Miss Caroline Hayes and her company at the Opera House on April 21, Miss Hayes serving as manager as well as being the female lead. The Brigand Queen was the opening attraction, but the press was not at all excited by the drama although it was willing to give credit to the acting of the company and its manager while only a fair house greeted the presentation. Said the Journal reporter:

Very little can be said favorably of The Brigand Queen. It is unreal, weak in dialogue, abounds, however, in pretty situations, and is graced with several effective

\textsuperscript{13}\textsuperscript{Mar 31, 1868.} It is safe to assume that the use of the word "cheap" was intended to be descriptive of the boarding houses and not the tenants themselves as might be deduced from the writer's sentence structure.

\textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{Sept. 29, 1868.}
tableaux. The troupe made the affair sail smoothly, Miss Hayes receiving marked attention in the way of applause.15

According to the advertisements Miss Hayes played five of the parts which, along with her managership, must have rendered her a busy girl.

Miss Hayes' engagement came to an unexpected close later in the week during a performance of *Rose of Killarney*, an Irish play by Stirling. The piece was being repeated from the night before and was proceeding according to schedule when, in the second act, it became evident that something was wrong behind the scenes. In due time it was announced by the manager that Mr. Davenport, one of the principal players, was too intoxicated to assume his part. The audience was informed that the play would, by necessity, be halted and money would be refunded at the door. This action on the part of the manager, although unexpected, was greatly appreciated. As the *Journal* commented:

> The straightforward dealing with the difficulty instead of so changing the parts as to represent the drama in a different manner, had the effect to secure for the company the good wishes and sympathy of the audience. The management decided, perhaps unwisely, that the season should close with last evening. The company have made extraordinary efforts to please, but came to the city at an unfortunate time. On both evenings they played against attractive entertainments in other parts of the city and were not as well patronized as they should have been. May they have better luck next time.16

The fact that the audience was surprised at the manner in which the situation was handled and the *Journal*’s mention of what might have been an alternative indicates that there actually were times when an incapacitated actor would necessitate swapping parts or changing

15 April 22, 1868.

16 April 24, 1868.
positions, as on a ball team, so as to effect a satisfactory comple-
tion of the play. How this might have been accomplished is not clear,
but unless there was strong familiarity with each others' lines, it
would require a scripts-in-hand performance—hardly a satisfactory
solution or a likely one considering the known versatility of the
average nineteenth century actor.

The following day the Journal carried a brief notice which
read, "The manageress is most happy to inform the citizens of Columbus
that in compliance with the wishes of many prominent citizens she has
concluded to give a farewell entertainment this evening." The
plays chosen for this special performance were Perfection and Rose of
Killarney. The house, nevertheless, was poor for which the press
voiced regrets.

In summary.—The Journal's remark on April 24 that the Hayes
Company had come to Columbus at an unfortunate time was apropos to the
entire season past. It had been most unsatisfactory in every respect.
No attempt had been made to provide theater during the summer as had
been in the past two seasons although it was known that John Ellsler, for
example, was playing in other parts of the state. However, he did not
play Columbus at all except for a brief appearance in March bringing
with him Daly's new play Under the Gaslight. It was clear Ellsler was
giving up resident company practices to follow the new Combination
procedure. In the meanwhile others attempted to maintain resident
companies at the Atheneum and Opera House, but their success was hin-
dered by poor attendance and internal dissention.

17April 25, 1868.
Madame Ristori's appearance with her own company operating under Combination principles was the climax of the guest appearances which had totalled only five for the entire season. There had been long periods of inactivity at both theaters except for minstrel shows and like attractions and the season was finally brought to an early close with the unsuccessful engagement of the Caroline Hayes Company in April.

The Season of 1868-1869

It may have been an unusual feature of the previous season that C. W. Couldock and his daughter did not play Columbus; however, it was their privilege to open the 1868-69 season in September when the Opera House was opened under the management of Miles and Bates of the National Theater in Cincinnati. The high favor in which these two actors continued to be held among Columbus patrons was attested by the papers which welcomed them with the comment, "The opportunity of hearing the Couldocks in 'Willow Copse' supported by a good company is one that is not offered very frequently in Columbus in these latter days." Such a comment in praise of the Couldocks was also, by its wording, a criticism of current theatrical fare in the city at this time which might have been closer to the truth than puffs written daily over the past several months.

The fare for the week was the familiar Couldock repertoire which had been pleasing Columbus patrons for a number of seasons--Wil-

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18 *The Ohio State Journal*, Sept. 28, 1868.

19 Ibid., Sept. 28, 1868.
low Copse; The Chimney Corner; and One Touch of Nature. However, on Wednesday, September 30, the Couldocks introduced a new play in their repertoire. It was Louis XI of France starring Couldock as Louis and his daughter as the Dauphin. Saturday closed out the Couldock company leaving the Opera House in the hands of J. W. Lanergan who assumed management to feature his own company and the star performances of his wife and himself in two weeks of current dramatic favorites. On Thursday of the second week the Lanergan company introduced Boucicault's new play entitled The Long Strike which was played to the end of the week when the troupe departed for Zanesville, Ohio.20

In spite of what was obviously "slim pickings" for theater managers in the city of Columbus during this period, there was something which continued to draw and challenge them, even to bring them back after what was often financial failure. While Lanergan had played to what the papers referred to as "good houses," there was no indication of exactly how good those houses were and it is doubtful that Mr. Lanergan or any of the other managers at this time were entirely happy with the box office receipts. On closing night of the Lanergan troupe's first week in Columbus the Statesman wrote:

Tonight is the last night here for the present of the truly talented company of dramatic artists under the management of Mr. Lanergan. Coming here as he did in the midst of the most exciting political campaign we have lately known, Mr. Lanergan has not been patronized to the extent his excellent company deserves. We are sorry for this and could well wish it otherwise, yet he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has done better here than any other company could have done under the circumstances.21

20 Ibid., Oct. 24, 1868.

21 The Ohio Statesman, Oct. 24, 1868.
After the second week of the Lanergan company there was little of the regular dramatic fare to be seen until November 18. On that date John Ellsler occupied the Opera House to bring to Columbus a special attraction in the form of George L. Foxes' Great Spectacular Pantomime, *Humpty-Dumpty*, with colorful tableaux and dancing—an attraction which played through November 27 for a total of ten nights. At the close of Ellsler's engagement, the Opera House was given over to repairs including the installation of heating coils intended to augment the existing heating facilities. In the meantime, the State Street Theater was reopened under the management of that familiar figure from seasons back—John M. Kinney—who was presenting Louise Payne and Ada Wray in a musical variety bill. This particular troupe performed until Monday, January 14.

Again, and within a short time, John Ellsler's company returned to the Opera House, this time with a performance of *The Octoroon* on January 25 followed on Tuesday, January 26, with *The Hidden Hand* starring a member of the company who had been steadily rising in popularity—Miss Clara Morris. *Under the Gaslight* was the next attraction being shown for the second time in Columbus and written by Augustin Daly. The play, written in 1867, was the story of Laura Courtlandt, brought up by a wealthy family only to discover she is the daughter of a criminal. Deserted by her sweetheart, she returns to a life of poverty. The play takes her through five acts of suffering and adventure climaxed by the traditional dramatic

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22 Ellsler first presented this play in Columbus on March 25 of the previous season. *Supra*, p. 205.
thrill—a rescue from an oncoming locomotive. Quinn describes the sensation play further:

Up to 1867 Daly had been experimenting in the arrangement of material already clothed in literary form by other hands. He attempted in his first original play he produced to deal with real life in New York City. So far as the setting of Under The Gaslight is concerned he succeeded. The home of Laura and Pearl Courtland, the basement to which Laura flies when the secret of her birth is discovered .... the pier of the North River into which she is thrown are all elements of a stage reality which goes back to Benjamin A. Baker's A Glance At New York in 1848 and perhaps more immediately to Boucicault's The Poor of New York. Daly developed a scene which he claimed was suggested by the railroad crossing over which he passed daily. Snorky, the wounded soldier who watches over the heroine is bound to the railroad track by the villain, Byke. But Laura, who has escaped from both her captives and the North River, is in a nearby signal house .... When the audience has been worked up sufficiently, Laura breaks out and saves Snorky from an approaching train.23

After three nights of melodrama the company turned to the Burtonian drama, Dutch Governor and a rendition of Jack Sheppard to conclude the week and the engagement of the Ellsler troupe. Again Columbus experienced a period of theatrical inactivity broken only by a three-day engagement of Sherry's New York Theater, as the company was called, before a troupe from the National Theater in Cincinnati arrived in Columbus on Wednesday, March 3, bringing with it the famed Joseph Jefferson and his equally famous character, Rip Van Winkle, from the popular play of that name. The presentation ran four nights without change and called out the highest praise of the press which was typified in the writing of the Journal:

After once seeing Rip Van Winkle everyone can understand why the play can be presented night after night and seem more attractive the last night than on the first. The attraction is not in the drama, but in Mr. Jefferson's

23Quinn, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 11.
acting. Every sentence, trifling though it be, is made a perfect little something in itself to delight all who look for the artistic, and every sentence is a wonder in that it leaves the spectator in doubt as to whether a scene of the sentence is real or being acted.

There are few grand points in the drama. The flow of what we call "excellent" in acting is uninterrupted and the audience, instead of bursting into sudden roars of applause, laughs out a current of scarcely ceasing, well impressed satisfaction and enthusiasm. Toward the close, the spectator becomes as badly confused as old Rip himself and scarcely knows whether he's listening to Rip Van Jefferson or Joe Van Winkle or whether the whole affair is a dream or a reality.  

With the close of the Jefferson company on Saturday, there occurred another barren period which lasted to April 8 when Sherry's New York Theater returned for a three-night engagement. The press was most generous in its review of Sherry's company, but the audiences were disappointing. For reasons known only to them, the public was not responding to the current theatrical fare in spite of the fact that increased intervals of inactivity should have whetted theater appetites when a dramatic troupe did appear. Following closely the press notices there was not even a minstrel show in Columbus from April 10 to May 20, a remarkable occurrence considering the almost inexhaustible popularity of this form of theater.

However, such a phenomenon cannot be interpreted as a sign of the decline of minstrelsy for the exponents of Ethiopian humor were back in good number in subsequent weeks. In the meanwhile, Thursday, May 20, was the day for a return of John Ellsler to the Opera House bringing a performance of Rosedale with Clara Morris playing as Florence. Ellsler, it should be noted, was no longer a perennial Columbus

\[24\] March 5, 1869.
manager, at least to the extent that he was during the war years. His Columbus engagements, though oftener, were shorter in length. He no longer held a recurring lease on the Atheneum which once bore his name, that theater reverting back to its earlier identity as the State Street Theater. His earlier custom of playing Columbus with a resident company when legislature was in session was now a thing of the past and, in almost every case, his engagements in Columbus were but two or three night stands, just one of several engagements which his company might be making with a currently popular star or play. It was the Combination System which was becoming more and more the common practice.

A new sensation drama called Blow for Blow or The Twin Sisters followed on Friday and Saturday again starring Miss Morris, and the next week Brougham's new play, Lottery of Life, was introduced to Columbus in two performances. Productions were of high quality, seemingly, although they were still being witnessed by only fair houses and the Journal caustically remarked that "after the neglect of last week Elsler's patrons should crowd the house."25 The bill continued through Thursday with little improvement in attendance, however, and it was changed Friday to Fanchon with Miss Sylvester who took the usual Friday benefit. Clara Morris played Mother Fadet in this performance.

The engagement closed on Saturday evening with Woman's Trials and the old favorite, Family Jars, and the Opera House was given over to the Chapman sisters. These young ladies specialized in burlesque and comic operettas and seemed to play to better houses than did the Elsler troupe. The legitimate season, as anyone could see, had not been the best.

25May 25, 1869.
In summary.—Little can be said of the theatrical season just concluded because very little transpired. There were only two outstanding engagements in Columbus from September to the end of May—Ellsler's spectacular, "Humpty-Dumpty," and Joseph Jefferson playing Rip Van Winkle. As it was, there were only three guest artists who played Columbus in this time compared to twenty the season before. They were C. W. Couldock, Marietta Ravel, and Joseph Jefferson.

Taking an over-all view, the legitimate theater in Columbus could be said to have been more conspicuous by its absence than by its presence, and yet no good reason for this circumstance stands out. The Journal had commented the previous season on Miss Hayes' company playing the city "at an unfortunate time," but gave no clue as to whether it was referring to political or economic conditions or to the deplorable state of the theater. Neither was there any evidence that the theater in Columbus was reflecting unusual theater conditions elsewhere. Manager Lanergan's closing in October was regretted by the Statesman which commented: "Coming here in the midst of the most exciting political campaign we have lately known, Mr. Lanergan has not been patronized to the extent his excellent company deserves." Although it does not seem possible that a political campaign could have the depth and breadth of influence upon the theater to so impair two seasons, that is all that remains in explanation of the past season in Columbus unless one says simply that players were busy elsewhere.

26 April 24, 1868.

27 Oct. 24, 1868.
The Season of 1869-1870

An examination of the period from April 1868 to November 1869 shows a marked decline in theatrics in Columbus in contrast to the activity of former years. Naturally, one would expect a slowing down during the summer months—even a temporary suspension—but the summer of 1866 had seen an almost continuous sequence of dramatic fare right up to the fall months, and that was in addition to the circuses and other forms of summer entertainment. This circumstance, however, had not been repeated in the past two summers and the winter season just past was, with few exceptions, poor both in quality and quantity.

In past years minstrel troupes had provided abundant entertainment during the lean periods of legitimate theater, but even they were appearing with less frequency. The fact that no minstrel shows played Columbus from April 10 to May 20 might be called a coincidence, but it was a very unusual coincidence decidedly out of line with past developments. Acrobatic troupes, light opera companies, concerts, and a few combination dramatic and acrobatic aggregations made frequent appearances but to a lesser extent than in the past. John Ellsler's reluctance to spend as much time in Columbus as he had in the past was a disappointment to theater patrons, but there was little to be done about it. A company from Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati used to frequent Columbus when Ellsler was elsewhere, but that particular theater had been destroyed by fire and now other Cincinnati companies were coming to Columbus for short engagements.

With very few exceptions the quality throughout was poor. Both the Journal and the Statesman struggled hard to find something
complimentary to say to help the situation. Even the better companies
were finding it hard to arouse interest in their productions and the
poor quality displayed by inferior troupes may have been one of the
causes of the difficulties of both groups.

The 1869-70 theatrical season in Columbus began with a series
of small one-week engagements, the first being that of B. Macauley,
manager of Woods' Theater in Cincinnati, whose company was featuring
their guest artist, Miss Lotta. The popular little actress had not
played Columbus since September of 1866 and her appearance on October
7, after being away so long, was certain to be a personal success as
well as a boost to sagging theatrical interests. Miss Lotta began her
three-night engagement playing six characters in Female Detective
supported by Mr. Macauley as Barry Mallison. The farce Object of
Interest was also presented that night. Pet of The Petticoats, a fa­
vorite Lotta vehicle, and Nan, The Good For Nothing made up the Friday
bill and benefit for the star after which Little Treasure and Andy
Blake completed the Lotta engagement Saturday.

Ten days later the Opera House was the scene of six nights of
operatic burlesque featuring the three Worrell Sisters—Sophie, Irene,
and Jennie. In 1858 these young ladies began a theatrical career in
California being introduced there as vocalists and danseuses. In 1866
the Worrell Sisters appeared in New York where they played in several
popular burlesques until 1868 when they went on one of several starring
tours, which was likely the occasion of their being in Columbus at this
particular time.28

28See Allston Brown, op.cit., p. 402.
C. P. DeGroat's National Theater Troupe engaged the Opera House for a week beginning November 2 with the Partington Sisters as guest artists. The troupe was scheduled to begin their engagement on Monday, but they arrived from Xenia, Ohio, by train too late to perform that night and the opening was postponed to the day following. Under the Gaslight was their opening play followed by Wandering Boys and Pocohontas which made up the Wednesday program while The Hidden Hand was offered on Thursday.

A bit of the unusual took place the following Monday night when guest star Melissa Breslau was scheduled to appear with the DeGroat company in a production of the Greek tragedy Medea. Some time before the curtain, the proprietor of The Preston House, a hotel in Newark, Ohio, appeared at the theater with a bill for several hundred dollars against the DeGroat Company and demanded that all the receipts of the evening be turned over to him. The theater manager would not agree to this, but proposed that a certain percentage of each evening's proceeds be given to the Preston House man. Meanwhile, the hotel keeper proceeded to take charge of the box office and began selling tickets. Indications were that the house would be a large one when the manager countered with the announcement that there would be no performance and instructed the assembled people to request a refund at the box office. He also added that Tuesday's performance would be given under new management. As the Journal put it: "The people got their money, the hotel man didn't get his, Mrs. Breslau didn't have an opportunity to play Medea and everybody was indignant." 29 As promised, the Opera

29November 9, 1869.
House did reopen on Tuesday and the guest artist was again Mrs. Breslau who took the stage in the drama Leah, The Forsaken, but the management was not the same—it was now in the hands of Mr. J. M. Breslau, husband of the star. It is quite likely that Mr. Breslau's management lasted only during his wife's engagement and that the arrangement was only a device to side-step the claims of the hotel manager from Newark. The performance was a good one and, in the words of the Journal reporter: "Luck turned at the Opera House last night and Melissa Breslau played 'Leah, The Forsaken' to a good audience, the best that has greeted the company during its stay."

Mrs. Breslau has a good voice, a fine stage presence, and as far as we observed last night, succeeded well in playing a most difficult part. She was greeted with frequent rounds of applause and seemed from the first a favorite with the audience. Proper encouragement will cause the company to play with less timidity or with less of the "don't care down in the mouth" quality that was predominant in speech and act last week.

Mrs. Breslau continued her engagement with a performance of Camille on Wednesday, Mr. M. V. Lingham playing Armand, and the following night she played Medea which had been scheduled for Monday when the financial difficulty developed with the Newark hotel man. Medea was accompanied by the third and fourth acts of Camille and East Lynne followed as the Friday and benefit attraction, Lucretia Borgia playing Saturday, November 13. Well-filled houses attended all performances and reviews were very favorable.

During the second week of the current engagement audiences fell off somewhat with no apparent reason given except that Monday's piece,

30Nov. 10, 1869.
31Nov. 10, 1869.
Boucicault's *Formosa* was not of the quality expected--more in the play itself than in the performance thereof. The *Ohio State Journal* attacked the Boucicault script with vigor:

"*Formosa* is a case of prolonged epilepsy in five spasms closing with a final stroke of apoplexy. The fine powers of Mrs. Breslau have little feel in the piece. She evidently plays without any love for the part, which is simply that of a town woman with a town woman's longing for lost purity. Gambling and devilment of every description form the staple of the piece . . . The virtuous people are dull and commonplace to the last degree. The vicious people are vicious in a line of vice not presentable in decent society.

There are some flashes in the last two acts that give better scope for the player in deep passionate renderings, but we cannot feel that these are sufficient to make the drama worth production. Yet the audience called out the principal performers at the end of the fourth act and seemed to enjoy the play throughout.\(^{32}\)

On the following day the *Journal* remarked that "the friends of Mrs. Breslau will not be sorry to see her out of *Formosa* and in a drama in which more opportunity is given for a display of her powers."\(^{33}\)

Following *Formosa*, Mrs. Breslau undertook *East Lynne*, *Lucretia Borgia* and, on Friday, the selection was Kotzebue's *The Stranger*.

When the *Statesman* and the *Journal* appeared on the streets the next Monday they contained a letter from prominent citizens asking for a complimentary benefit for Mrs. Breslau; also included was Mrs. Breslau's note of acceptance. There was also the announcement of a complimentary benefit to be given Tuesday for W. L. Robinson [identity unknown] by members of the company for which a large number of them had volunteered their services. *Love's Sacrifice* was the feature intended

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\(^{32}\)Nov. 16, 1869.

\(^{33}\)Nov. 17, 1869.
for the Breslau benefit on Monday, but once again financial troubles in the form of a small strike disrupted the prepared program.

Messrs. DeGroat, Grierson, Hampton, and Balfour, after volunteering to play as announced, refused to do so unless extra pay was allowed. This was not agreed to and they declined to appear. Mrs. Breslau made a statement to this effect and stated that the money would be returned to the spectators at the door. The audience objected to this arrangement and insisted that a farce or something should be presented.

In accordance with this demand "Rough Diamond" was presented, Mrs. Breslau sustaining the leading parts and creating much enthusiasm. Mr. Lingham recited the celebrated soliloquy from Hamlet . . . and very well too. His voice being particularly well suited to this style of dramatic recitation, he was recalled and recited Othello's address to the senate which was very well received. The performance closed with three acts from "Lucretia Borgia" with Mrs. Breslau, Mr. Lingham, and Mr. Breslau in the leading parts. There will be no performance tonight.34

A month following the disagreement over Mrs. Breslau's benefit, Columbus theater patrons were introduced to the Coleman Juvenile Dramatic Troupe under the management of John Ellsler who placed the troupe upon the Opera House stage for a three-night billing. The troupe was composed of children ranging from six to twelve years of age whose names were given simply as Alice, Lewey, Clara, and Ettie, and their forte was the performance of adult comedies. The resulting effect was a performance in miniature of some of the comedies popular in the day including Maid With The Milking Pail and Nan, The Good For Nothing. Audiences for these performances were moderately good and, if the reviews were correct, Columbus could not make up its mind whether they liked the troupe or not:

Children in parts that adults only are expected to handle seem a little out of place. But as they do their

34Nov. 23, 1869.
parts well, the plays are very amusing . . . you must see these little dramatists and agree with the audience last night that they are very—well—say cute.\[35\]

In the meantime the State Street Theater\[36\] was reopened on December 30 under the management of Robinson and Baumer. The original opening date had been set as Christmas Day, but due to the failure of some members of the company to arrive on that date the opening was postponed. Members of the new troupe were listed as Miss Mary Preston, Imogene Ker, Mr, and Mrs. R. C. Grierson, Miss Phillips, C. P. DeGroat, Alex Balfour, and George Gaston. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of Mr. Hampton, all the mutinous members of the Breslau troupe appear in the new company and, although it cannot be verified, the Robinson listed as co-manager was very likely W. L. Robinson who was so abruptly deprived of his benefit as a result of the difficulty on the night of November 22. The management was a short one for after the close of the New Year's Day performance nothing more was heard of them.

Mr. Edwin Forrest, then considered the greatest living Shakespearean tragedian, made his second appearance in Columbus since the close of the Civil War, opening a three-night engagement at the Opera House on January 5 with a performance of Richelieu. Forrest was sustained by Miss Lillie (Lizzie Swinglehurst), an actress who had been traveling with Mr. Forrest for some time. Also playing major roles with Forrest was William Harris, a reputable actor who had resumed his

\[35\]The Ohio State Journal, Dec. 22, 1869.

\[36\]The name "Ellsler's Atheneum" was becoming less applicable to this theater as time passed since John Ellsler was no longer restricting his Columbus engagements to this theater as he once did.
career after discharge from the army. The production was of the best
as might be expected although admission prices reduced the house some-
what causing the press to complain.

Forrest's first night in Columbus this season was not
the success his first night was two years ago and yet he
had a splendid house. This does not show any falling off
in the admiration of the people for Forrest's acting, but
is evidence of a determination on the part of people to
resist the high tariff of prices. The manager made a
mistake in putting his prices for reserved seats up to
$1.50. But as he succeeds in presenting the grand old play
of "Richelieu" in splendid style ... we are not disposed
to scold even on this subject.37

On the following night Mr. Forrest appeared as Othello in the
play of that title, with Miss Lillie playing Desdemona and Harris the
treacherous Iago. In spite of an otherwise excellent rendition by
the great tragedian, the Statesman criticized Forrest's support:

The Iago of Mr. Harris did not render that perfect
satisfaction which should have gone hand in hand with Mr.
Forrest's Othello. There appeared to be, at times, a lack
of appreciation of the character and position which had
a painful effect on the minds of many in the audience.
The Desdemona of Miss Lillie was a sweet piece of acting
and gave general satisfaction to the audience. On the
whole the tragedy was received with marked expressions of
delight and the audience rendered unmistakable evidence of
their appreciation of its production.38

Edwin Forrest's performance of Othello was well described by
the Journal reporter:

Of Mr. Forrest's Othello it seems idle to speak. The
rapt attention of the audience being moved by every tone and
gesture like spellbound beings under the wizard's wand attests
the power of the actor. If one does wish that Othello was a
little less elocutionary in his rage and despair, a glance
at the audience almost unsettles the desire and convinces him

37Ohio State Journal, Jan. 6, 1870.
38Jan. 7, 1870.
that such effects cannot be produced on men and women of all classes and kinds without the power of genius.

The impetuous character of Othello will properly admit of more superhuman passion in the rendering than almost any other character of the legitimate drama. One expects something akin to raving at the grand tortured animal bellowing like a bull in the arena at the skilful stabs directed by the cool calculating devilish hand of Iago is a natural picture of a being red hot with passion and well nigh empty of the wiley intellectual powers of his tormentor.

Mr. Harris gave us last night a fine rendition of the Iago who was an impossibility anywhere off the stage. Ice is not colder than the real Iago. He is the real Mephistopheles and creature of perfect intellectuality but perfect only for bad . . . Passion would muddy his clear vision, and any of the rhetorical rant and tempest put upon his character is as much out of place as silk and fringe on the devil's own dressing gown.39

B. Macauley, manager of Woods' Theater in Cincinnati who had, in effect, opened the present season in Columbus last September, returned to the Opera House on January 25 with a company which opened a five-day engagement with The Hunchback. The featured artists were Mrs. D. P. Bowers and J. C. McCollom who played Julia and Master Walter respectively. East Lynne was offered on Tuesday followed by Elizabeth, Queen of England, Kotzebue's The Stranger, and Lady Audley's Secret. Each performance drew a good audience and the reviews were generous in praising the company:

Those of the audience who had witnessed the great Ristori and Mrs. Lander in the same character [Elizabeth] can never forget the queenly appearance of either . . . Some may have thought that none other than Ristori and Mrs. Lander could have assumed the difficult role of Elizabeth and presented it acceptably. The fortunate visitors to the Opera House last evening must have been disabused of all such opinions, granting they had been informed . . . But it was with a wonderful loss of self, the transformation of the talented lady in person to the

39 Jan. 7, 1870.
venerable queen, the seemingly actual presentation of the tender love, the burning jealousies, the mounting pride, the terrible severity of crossed and offended majesty, all these presented with that naturalness akin to personal experience; it was with these that the fair lady's audience was enraptured and by reason of these, she achieved a triumph not second to her lustrous compeers of Italy and America. The Elizabeth of Mrs. Bowers was perfect; what more can be said?

The Essex of Mr. McCollom, though not equal to that of Tayleur, was a masterpiece well worth the frequent attestations of appreciation bestowed by the audience.¹⁰

When Elise Holt, English actress, made such a striking success of her American debut at the Olympic Theater in Boston in December of 1868 playing the burlesque attraction *Lucretia Borgia, M. D.* she was immediately on demand in every major city across the country. However, it was not until after her return from California over a year later that John Ellsler was able to engage her for appearances in Ohio including the capital city. At the same time that Ellsler was featuring Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes in Cleveland he sent his own company to Columbus in support of Miss Holt whom he scheduled to play at the Opera House five nights beginning Monday, March 7. *Lucretia Borgia, M. D.* was the burlesque artist's initial performance which was preceded by a farce entitled *Whites and Browns* (actually the play *Mr. and Mrs. Peter White* under a new title) and featuring Miss Adela Palmer. The fact that Miss Holt was, in private life, Mrs. Henry Palmer may suggest a possible relationship existing between Miss Holt and Miss Palmer. About the production the *Journal* reporter wrote:

> The reign of burlesque commenced in earnest at the Opera House last night with the coming of the pretty, spritely, and dashing Miss Holt. Miss Elise, Harry Wall, and the funny people of Ellsler's company took the boards

¹⁰*The Ohio Statesman*, Jan. 28, 1870.
the steamer Daniel Doo. These features were hailed as realistic achievements by the March 17 issue of the Journal:

A great steamboat scene in Act III was made more beautiful and real by the moving panorama of Hudson River scenery by moonlight. This, in itself, with its mountains and shadows and grand sky pictures excites the liveliest emotions of admiration and enthusiasm. For beautiful and magnificent effects this long extensive moonlight scenery stands unequalled by anything of the kind ever produced here . . . The freight deck and furnace room and the burning steamer scenes of Act IV strike the nerves from a new direction and intensify the excitement coming as a result of Act III. Those who assume that there cannot be scenes of great dramatic power in drama of the realistic school should see Acts III and IV of this drama.\(^2\)

With the departure of Ellsler's company, Sherry's New York Theater troupe returned to the Opera House for another week, this time featuring Mrs. Julia Blake as leading actress. Mrs. Blake was the former Julia Weston of Boston, Massachusetts, who made her debut on the stage as a child and was one of the first "Little Evas" in Uncle Tom's Cabin, a role which she played through the mid-west for sometime.

The month of April and most of May saw relatively little activity for the patrons of legitimate drama in Columbus, Ohio, there being nothing of this nature until the announced appearance of Laura Keene and her New York Troupe on Friday, May 27.\(^3\) During this interval of little activity, however, the Atheneum, now the property of William Neil, was being remodeled.\(^4\) Store rooms were being added to the front opening on the sidewalk with a hall between them leading back to

\(^2\)March 17, 1870.

\(^3\)Ibid., May 27, 1870.

\(^4\)May 6, 1870.
in first rate style from the burlesque standpoint and, after
the farce, put "Lucretia Borgia, M. D." through with such
preponderance of oddity and wreckless ludicrousness in
costume and song, dance and action generally that if the
admirer of the burlesque wasn't pleased and the stickler
for the legitimate drama indignant, the case is a hopeless
one. 

The bill was repeated Tuesday before being replaced by a bur­
lesque of Scott's novel, Ivanhoe, in which Miss Elise played a char­
acter named Wamba, The Joker, based on the Scott character. This
performance was also repeated, and on Friday Miss Holt played her ben­
efit offering a burlesque called Nip or High, Low, Jack and the Game
with which the actress closed out on Saturday.

For the closing night of Miss Holt's engagement, however, Mr.
Ellsler introduced a box office gimmick apparently designed to increase
ticket sales. It was announced in the papers that to every individual
presenting a dollar in payment for a fifty-cent ticket the manager would
return the change in silver. The next day it was announced that over
$300 in silver had been paid out in change at the ticket office which,
in itself, gives a general idea of the minimum attendance at the Opera
House on that particular night.

Although Elise Holt continued on her tour, the Ellsler company
remained in Columbus to introduce on Monday the new Daly sensation play
Flash of Lightning which ran through the entire week. The piece was a
dazzling display of exciting scenes attempted in a realistic style of
staging, among the highlights of which was a steamboat race, a panorama
of the Hudson River by moonlight, the cage of fire, and the burning of

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March 8, 1870.
the old theater structure which had always been a short distance back from the street. Mr. Neil did not live to see the completion of the work for he died on May 18, 1870, after a grave illness at eighty years of age.

Laura Keene and her company were on a western tour when they played a two-night engagement at the Columbus Opera House Friday and Saturday, May 27 and 28. The feature was Boucicault's emotional drama, *Hunted Down*, with Miss Keene in the role of Mary Leigh and with Frank Mordaunt as John Leigh, while *Our American Cousin* was performed on May 28. With the company was Collin Stewart who had been a member of Ellsler's company when it was regularly playing Columbus in 1862.

**In summary.**—The 1869-70 season saw very little improvement in theatrical fortune over the season preceding it. Theater attendance was still very low and there were long periods of inactivity, the two most extensive being the months of December and April. However, guest appearances did increase from three the previous season to nine in the season just closed. There were no outstanding productions to highlight the year except *Formosa* which was subject to criticism.

**The Season of 1870-1871**

During the summer and early fall of 1870 the attention and interest of the public was taken up by the state fair, but even more so by the Franco-Prussian War. Both during the war and for some months thereafter, the papers frequently announced concerts, lectures, and other functions of like nature whose objective was the raising of funds for the widows and orphans of one side of the conflict or the other.

45 Ibid., May 19, 1870.
Columbus had a fairly large German population, located mostly on the south side, which naturally took an interest in the fortunes of their ancestral homeland. However, there were frequent benefits of this type for the French as well.

Of some significance, particularly to the theatrical profession, was the passage of the new ordinance governing the licensing of theaters, circuses, and other exhibitions. At the meeting of City Council, July 18, 1870, Mr. English, from the Committee on Ordinances and Revision, submitted a change to existing regulations governing theatrical exhibitions requiring such exhibitions to pay a license fee of five dollars a day. A circus paid twenty dollars a day, an animal show ten dollars a day, concerts five dollars a day, and any other show or lecture five dollars a day. Owners of halls and buildings generally used for expository purposes were to pay a yearly fee of $100. The new regulation passed.46

On July 14, the Journal commented on the fact that John Ellsler and his company were then playing to good audiences in Akron, Ohio, but the favorite manager did not come near Columbus until the month of October and then it was with a burlesque troupe. Meanwhile, the city had to be satisfied with circus fare and miscellaneous theater, including the ever-present minstrel, until September 5 when the papers announced the coming of the Opera Bouffe Burlesque Company starring the Wallace Sisters—Agnes, Jennie, Minnie, and Maude—with the comedian S. B. Villa. Clorinda, The Girl of The Period, a comic operatic burlesque, was presented by the Wallace Sisters on Monday and Tuesday evenings and

46 The Ohio State Journal, July 19, 1870.
was greeted by a full house. *Caste* was the play announced for Wednesday which was a drastic change of pace if the play was T. W. Robertson's story of social snobbery, although there was no indication that it was otherwise. *Frau Diavolo* was the Thursday attraction and on Friday, September 9, the Wallace Sisters presented *The Grand Duchess*, closing on Saturday with the operatic drama, *The Invisible Prince* and a piece called *The Little Sentinel*.

As previously mentioned, John Ellser occupied the Opera House for two weeks beginning October 3 with the Harry Beckett English Blondes Troupe. This ensemble was a remnant of the original company brought to this country by the famous Lydia Thompson, a theatrical figure whose role in the changing American theater was as significant as that of Ada Isaac Menken or *The Black Crook*.

When Lydia Thompson came across the waters from England she brought one of the best burlesque and comic opera companies that ever set foot on this shore. Her intrusion upon the established stage mores of this country created a flutter of excitement that resulted in huge monetary benefits to the manageress. Her company consisted of four British Amazons like herself, and a comedian named Willy Edouin. After the first engagement in New York, Ella Chapman was signed on as an ingenue, she being one of the Chapman Sisters until her sister, Blanche, married and discontinued the team. The Thompson Troupe "played at British burlesque--usually a lampoon on the lives of the gods on Olympus or on some of the classics of English literature. They sang and danced and told jokes which pleased the audience no end."
There was no salaciousness, no double entendre, and no offensive dancing.\(^{47}\)

But Lydia had committed one great fault in the eyes of those of Puritan mind—she had introduced the wearing of tights on the American stage. The effect was electric and the blades, young and old, stood in line to get tickets and gathered at the stage door to get a closer look at the beauties. From pulpits and news sheets the storm of protest grew and so did the size of the audiences. "In two season Lydia Thompson had played to a gross of over half a million dollars."\(^{48}\)

But like so many successful groups even today, they failed to stick together. The usual "flare-ups" occurred, sparked by jealousies and over-reaching ambition along with personal egos which soon left Lydia with not one of her original people. Beckett roamed over the country with the British Blondes and lost everything he ever made. Miss Weathersby joined other organizations while Larkham, "the beautiful Pauline," drifted into The Black Crook. Hall found more congenial company elsewhere as did some of the others who were brilliant in grotesque comedy but who eventually scattered themselves over the country. Eventually some of the original members reunited—Miss Thompson, Miss Weatherby, and Mr. Beckett. With these and two ladies—Miss Dubois and Miss Zurbini—who possessed fine vocal powers, and a

\(^{47}\)Ford, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 269.

\(^{48}\)\textit{Ibid.}
dozen other ladies and gentlemen, the great lady of burlesque, Miss Lydia, continued to travel but not quite with the same reputation the original company had enjoyed.\(^{49}\)

When the British Blondes appeared at the Columbus Opera House on October 3, Harry Beckett, manager of the group, was still troup ing but independent of Miss Thompson. *Luna* or *The Boy Who Cried For The Moon*, was the initial presentation and it bore not a few similarities to the classic *Endymion* by John Lyly. *The Serious Family* completed the first night's entertainment and on Tuesday the bill was repeated.

A very large audience assembled at the Opera House last night to greet the British Blondes, and from the enthusiasm manifested it is fair to expect an equally large audience will patronize them this evening . . . The troupe does not belong to that class by which the public is so often afflicted where a single star of ordinary magnitude is supported by an indifferent collection, but each one appears to possess all the necessary accomplishments for the successful production of burlesque. The singing in "Luna" last night combined cultivation with an appreciation of humor and just enough of the "shoo-fly" order of music was introduced to effect a commendable versatility. The dialogue was spiced with local hits and the stage management and costumes received the proper attention.\(^{50}\)

Fair audiences witnessed a performance of *Forty Thieves* and J. Morton's *Grimshaw, Bagshaw, and Bradshaw* on Thursday and the next night *Sinbad, The Sailor* was staged for Mr. Beckett's benefit. The *Journal* took the occasion to comment on burlesque generally:

> Burlesque companies either go up slowly or go down rapidly with the better class of theater-goers. All people, at first, are a little afraid of them. If the coarse and low predominate the few ladies who venture drop off and the company plays the rest of the season to audiences not particular as to what they hear. Otherwise, if there is talent as well as beautiful forms, if the

\(^{49}\)Ibid., p. 270

\(^{50}\)The Ohio Statesman, Oct. 4, 1870.
company plays to present the pieces as a business the public soon discovers it and patronise. The British Blondes have gone up in the scale; they put something good in every night's program, and make an effort to please as artists and they have succeeded.51

A burlesque of William Tell and a second presentation of The Forty Thieves on Saturday concluded the engagement of the Beckett Company.

Manager Ellsler's attraction for his second week at the Opera House was Frank Mayo. Mr. Mayo was another actor claiming Boston as his birthplace, but it was across the continent in The American Theater of San Francisco that he made his first professional appearance. Since then he had played star engagements all across the country, being best remembered as one of the early players of Davey Crockett although his skill and his repertoire went far beyond it.

The Streets of New York was another play in which Mayo gained distinction as the character, Tom Badger; he opened his engagement on October 17 and repeated the play the next night. The piece was a typical Boucicault melodrama of five acts, written in 1857, wherein the hero manages to rescue "the papers" from a burning tenement house and thereby comes into the money which enables him to marry the heroine and break the villain's power. The piece was not pleasing to the Journal reporter, however, who complimented Mayo but spurned the play:

"The Streets of New York" still draws marvelously. It is one of the worst of Boucicault's pieces of carpentry and fireworks and yet with the really fine playing of Mr. Mayo one can well endure, if not enjoy, one night of it, especially if the insufferably stupid and tedious supper scene were cut. That is useful only as a provocative to drink. Drink or chloroform is the only refuge from it. Every saloon (not the saloons of the rich, however, spoken of by one of the young ladies in her part) should contribute

51 Oct. 8, 1870.
handsomely to have the scene retained; otherwise, in the
name of a suffering public, let it be cut.52

A performance of Hamlet was happily received by the patrons on
Wednesday, October 19, and, by request, was repeated the following
evening with Mayo in the part of the Prince. John Ellsler played
Polonius, Mrs. Welcot was the Queen, and Bella Goldes played Ophelia.
The Statesman of October 20 made some interesting observations on Mayo's
portrayal of Hamlet:

That Mr. Mayo has a grand conception of the part cannot be denied. He looked every inch a Hamlet, though we
never saw him before out of his usual color "a suit of
sables." We confess to being disappointed in a measure
that his lack of accent and punctuation and his evident
desire to hurry through sentences which, were the rendering
more natural, would have developed more of the author
and less of the actor. Beside, he was slightly imperfect
and given to a transposition of the words in the text which
destroyed the beauty if not the perfect jingle of the verse
in blank. We deplore his alteration from the time honored
and acknowledged custom of suit to the
language and we thought there were several tables and chairs
too many in several of the ideal scenes where none should
be used.

The Journal took a similar view of the performance:

Mr. Mayo is a fine player. He will do well to make
a better specialty than Badger, well as he does that. It
is not worth the talent he expends upon the characterization.

The Chicago Times has this to say of Mayo's Hamlet:
"In very many respects Mr. Mayo's Hamlet is very unlike to
the Hamlet of any other actor. In this originality--
considered infallible--he used evidence of a genius that
will ultimately triumph over dramatic prejudices and assert
his right to public favor.

"In some respects, however, Mr. Mayo's Hamlet closely
resembles other Hamlets, as of necessity it must unless he
omitted the part altogether. In the Ghost scene he reminded
us of Macready; when instructing the players he was
Edwin Booth; in the scene where the play is given in the
presence of the King, his snake-like writhing and his furious
mockery of the conscious-stricken king was like that of

52 Oct. 19, 1870.
another Booth whose name should be whispered with a shudder. But more than any other did he resemble Charles Kean in the famous soliloquy 'to be or not to be,' even to the 'head-notes' and peculiar mouthing of the text."53

Mr. Mayo performed Wilkie Collins' *Man and Wife* on Friday and *Lancashire Lass* on Saturday for his final appearance. No mention was made of a Friday benefit which might have been omitted, an occasional happening, but not frequent enough to be called a new practice.

Over a month lapsed before the Opera House saw another popular dramatic star. This time it was the comedian, John E. Owens who gave Columbus an opportunity to see him in his famous characterization of Solon Shingle in his original play of that title when he appeared under the management of George Fuller. On Friday, November 25, Mr. Owens began his performance with the comedy *Everybody's Friend* playing the character Major Wellington De Boots. *Solon Shingle* was the accompanying piece. On Saturday evening *Solon Shingle* was repeated with a comedy called *The Living Indians* to conclude the brief Owens engagement.

John Owens was an actor high in the esteem of the public as well as in the opinions of his fellow actors. His forte was, without doubt, comedy wherein he displayed an endless source of wit and pantomime.

Clara Morris describes him as an actor and personality:

Mr. John E. Owens was of medium height and very brisk in all his movements walking with a short and quick little step. He had a wide mouth, good teeth and a funny pair of eyes. The eye-balls were very large and round and he showed an astonishing amount of their whites which were of unusual brilliancy and luster; this added to his power of rolling them wildly about in their sockets making them very funny indeed. They reminded many people of a pair of large peeled onions.

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53 Nov. 20, 1870.
I think his most marked peculiarity was his almost frantic desire to provoke laughter in the actors about him. He would willingly throw away an entire scene . . . in order to secure a hearty laugh from an actor or actress whom he knew not to be easily moved to laughter; and what was more astonishing still, if an actress in playing a scene with him fell from tittering into helpless laughter and failed to speak her line, he made no angry protests but regarded the situation with dancing eyes and delighted smiles seeming to accept the break-down as proof-positive that he was irresistible as a fun maker.54

It was January 9, 1871, before another theatrical company was engaged in Columbus. On this date the Chapman Sisters, with the comedian C. B. Bishop, opened a week of burlesque entertainment at the Opera House. Blanche and Ella Chapman were the daughters of Harry Chapman and Julia Drake and came to the notice of John Ford when their father was stage manager at the Holiday Street Theater in Baltimore. Both girls were talented and Ella was one of the first portrayers of Little Eva in the early days of the famous Uncle Tom's Cabin. She was only three or four years old when she "went to heaven" on a wire.

Impressed with their early exhibitions, Ford gave them a starring name—"The Chapman Sisters"—and launched them on a brief but most interesting career as a double attraction. They were a starring team during the years 1864-68 with Blanche taking a solo lead now and then and Ella appearing as a singer, dancer, and banjo player. They were then fourteen and fifteen years of age. With the marriage of Blanche, Ella took a long step in the amusement world of that day by joining Lydia Thompson's company of British Blondes and later went to England for a long period of dramatic activity there. Blanche, who had retired to raise a family, eventually returned to the stage to be-

54Morris, op. cit., p. 269.
come a light prima donna of note, having at one time seventy-two leading roles at her command. 55

A full house welcomed the Chapman Sisters in their opening performance January 9. *Kennilworth*, a burlesque in which Blanche played The Earl of Leicester and Mr. Bishop the part of Queen Elizabeth, was the attraction accompanied by *My Precious Betsy* (Bobtails and Wagtails). The next night they played a grotesque version of *Alladin* and again Mr. Bishop played the female role. *Frau Diavolo* was the Wednesday bill with *Sleeping Beauty* on Thursday and *Cinderella* on Friday for the Chapman Sisters' benefit. Mr. Bishop took a benefit at the final performance Saturday, January 14, with a burlesque concoction entitled *Much Ado About A Merchant of Venice* in which he played Shylock and the Sisters played Lorenzo and Bassanio.

A very short engagement of William Horace Lingard and his wife, Alice Dunning Lingard, was begun at the Opera House on February 1, 1871. Mr. Lingard, whose right name was William Thomas, was a comic vocalist coming to this country from England and who made his debut in New York as a mimic. Alice Dunning was also of English birth and made her first stage appearance at the Grecian Theater, London, as a vocalist. She married Mr. Lingard in 1866 and arrived in this country with him in 1868 making her American debut at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. 56 Their Columbus engagement of only two nights featured Tom Robertson's *David Garrick* plus twenty sketches by W. H. Lingard and *Pretty Piece of Business* with *Naval Engagements* featuring their small company. For

56Brown, op. cit., p. 221.
some unknown reason no reviews of these performances appeared in either of the major Columbus papers.

Fifteen days later another segment of the former Lydia Thompson troupe played two nights in the capital city opening on February 17. It was announced as "Lisa Webb from the original Lydia Thompson Troupe with a burlesque opera and comedy company."57 Laughing Hyena and Ernani played the first night while The Jealous Husband and La Somnam-bula were the concluding pieces presented Saturday. Good houses attended both nights and the reviews were generally complimentary.

John Elsler once again favored Columbus with an engagement of a week with his regular company and Columbus patrons were pleased to see a brief return to the legitimate and standard plays which were announced. The engagement began with Oriana, a new drama in which the guest artist, Miss Lizzette Bernard, played three roles and appeared in songs, dances, and banjo solos. Her bill was repeated Tuesday after which it was replaced by The French Spy and the farce Katy O'Sheil which, in turn, gave way to Fanchon and Friday's benefit featuring Irish Emigrant and a repeat of Oriana. Jack Sheppard and The French Spy were played for the troupe's final performance Saturday.

When Sherry brought his New York Theater troupe to Columbus on April 17, he had with him three actors of note—J. W. Carner, Miss Virginia Howard, and S. K. Chester. Little is known of Carner, but Miss Howard was a Philadelphia actress, born there in November of 1834, and who made her first public appearance at the Chestnut Street Theater as

57The Ohio State Journal, Feb. 17, 1871.
Florinda in *The Apostate*. S. K. Chester, whose right name was Knapp, was originally from Baltimore where he first played on the stage as Lehaire in *Eustache Baudin*. Beginning in 1865 he was seen in the New York theaters.

Sherry's company opened with *Rip Van Winkle*, Mr. Carner playing Rip and Miss Howard assuming the role of Gretchen. The play was repeated on the following night. On Wednesday a new drama called *Mary Warner or A Wife's Trials* was introduced to Columbus. The play had first been produced at Booth's Theater in New York with Kate Bateman and Mrs. D. P. Bowers. Miss Howard and Mr. Chester assumed the leads in the Columbus production. *Dora* was given Thursday along with *Black Eyed Susan* and the Friday program consisted of *Rosedale* with Chester as Elliott Gray and Miss Howard as Lady Florence. Another new drama, *Out On the Streets*, along with John E. Owens' own piece, *Solon Shingle*, concluded the engagement Saturday, Mr. Carner playing Solon, after which the company moved to Mansfield, Ohio.

The season of 1870-71 was brought to a close in May with the engagement of Miss Fanny B. Price under the management of David Hanchett. The engagement opened on May 17 with *Nobody's Daughter* announced as being staged in Columbus for the first time. Miss Price assumed three parts in the new piece and Mr. Hanchett was welcomed back in his role of Captain Copplestone. It was in August of 1864 that D. Hanchett had last played in Columbus with his stepdaughter.

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59 Ibid.

60 *The Ohio State Journal*, April 19, 1871.
The Statesman was not particularly pleased with the new play:

Quite a critical but not a very large audience witnessed "Nobody's Daughter" last night, but little could be expected from the company with the version of Miss Brandon's novel presented. It is full of improbabilities, abrupt turns, and venerable staginess, but the conspicuous passages were rendered well.61

The Thursday attraction was Boucicault's four-act drama, The Long Strike, with Miss Fannie as Jane Leroyd and Hanchett as Mr. Moneypenny. This time it was the Journal's turn to be critical and the result was a severe chastisement of the public:

"The Long Strike" which is a very lucid representation of the frequently painful outcomings of working men's rebellions against their employers (with a tale of love terminating in bitterness and tragedy thrown in to season the thing) was played by Miss Fanny B. Price and her confident supporters to an audience that (we dislike to confess it) somewhat approached beggarly numbers. Had it been a nigger show, even below the mediocre standard, a healthy outpouring of people could not have been stayed under any circumstances. By this we don't mean to reprove but merely to hold up in judicious comparison Columbus tastes or predilections.62

The Statesman also spoke out in criticism of the house, but it was even less impressed by the efforts of the orchestra:

The audience at the Opera House last night was small; scarcely large enough to encourage the players in even a moderate endeavor to please. Nevertheless, "The Long Strike," one of the best of the sensational plays now raging, was very creditably produced . . . It was a shame to mar the performance with the work of an orchestra that doesn't amount to enough for criticism; it was simply laughing stock last night.63

61May 18, 1871.
62May 19, 1871.
63May 19, 1871.
Mr. Hanchett introduced another play unfamiliar to Columbus patrons on Friday entitled *Frou Frou*, written by A. Daly. Miss Price played the title role and among the cast was listed Miss Julie Hanchett, most likely a younger daughter of D. Hanchett. The States man reporter was pleased with the performance and also with the improvement in the orchestra:

There was a larger audience at the Opera House last night than had greeted the company since the opening of the season and the performance was decidedly the best yet given . . . It is due to the management to say also that there was a very radical improvement in the music over the night previous.64

On Saturday the company closed with the sensation drama *The Octoroon*, with Miss Fannie as Zoe and Julia Hanchett playing the part of Dora Sunnyside. This play was always certain of success whenever it was staged, provided, of course, that it was reasonably well acted and properly managed. Arthur Quinn divulges the possible secret of its appeal in his *History of The American Drama From The Beginning to The Civil War*:

The slave auction and the burning of the steamer Magnolia on which McCloskey has been imprisoned may have appealed to the theatrical instincts of the audiences, but the sympathy for human suffering carried the play even more surely into popular favor. Jefferson, who acted Salem Scudder rightly accounts for the approval of audiences made up of both parties to the slavery struggle who viewed the play. "The truth of the matter is," he said, "it is non-committal." The dialogue and characters of the play made one feel for the South, but the action proclaimed against slavery and called loudly for its abolition. It was the dramatic action of *The Octoroon* far more than the dialogue which thrilled the hearer of the play.65

64 It must be remembered that Miss Price is a stepdaughter to D. Hanchett. See *Supra*, p. 124.

65 *May 20, 1871.*

66 *Quinn, op. cit.*, p. 374.
The smash ending of *The Octoroon* was typical of the sensation drama of the day: A violent struggle and fight take place ending with the triumph of Wahnottee who drags McCloskey along the ground, then takes the knife and stabs him repeatedly. George enters bearing Zoe in his arms—-all characters rush on—-noise increasing—-the steam vessel blows up—-grande tableau and the curtain falls.67

**In summary.**—Two rather distinct trends characterize the theatrical season in Columbus: First, there is an increasing number of burlesque and comic opera companies appearing. A list of legitimate stage personalities who recently played the capital city show even fewer than the season before, but the intervals between were occupied by such performers as the Wallace Sisters, Miss Liza Webb, The Chapman Sisters, and Mlle. Lizette Bernard—-all specialists in comic opera and burlesque.

The second noticeable development is the increase in the number of new plays being performed. *Frou-Frou; Oriana; Mary Warner; Out On the Streets,* and *The Long Strike* compose a list of plays new to Columbus greater than would have been found in any previous season. That old stand-by *The French Spy* and others were still popular, but Boucicault's Combination System, placing emphasis upon the play, was beginning to make itself felt, slowly but surely, in the appearance of new plays.

**The Season of 1871-1872**

Although Tony Pastor's vaudeville troupe at the Opera House on August 24 and 25 might be credited with being the first engagement of

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the season, a more auspicious and grandiose beginning occurred four days later. On August 29, a combination from New York City, known as Palmer and Company, put *Alladin* on the Columbus boards for four consecutive nights. It was the first time Columbus had seen the spectacle performed since John Ellsler's company played it in April of 1865. It cannot be ascertained whether this was the same dramatization of the Arabian Nights tale arranged by Ellsler for that early production or not. Under such copyright laws as then existed, it would have been possible to present *Alladin* even though Ellsler had not given out the rights of production. Yet, considering the source of the material, it is quite feasible that the Palmer production was based upon another arrangement of the story than that of John Ellsler.

The major criticism of the performance came from the pen of the *Journal* reporter who was reasonably well pleased with the performance itself but found great fault with the accompanying orchestra and certainly with the conduct of the audience--or with a management that would permit such conduct:

Much of the original and introductory music was nothing wonderful, and may we not humbly suggest that a few more penny whistles be added to the orchestra. It is dreadful it is and all the people thought so.

The transformation scene at the close of the third act was a magnificent triumph of scenic art and it was even more gorgeous and glittering than the scene made famous for the part of The Seven Sisters here a few years ago. Where are the police? This question was asked not a few times last night.

The gallery audience were of intensively concert hall order and behaved in such a way as to deserve bread and water.

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and about thirty days apiece. This abominable rowdy element must be squelched or decent people must stay away from the Opera House. The screams, hisses, cat-calls, and ear-piercing whistling of last night would have done credit to a third rate concert seller. Let the management see that this senseless and rowdy conduct be stopped.  

After four consecutive performances of Alladin the company closed out its engagement on Saturday with Donizetti's comic opera Daughter of the Regiment.

Following the lapse of more than a month, the papers announced the engagement of the Mark Smith Comedy Company which opened at the Opera House Monday, October 16, with Sheridan's School for Scandal, Mark Smith playing the role of Sir Peter. Concerning the performance and the company, the Statesman commented prior to the opening:

We congratulate our readers on an event in the show line the like of which is seldom encountered in this city. The world advances, but the character of two-thirds of the shows that visit us indicate that the tastes of those who patronize amusements have been considerably adulterated by the exhibition of extremities and an overdose of plantation ditties. Following a surfeit of dramatic and musical quackery, the appearance of the noted comedian, Mr. Mark Smith, with a company possessing the talent necessary to render some of the fine old comedies that gave the stage its character in other days, will be hailed with delight.

The day following The School For Scandal the Statesman reviewed the play thus:

Mark Smith's comedy company made their first appearance at the Opera House last evening in "The School for Scandal" to a moderate audience not up to the standard of the shoo-fly burnt cork opera, or legitimate drama. If the patrons of the Opera House, however, vindicate good taste, Mr. Smith will this evening receive the pecuniary reward of which last night's receipts were but a sparse preface. The stirling old English comedy was played in a manner which would have

70Aug. 30, 1871.

71Oct. 16, 1871.
done credit to eastern theaters. Mr. Smith, as Peter Teazle, was all that could be asked and where the support was generally good we forebear criticism in a few individual cases. But we would suggest to the management that in the orchestral department the music was only good so far as it went.\textsuperscript{2}

The Ohio State Journal was obviously of the same sentiments for that paper came out with a significant commentary that could well be applied to much of the theatrical fare of the twentieth century:

We feel that we cannot speak too highly of the company and the performance last night. Every member is a star. Each is an actor of the good old times, such as we used to see, when a theater was a place where the plays of Shakespeare, Knowles, Robertson, and other great dramatists were produced to appeal to the intellects and move the heart, to instruct and amuse—before the day when it was prostituted to the show of legs and female charms to appeal to the mere animal nature. They are not only actors of the old time, but first class actors who would have, even in the palmiest days of the legitimate drama, taken position in the foremost rank of their profession.\textsuperscript{3}

These remarks by the Journal reporter suggest rather clearly the trend of theatrical fare in these times and the fact that this trend did not necessarily meet with the unanimous approval of the public—that is if we may rely upon the press as representative of public tastes. Already there is an awareness of the increasing popularity of variety over legitimate drama as well as the direction taken by burlesque which eventually would doom it to the status of morally degenerate entertainment wherein it now resides. Note should be made also of the writer's clear definition of the ethical responsibilities of the theater which, in the face of prevailing dramatic fare, appears to be suffering neglect and on the way to eventual discard.

\begin{itemize}
  \item [\textsuperscript{2}] Oct. 17, 1871.
  \item [\textsuperscript{3}] Oct. 17, 1871.
\end{itemize}
But the Journal was not through, and on the day following there appeared therein a bitter rebuke of Columbus citizens for their supposedly low theatrical tastes and their indifference to quality productions:

The attendance at the Opera House last night was quite small. A fact which is to be greatly regretted as the performance was certainly deserving of a well-filled house. The excellence of the entertainment the previous night ought certainly to have insured a much larger attendance last night and that there was not, lamentably indicates the taste of opera-going citizens for vulgar dramatic performances. For had there been instead, a "nigger" minstrel performance or an entertainment bordering on the low and coarse with which the Opera House has been occupied for several nights previously, the house would have been filled in every available nook and corner. Why is it that when a play—such as has been occupying the stage the last two nights, of real refinement and worth—is announced that there must be such a slim attendance of our citizens to witness it? The answer is suggestive. It is because of the corrupt taste of the opera-going portion of our citizens.

Meanwhile, The Heir At Law was staged on Wednesday night, October 18, to what was considered a good house although there were complaints of a cold building. On Thursday The Rivals was presented with Mark Smith, Mr. Burroughs, Miss Bailey, and Mrs. Flood dominating the cast. On Friday, October 20, Smith was given a benefit for which Old English Gentleman and Nine Points of the Law made up the program. The company concluded its engagement with the Friday benefit and moved to Springfield, Ohio.

The next week the Ellsler company opened an engagement at the Opera House featuring the noted tragedian, Edwin Forrest, who had played

74 Oct. 18, 1871.

75 Ibid.
the capital city over a year and a half ago.\textsuperscript{76} Shakespeare's \textit{King Lear} was the opening piece with Forrest as Lear and Mrs. Ellsler as Cordelia. Also in the cast was James O'Neill, father of the playwright Eugene O'Neill, who appeared as Edgar.\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Virginius} was performed on Tuesday with Miss Effie Ellsler, daughter of the manager, in a prominent role while Richelieu and Jack Cade were offered Wednesday and Thursday respectively. \textit{King Lear} was again presented Friday for Mr. Forrest's benefit and last appearance and the company performed alone Saturday with a rendition of \textit{Satan In Paris}. Monday, October 30, Ellsler's company presented \textit{After Dark or London By Night} starring James O'Neill and Bella Golden of the company and the play was repeated twice more before closing on Wednesday night. Good audiences witnessed the later performances, but the papers earlier complained of the fact that the city's favorite theatrical manager was playing to very poor houses.\textsuperscript{78}

With Ellsler's departure, the Opera House was immediately taken up by John T. Ford of the Baltimore Grand Opera House and Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati.\textsuperscript{79} The initial performance that Thursday night was \textit{Hamlet}, sustained by an excellent company. The role of Hamlet was taken by James Wallack, Jr. while Ophelia was played by Mrs. Caroline Richings Bernard. Mrs. Bernard was the same Caroline, daughter to Peter Richings who had played with her father on the Columbus stage prior to his retirement in 1867 and before her marriage to P. Bernard.

\textsuperscript{76}Supra., p. 223.

\textsuperscript{77}The \textit{Ohio State Journal}, Oct. 23, 1871.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., Oct. 30, 1871.

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., Nov. 2, 1871.
But two performances remained in the John T. Ford engagement one of which was Bulwer's *Money* which had not been on the Columbus stage in several years, and the tragic historical drama called *The Iron Mask*. According to the *Statesman* the Richings Company under John Ford was very well received:

We heartily rejoice at the liberal patronage bestowed on Mr. Ford for it demonstrates that a first class entertainment can draw in Columbus and gives us room to hope that responsible managers will feel justified in favoring us more frequently than they have in the past.80

Note will be made of the fact that all of the city's theatrical activity for the past year had taken place at the Opera House. The old State Street Theater, for a period of time known as The Atheneum, had been closed for some months to undergo a rather complete program of remodeling and repair and it was at this time that the renovated building was reopened under the name "Neil's New Atheneum." The auditorium and stage had been remodeled and everything necessary to add to the beauty and usefulness of the theater had been done except re-decorating and frescoing the walls which would be delayed until spring. The grand opening of the renovated edifice was to take place Monday, November 13, with the introduction of Eickburg's celebrated comic opera, *Doctor of Alcantra*. 81 The *Journal* describes the repairs further:

A most thorough renovation inside has taken place. The dimensions of the auditorium are 74 by 60 ft., those of the stage 47 by 60 ft. The seating capacity of the building is about 1500. It was the original intention to upholster the front part of the gallery, but this has been deferred until next spring when the balcony will be remodeled and opera stiles will be put upon the front. The

80Nov. 6, 1871.
81Lee, op cit., p. 794.
stage is exceedingly well lighted having more lights perhaps than any other theater in Ohio. The building is lighted by brackets furnished by Cornelius and Son of Philadelphia and is heated by three large furnaces. The arrangement of seats has been such that the footlights may be seen from every seat. Considerable pains have been taken to render the ventilation perfect. Out of the 60 ft. front there will be 28 ft. of opening for exit... The dressing rooms are put outside of the main building so as to give up the whole stage to the scenic effect... In short, Mr. Neil has been most successful in his transformation of the old theater building into a commodious and beautiful art temple in which our citizens can take pride.82

An excellent house was present to share in the grand opening of Neil's New Atheneum. The Doctor of Alcantra was well staged, particularly in view of the fact that it was in the hands of the city's amateur opera company, and the piece was repeated the night following. The cast included such local people as the Misses Emma J. Lathrop, Louise Cushman, and Flora Kunz, and the Messrs William Bach, H. W. Frillman, Frank Brooks, and C. R. Hayden. Miss Caroline Schneider was at the piano.

The following night Fanny Price and her stepfather D. Hanchett occupied the New Atheneum, opening with East Lynne and changing to Frou-Frou on Thursday when they played to a very poor house due largely to the presence of Cal Wagner's Minstrels at the Opera House. Crowds improved somewhat at the Atheneum, however, as the week wore on and were considered good in the face of the competition. The Friday performance at the New Atheneum introduced another play new to Columbus called Drifting or A Prairie House In Flames. The rather unimaginative second title of the piece might indicate both the nature and the qual-

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82 Nov. 10, 1871.
ity of the play which was not received with any enthusiasm by any of the reviewers. Said the Statesman:

The man who dramatized the New York Weekly story which was put on at the Athenæum last night under the high-sounding name of "Drifting, or A Prairie Home In Flames" ought to be professionally choked with a bundle of Beadle's dime novels. The plot and situations are all forced, the writer disregarding all propriety to reach the sensational. The drama (if such it may be called) is so void of merit that it is not worthy of criticism; a better play could be carved out with a jack-knife . . . The company cannot be blamed for exhibiting but little talent in its production. Miss Price played well when there was any opportunity and Mr. Wise did what little he had to do with the usual care. Mr. Barry had the most conspicuous character in the piece—that of a sort of warm-hearted reckless outcast but he exhibited more minstrel than dramatic ability.83

The Journal was equally unhappy about the play:

. . . . . And they all last night exerted themselves to the utmost to make something out of as poor a piece as was ever put on the stage. "Drifting or A Prairie Home In Flames" has not a single feature to recommend it. The dialogue is very poor and the incidents preposterously absurd. It is, if we are not mistaken, a dramatization of a cheap sensational trashy serial of the blood-and-thunder order recently published and has probably been as well dramatized as the plot of the story will admit. However, it never should have been placed on the stage.84

It had obviously been rough sledding for the Hanchett Company through the week and the fiasco on Friday did not help matters. Following a rendition of The Long Strike on Saturday, the company moved on, cutting short what originally was intended to be a ten-night engagement. Both the Journal and the Statesman expressed regret that so able a company should be forced to close and once again they attrib-
uted a portion of the difficulty to the ever-popular minstrel show.

Said the **Statesman**:

> We regret exceedingly that the Hanchett Dramatic Company has been compelled to relinquish its engagement at the New Atheneum on account of the meager patronage they have received from Columbus people... We can only attribute the failure to attract paying audiences to lack of popularity of their plays or to the want of taste, generally speaking, of the public for this class of stage amusements. Morris Brothers Minstrels, on the contrary, have been more successful in attracting the masses as they drew a very large audience to the Opera House Saturday night to witness their performance.85

The premature departure of the Hanchett Company left the Atheneum idle for a week until the arrival of the Mark Smith Comedy which had been so highly praised during its Opera House engagement just a month ago. The opening piece was *The Rivals* which carried the identical cast as performed in October.86 Boucicault's *London Assurance* was presented on Tuesday and these two nights saw a slight increase in attendance over that of the past week. The Opera House likewise opened on Monday under John Ellsler's management and featured Frank Mayo as Tom Badger in *Streets of New York*. Mr. Mayo had played the same role just a year ago at the Opera House and under the same manager.87

Both theaters changed their billing on Wednesday, the Atheneum playing *Poor Gentleman*, while at the Opera House the Ellsler troupe undertook *Three Guardsmen*, a dramatization of Dumas' *Three Musketeers*, with Frank Mayo as D'Artigan. The change was as a signal for drop-off in attendance at both theaters and while the Statesman merely

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85 Nov. 20, 1871.
86 Supra., p. 246.
87 Supra., p. 233.
noted the fact, the Journal reporter again took the city to task for its indifference to drama of quality:

We imagine that it is neither pleasant nor encouraging for such a talented combination as Mark Smith's company is acknowledged to be to perform to small audiences . . . Our people can hardly expect to be favored very often with first class amusements if they do not show a disposition to be still in more liberal patronage than they have given Mark Smith so far during his present engagement . . . There was but a meager attendance, we regret to say, at the Opera House last night to witness "The Three Guardsmen" by John Ellsler's company.88

The remainder of the week saw Hair At Law and the farce, Morning Call at the Atheneum Thursday with a special matinee of School For Scandal, and on Friday the play was Fine Old Gentleman for a Mark Smith benefit. The latter play was repeated on Saturday after which the engagement closed. The Opera House, in the meantime, also played a matinee Thursday doing The Streets of New York and offering The Corsican Brothers and Bull In A China Shop that evening. The Vagabonds was offered Friday and on Saturday Mr. Mayo closed his engagement with another performance of Streets of New York. The poorest house of the week occurred at the Opera House performance on Friday.89

With the departure of Mark Smith, the Ellsler company moved from the Opera House to the New Atheneum for two nights of Joseph Jefferson in Rip Van Winkle. It was Jefferson who had made the dramatization of Irving's story so popular throughout the country and who had perfected the role of Rip to the point where it was considered Jefferson's second identity and virtually his property. The story itself

88Nov. 30, 1871.

89Ibid., Dec. 2, 1871.
had been published in 1819 and what was considered the first dramatization in America was placed on the stage of the South Pearl Street Theater in Albany, New York, on May 26, 1828. Since then many versions of the story have crossed the boards, perhaps the best being that of Don Boucicault which was first produced in London in 1865. As already mentioned, the role of Rip almost became Jefferson's counterpart and he continued to play it almost exclusively until his death in 1905. The *Journal* was enthusiastic over Jefferson's performance but felt that minor injustice had been done to the public in raising the price of the seats:

Notwithstanding the high price of admission, a large audience attended Joe Jefferson's rendition of Washington Irving's great legend, Rip Van Winkle, last night. Had there even been a compromise on the matter of the price of tickets—say fifty or seventy-five cents—the New Atheneum would undoubtedly have been crowded to its utmost capacity. We know numbers of people who were compelled to forego the pleasure of witnessing this renowned drama last night because they felt that money is too dearly earned by them to justify their attending the entertainment at $1.00 to $1.50. We would suggest that a slight improvement in the line of ushers or some additional help in that line would greatly add to the comfort of persons visiting the Atheneum and enhance the value of tickets.

Ellsler concluded his engagement at the Atheneum with Jefferson's performances but he returned Saturday, December 9, with the Pittsburgh Opera House Company of which he was also manager. Their opening performance was Lester Wallack's Rosedale featuring J. Newton Gotthold and Mrs. Georgia Dickson of the company. It is very likely that Mrs.

90Hughes, op. cit., p. 135
91Ibid., op. cit., p. 249.
92Dec. 6, 1871.
93Weston, op. cit., p. 144
Dickson was the same woman of that name who, with her husband, James Dickson, played Columbus and Cleveland with Ellsler's resident company back in the early sixties.

The perennial favorite, C. W. Couldock, opened an engagement the following week with his equally perennial bill, The Willow Copse and The Chimney Corner. However, his daughter was no longer with him and her part of Rose Fielding in the former was taken by Miss Nellie Johnson. The Journal noted that Mr. Couldock was getting a little old, but that his acting was as full of life, vigor, and impressiveness as in former years. At the conclusion of Thursday's performance Couldock appeared before the audience informally and related interesting anecdotes, recollections and imitations of great actors and authors he had met over the years including McCready, Kemble, Charles Dickens, and the Booths. The same program was repeated on Friday, but, as is usual in such cases there were those who neither understood Mr. Couldock's talk nor appreciated it. The Statesman remarked on Saturday that "the few who apparently expected to witness something like the current buffoonery of a minstrel show expressed their disgust at an intellectual treat by tramping out of the house in a very noisy manner while Mr. Couldock was speaking."

On this same Saturday (December 16, 1871) Albert W. Aiken and a company of his own selection were announced as appearing that night at the Opera House in The Witches of New York. Aiken had first appeared on the stage in 1852. Later he had managed traveling companies and was

94 Dec. 12, 1871.
95 Dec. 16, 1871.
now touring as a star and playing the leads in his own dramas. His first success as a playwright was Child of The Savanna which had been presented in Columbus in May of 1864. It is likely that The Witches of New York was also of his authorship. The Statesman was enthused over the coming production and over Mr. Aiken's acting which promised to be free of the staginess so characteristic of most acting at this time:

According to the advertisement the play reflects high and low life in the metropolis which furnishes plenty of material for a meritorious realistic drama. Mr. Aiken is denominated a colloquial actor from which we infer he intends to divest stage business of its staginess and give us a touch of natural acting. He has drawn large audiences elsewhere and will probably do good business here.

Some disappointment was expressed in the Statesman reviews the next day, however, particularly in the absence of the "realistic" acting the star had promised:

"The Witches of New York" is a mixture of scenes from "The Streets of New York" and other sensational plays and the leading actor is not as "colloquial" as many another man. Although the audience bestowed considerable applause the character of the performance was foreshadowed by the dime novel illustrations and "Injun" killing advertisements on the back of the program.

Sherry's New York Theater returned to Columbus on January 2 opening the New Atheneum that Tuesday with Peep O'Day following with The Red Light on Wednesday and The Long Strike and The Two Buzzards on Thursday, their closing day. The Opera House, at this time, was the scene of a series of lectures by Mark Twain. On the following Monday

96 Supra., p. 118.
97 Dec. 16, 1871.
98 Dec. 18, 1871.
a single performance of The Merchant of Venice was scheduled at the New Atheneum featuring Mrs. Macready in the role of Shylock and under the management of Sam T. Cory. It cannot be ascertained, but it is believed that Mrs. Macready was the widow of the famous English actor, Charles W. Macready, who had figured in the Astor Place Riot in New York back in 1849 and who played his final role in London in 1851. Mrs. Macready had made her stage debut as Julia in The Hunchback performed at the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia in 1853 and had been a pupil of Peter Richings.

While the appearance of an actress in a male role was not new to the Columbus theater, and while the current star was evidently successful in that part, the Statesman took a dim view of the idea and the resulting review may have been representative of a growing disapproval which eventually led to discontinuing the practice:

Taken as a whole, however, Mrs. Macready's impersonation of Shylock was principally remarkable for the fact that it was by a lady and viewed from that standpoint it was a success—a success that but few ladies ever attain to. But Shylock is not a woman's character and the forced enunciation which the lady frequently found necessary in the more difficult passages was calculated to leave the impression that a lady, no matter what her accomplishments might be in other roles, should never attempt to wrestle with Shylock, a character about as far removed from femininity as any of Shakespeare's creations.

Quite an interval of time lapsed before the next traveling company played Columbus. The interval was broken only by two performances of the opera Lucia Di Lammermoor at the Atheneum February 8 and 9 by the Grand Italian Opera Company, and the appearance of

100 Feb. 5, 1872.
Charlotte Cushman at the Opera House on March 7 in excerpts from Henry VIII which actually were staged readings. Eleven days later Mr. Ellsler engaged the Atheneum for a one-night presentation of Edwin Adams in Enoch Arden supported by a combined cast made up from the Cleveland Academy of Music and Pike's Opera House in Pittsburgh, Mr. Ellsler being the manager of both theaters. The Atheneum was crowded on this occasion even with standing room at a premium.

Adams, an extremely popular star as seen by his reception in Columbus at this time, was born in Massachusetts in 1834 and, after playing in New York and Philadelphia, he rose to a position of one of the best light comedians of this period. However, his weakness for drink eventually led to his destruction and he died at an early age in 1877. Clara Morris, who played with him on numerous occasions, describes his manner:

He was so popular with men they sought him out, they followed him, and they generally expressed their liking through the medium of food and drink. Like every other sturdy man that's worth his salt, he could stand off an enemy, but he was as weak as water in the hands of a friend, and thus it came about that he often stood in slippery places, and though he fell again and again, yet was he forgiven as often as he sinned, and heartily welcomed back the next season, so great was his power to charm.

He was not handsome, he was not heroic in form, but there was such dash and go, such sincerity and naturalness in all his work that whether he was lovemaking or fighting, singing or dying, he convinced you he was the character's self... His grace of movement and his superb voice were his greatest gifts.

John Ellsler's next contribution to Columbus theater occurred a month later when he again assumed the management of the Atheneum with

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101 Brown, op. cit., p. 6.
102 Morris, op. cit., p. 195.
the assistance of J. Newton Gotthold of the Pittsburgh Opera House. On this occasion (April 17) the traveling company presented Buffalo Bill, Ned Buntline's story from the New York Weekly, starring James O'Neill as Buffalo Bill.103 Once again an Ellsler production filled the house to standing room capacity and was repeated another night before departing the city. The Journal was more amused than pleased with the play and saw it only as a vehicle for sensational display:

Nothing touching it Buffalo Bill in point of extravagant dramatic invention and scenic effect has been offered to this public for many a day. The plot is accommodated to the production of a series of tableaux with the usual adjective qualifications of thrilling, affecting, startling, and gorgeous, and the quantity of gunpowder and red fire consumed would supply a frigate with explosive necessities and give abundant scope for a respectable Fourth of July celebration. The declamation of course is in accord with the features we have named and the actors are called upon to take terrible oaths of vengeance that would erect the capillary ornamentations after the manner of the plumage of the porcupine if it wasn't "all in the piece." The quantity of "heart's blood" drawn in any one act of the play would eclipse the tragic element in a whole library of ordinary Indian yarns...104

A week later Manager G. R. Hayden took possession of the Athenaeum presenting Virginial Gabriel's two-act operetta Lost and Found along with Anthony and Cleopatra billed as a burletta. On May 3 the Opera House was given over to E. A. Sothern who, for two nights, played Lord Dundreary in Our American Cousin.

Tom Taylor's Our American Cousin was a very popular play during the decade of the sixties although it was recognized even then as being of no value whatever, and its principal claim upon the memory is its affiliation with the death of Abraham Lincoln. However, the play did

103The Ohio State Journal, April 16, 1872.
104April 18, 1872.
attain a level of great contemporary success due, in part, to the character of Lord Dundreary made popular by E. A. Sothern—or possibly E. A. Sothern was made popular by the character of Lord Dundreary. When first assigned the role, Sothern was resentful and expressed his vexation by lampooning the part before an audience only to discover that, in so doing, he had created a comic character that was to make him famous. The play had been in the possession of Laura Keene as a part of her repertoire for a number of years, but when E. A. Sothern played Columbus at this time it was announced that he had purchased from Miss Keene the sole right and title to the piece.105

Three engagements remained in the season which was rapidly coming to a close. The Jane Coombs Combination played a three-day program at the Opera House beginning Monday, May 13, and starred Miss Coombs supported by Frederic Robinson in The Love Chase; Love’s Sacrifice; and Romeo and Juliet.106 The second engagement was that of William Horace Lingard and his wife, Alice Dunning Lingard, who played the Atheneum on May 27 with A Pretty Piece of Business and the three-act comedy, David Garrick. Finally, on May 30, Mrs. D. P. Bowers played Lady Audley’s Secret at the Atheneum under the combined management of John Ellsler and Henry Abbey. The latter performance failed to come up to standard in the opinion of the Statesman reporter who remarked:

The Atheneum was little more than half filled last night by the audience. The play in the drama presented was much better than the plot or the grouping of incidents in it. It is neither true to nature nor does it have the air of probability and reality that a good play should have. For instance

105 The Ohio State Journal, May 17, 1872.
106 Ibid., May 13, 1872.
George Talboys is pushed into a well and after staying there to soak for a week or two, is hauled out and confronts the perpetrator. Some of the other incidents are just as improbable. Such as it was, the play was well rendered by the company. 107

On June 28 the long announced arrival of P. T. Barnum's Travelling Menagerie took place and the legitimate drama was temporarily shelved in favor of the circus and other summer amusements.

107 May 31, 1872.
CHAPTER VIII

THE RESIDENT COMPANY OF H. J. SARGENT

The Season of 1872-1873

The advantages of Variety.—By 1872 there was strong indication that the tastes of Columbus audiences were running heavily to burlesque, variety, and comic opera in whatever combination they might be found. The minstrel show could muster up a crowd almost any time, but the legitimate theater was having difficulty keeping ahead of—or even abreast of—the popularity of the lighter theatrical forms. One advantage over legitimate theater possessed by any variety troupe is its flexibility. A play of three or four acts is a complete unit. To discard an act or a scene, or to present it out of context, is hazardous to the over-all effect although it is sometimes successful. But the variety bill is basically a chain of small unrelated units which may be easily juggled about to suit the immediate situation. For example, a stage manager cannot begin a play and, in the middle of the second act, shift to another if he finds the audience unresponsive, nor can he encore an act very gracefully if one should prove to be especially appealing.

It is likely that the gradual change from resident company to traveling company may have increased the popularity of the several forms of variety from the standpoint of travel since this type of theater is less dependent upon details of set construction and the presence of
certain stage equipment. A review of the past several seasons covered in this study reveals a number of instances where an opening was postponed or which failed to play satisfactorily because scenery or cast members did not arrive in time or were inadequately prepared. When circumstances did call for emergency measures, the cast invariably turned to variety fare—a song, a recitation, a banjo solo, or an impersonation to bridge the difficulty. Credit must also be given to the number of times an entire play was changed at the last minute. Finally, the increased stress upon this special form of entertainment was a means of coping with the popularity of the minstrel show which, on an average, could outdraw all but the most famous of the legitimate stars.

There were other factors, both social and economic, which had their influence and helped to bring about changes in the nineteenth century theater and its ways, but these will suffice to explain in part the steady increase in the number of burlesque and operatic companies which were playing Columbus theaters, and likely the theaters of other cities, at this time. Tony Pastor, the country's greatest variety manager, was already in business and in the years to come the legitimate theater was to struggle toe-to-toe with the popularity of the lighter theatrical forms.

The unofficial opening of the fall season in 1872 was announced with three days of the Wallace Sisters who began their engagement at the Athenæum with The Factory Girl starring Jennie Wallace. The four sis-

1It was upon the refusal of some members of the company to play that the benefit performance of Mrs. Breslan was saved in part by resorting to sketches and recitations the night of November 22, 1869. There were a number of such instances through the years. Supra., p. 221.
ters, Agnes, Jennie, Minnie, and Hauda, had previously appeared at the Opera House in September of 1870. On the second night, September 12, Jennie and Minnie Wallace played leads in Stirling's *Rose of Killarney* which was followed on Friday with the burlesque *Aladdin, The Wonderful Scamp*. It was evident from the reviews that Agnes was no longer with her sisters, but no allusion was made to that fact.

Mrs. James A. Gates and her Comic Opera Company was the second troupe of this type to play Columbus in this season, opening at the Athenæum on Monday, September 23. The engagement was opened with Offenbach's comic opera, *Prima Donna For A Night*. On Tuesday the company presented Flanche's operatic burlesque *Fortuna* followed by *The King's Secret*, an operatic comedy which was played as a benefit for Mrs. Gates on Wednesday, her closing night. Two performances—*Everybody's Friend* and *Solon Shingle*, starring John E. Owens on Friday and Saturday, completed the theatrical entertainment for the week in Columbus.

Mlle. Morlacchi, with her dramatic company and ballet troupe, arrived at the Columbus Opera House on November 13 under the management of H. C. Bates. Mlle. Josephine Morlacchi was originally from Italy and was credited by T. Allston Brown with being one of the most graceful dancers to appear on the American stage. She made her first professional appearance in Genoa at the Carlo Felice Theater in 1856 and came to America to open at Bayard's Museum, New York, in 1867. She began the present engagement in Columbus with *The French Spy* and, in addition to

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playing the usual three roles, she danced attractive ballets with the support of her company. The Journal reporter commented:

The military drama of "The French Spy" is very familiar to the theater-going public of Columbus, but nevertheless, the fame of Morlacchi attracted a very large audience to see it last night. New and startling mechanical effects and the extra attraction in Morlacchi's accomplishments as a danseuse tended to confirm public expectation that the performance as a whole would be a revision and improvement on all previous presentations of the much played drama.3

The frequently played Wept of the Wish-Ton-Wish along with The French Spy was the feature for Thursday and Friday, while Saturday, November 16, saw a triple bill composed of Dumb Boy of Manchester; Dodging For A Wife, and Robert Macaire which concluded the Morlacchi engagement. The next Tuesday was the opening date of McKee Rankin's Rip Van Winkle Combination which performed three nights with Rankin playing the character of Rip.

With the exception of the single performance of Augustine Daly's Divorce given by the Fifth Avenue Theater Combination from New York on Christmas Day at the Athenæum, there was virtually no formal theater at the Athenæum or the Opera House for the remainder of the calendar year. However, on January 1, 1873, there appeared in Columbus a manager whose efforts and activity would earn for him a reputation among the theater patrons of Columbus second only to that of John Elsler. On this date H. J. Sargent leased the Athenæum and announced the grand opening of a resident troupe composed of the following players listed in the Journal:

George Middleton, from New York theaters.
Charles Stanley, from Fifth Avenue Theater, New York.
Frederic Monroe, from Booth's Theater, New York.

3Nov. 14, 1872.
H. J. Broughton, from Boston theaters.
Hamilton Vance, from California theaters.
Henry Bellini, from London theaters.
Miss Hannah Bailey, from Capitol Theater, Albany, New York.
Miss Lizzie Gale, from Opera House, Troy, New York.
Miss Elisa Long, from Boston theaters.
Miss Ada Lawrence, from New York theaters.
Miss Julia Prescott, from New Orleans.
Miss Annie Aldis, from eastern theaters.

Tom Robertson's play, Casts, was the initial piece featuring George
Middleton and Hannah Bailey which was accompanied by Fernande, the pro-
gram being repeated on Saturday. The old stand-by, Lady of Lyons, was
offered on Monday as a single bill and was replaced Wednesday by Kath-
leen Mavourmeen, a romantic Irish drama. The remainder of the week was
given over to Camilla's Husband and More Blunders Than One with Lady of
Lyons repeated on a Saturday matinee, Lucrezia Borgia being offered that
evening.

An engagement of two nights at Springfield, Ohio, rendered the
Athenaeum available early the following week for the use of a Combination
from the Academy of Music in New Orleans. This company brought Frank
Mayo back to Columbus for the presentation of his specialities, Davy
Crockett and The Streets of New York, both of which played to excellent
houses before withdrawing on the return of the regular Sargent company
on Thursday, January 16.

The apparent success of the Sargent company in the wake of a long
succession of visiting troupes, differing greatly in the quality of pro-

Jan. 1, 1873.
duction and in their personal merits, called forth the enthusiastic comments of the *Journal* in praising the new resident company:

Columbus people are now appreciating the advantage we spoke of in the outset of having a good regular company. They know what to expect having investigated for themselves. They have assurances of good acting and will do themselves credit in sustaining what we take pleasure in regarding as a home institution.  

This brief comment by the *Journal* reporter pointed up very clearly some significant circumstances relative to the contemporary theater at the time of the nearly complete conversion to the Combination System. According to this commentary, the resident company was much preferred by the theater patrons who saw in it a source of superior quality performances as well as a subject of civic pride. It should also be noted that the *Journal*’s pointing out the improved dramatic fare coming from the new resident company indicates considerable dissatisfaction with the quality of productions witnessed at the hands of the traveling Combinations in the past.

At this time Manager Sargent was also making an effort to popularize the Saturday afternoon matinee which, heretofore, had not proven successful. The statements made by the press in commending Sargent’s matinees clearly indicate why a matinee, up to this time, was not considered worthy of patronage. To begin with, the Saturday afternoon performance seldom received the attention given the regular evening shows and were often presented with a cast made up of substitutes and the less experienced players. Little attention was paid to quality of any kind and the piece itself was often a run-of-mine comedy so that

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5 Jan. 16, 1873.
the audience had neither the advantage of a new and interesting play nor of a reputable and popular star. The audience of the usual matinee was seldom of the best caliber. It was made up of the lower elements of theater patronage whose personal manners and morals fostered rowdiness, boisterous behavior, and a general disrespect for both the performance and for fellow-patrons. Women of a better class rarely attended matinees even in the company of their husbands, and children never attended in any number. Whether the poor performances caused the better classes to stay away or whether the poor audience personnel fostered an indifferent performance cannot positively be determined although it would seem that the latter circumstance was the more likely.

Sargent's company set about to change all this and received the support of the papers in assuring the public that the Saturday afternoon rabble-feasts of the past were to be confined to the past.

"Frou-Frou" will be given at the matinee this afternoon and it is a pleasure to be able to assure the public that it will be given with the same attention that is bestowed on night performances—with all the elegant stage settings, a fine wardrobe, good music, etc. The two matinees already given under Sargent's management are indexes of what may be looked for. Well conducted matinees, by the way, are among the best features of a theatrical season.6

On the following Monday the Journal again complimented Sargent's efforts:

... We are glad to see matinees becoming popular and attribute their success in no small degree to the complete order that has been established in the house at all performances. It begets public confidence and the manager can depend upon the friendship of his patrons in the continuation of his

6Jan. 18, 1873.
successful efforts to squelch the yelpers and peanut munchers that so long afflicted Columbus audiences.7

The Saturday evening performance, January 18, consisted of Leah, The Forsaken and A Day After The Wedding, while the following week began with performances of Arrah-Ma-Pogue and Dora, the latter founded on one of Temyson's poems. Thursday, January 23, the Athenæum was placed under the management of J. Wesley Hill, actor and manager from New Orleans, whose company introduced to Columbus the new dramatic attraction L'Article 47 or Breaking the Ban with Mr. Hill as George Duhamel and Miss Louise Hawthorne as Cora. The Journal commented:

"The great London, Paris, and New York sensation" Article 47 is not such a great sensation after all. Viewed in the light of its association with "Divorce" it is an inferior play. It is a reflection of an exceedingly bad phase of life in Paris without much of a plot and if it has any moral value, it is a bad one. It has fine language, however, and displayed three or four members of the New Orleans company to good advantage last night.8

Hill's company from New Orleans was another traveling combination and occupied the Athenæum only one night with Sargent's resident company resuming performances there on Friday with Retribution and Quiet Family with The Stranger and Honey Moon as the Saturday attractions. A matinee performance of Arrah-Ma-Pogue was also given on Saturday.

The Sargent troupe was augmented by the services of the comedian T. G. Biggs on Monday, January 27, who played out the week specialising in Irish character roles in Shin Fane; The Colleen Bawn; Peep O' Day;

7Jan. 2b, 1873.
8Jan. 21, 1873.
and The Fastest Boy In New York. With Mr. Riggs' departure the Sargent company played to the support of E. T. Stetson, a New York actor who had been playing across the country as guest artist in a number of cities. He was well received Tuesday in the comedy Neck and Neck which played two nights before being replaced by The Marble Heart on Wednesday, January 29. A special temperance attraction entitled The Fatal Glass starred Mr. Stetson Thursday and on Friday the play was Hamlet. Stetson, as Hamlet, was supported by Mr. Stanley as Polonius, Miss Bailey as Ophelia and Mr. Monroe as Claudius. Good houses prevailed throughout the week. In fact, considering the difficulties encountered by other troupes in keeping the house filled during the past two years, this particular company seemed to be doing very well. Stetson's fare-well benefit Saturday included a matinee performance of The Marble Heart with Richard III billed for the evening along with the farce, Black Eyed Susan.10

The Opera House had been relatively inactive legitimate-wise during this time. What theater there was seemed to be either musical or minstrel. Beginning February 3, an English operatic troupe played several light operas and on February 10 the comic opera I Ladroni was staged there with William Lingard and Alice Dunning Lingard as the featured players.11 Meanwhile, H. J. Sargent's resident company continued to play most successfully at the Athenæum. Poverty Flat, a dramatisation from Bret Harte's writings by J. J. McCloskey featured

9Ibid., Feb. 1, 1873.
10Ibid., Feb. 8, 1873.
11Ibid., Feb. 11, 1873.
the popular New York actor, J. W. Albaugh, in the role of Tom Flynn and continued to run for three nights followed by Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* on successive nights.

*Poverty Flat* was repeated as a matinee attraction on Saturday afternoon, February 15, and the twin bill of *Ingomar* and *Factory Girl* concluded Albaugh's engagement that evening. The next week was given over to performances featuring members of Sargent's resident company, the first being Charles Stanley playing Bermudas in *Under the Gaslight*. The play itself had long ago been recognised as being short on literary merit and long on technical display and the *Journal*'s comments followed that line of thought:

... "Under the Gaslight" has been presented by several different managements in this city having a run each time but never so well as on the stage at the Athenaum last night. The success was principally owing to the indefatigable efforts of the mechanics. The pier scene and railroad scene were worked up vividly; when the big boats brilliantly lighted and with streams of smoke curling from their chimneys moved gracefully by the pier, the audience first looked on in blank astonishment then broke out into a demonstration of applause which was repeated as the other effects succeeded.12

The piece was repeated the next night and on Wednesday, February 19, *Dora* was again offered along with Tom Taylor's four-act society play, *Retribution*. *A Race for A Wife* with the play *East Lynne* and a repeat of *Under the Gaslight* completed the week's attractions along with short scenes from *Taming of The Shrew*.

A phenomenon rarely if ever to be seen on a present-day stage took place at the Athenaum the night of February 20 during the perform-

12Feb. 17, 1873.
ance of A Race for A Wife. The manager was forced to come before the
curtain and announce the illness of a member of the cast, Mr. Monroe,
who would be unable to appear. As the Journal related the story the
next day, "a gentleman named Thornton happened to be in the city who
was competent to fill the vacant place. He was substituted and the
play went on as usual." One might safely conclude that the man,
identified only as Thornton, was an actor who chanced into the Athen-
eum as a spectator. Such an occurrence would have very little chance
of transpiring today. Although an actor would walk in on a modern
performance of a play in which he knew the lines letter-perfect, so
much stress is put upon the intricacies of timing and stage blocking
that such a person would be lost. Being so, he would render a smooth
performance impossible. That such an incident did occur successfully
clearly suggests the use of a standard setting and a common pattern of
interpretation devoid of any complex blocking or creative treatment on
the part of an imaginative director.

Lydia Thompson's Burlesque Company, with Miss Lydia billed as
"Queen of Burlesque," opened at the Opera House on February 21 playing
Bluebeard and Kenilworth with a repeat performance on Tuesday. That
same evening E. A. Locke began a week's engagement at the Athenæum with
a play called Shadows which played two nights and was followed by the
Irish drama Inshavogue which also ran for two nights. The performances
were quite acceptable to the critics, with the possible exception of the
second night of Inshavogue when a deficient orchestra once more drew the

13 Feb. 21, 1873.
no attempt to review the performance. It is possible some emergency might have necessitated this kind of a program though the papers normally recognized the news value of such a possibility while, on the other hand, the desire to give the audience something special or to give the company an opportunity to display other talents might have caused the change to a variety bill.

Miss Charlotte Thompson opened an engagement with Sargent's company at the Atheneum on March 3. Her Columbus program included 

One Wife which was followed by Jane Eyre. Both pieces were performed two nights each in that order. Miss Thompson's Friday benefit consisted of Fanchette or Daughter of Fanchon and the Saturday bill was a matinee of One Wife and an evening performance of Fanchette.

Once again the sensational piece The Black Crook made an appearance on the Columbus boards, announced as Bidwell and MacDonough's production featuring "The Wonderful Hernandez Troupe." The play was performed three nights and was received each time by an overflowing house. The Ohio State Journal noted the large crowd on opening night and remarked that "what was most astonishing, ladies composed a large portion of the audience."15 Such an observation suggests rather plainly that not many women had witnessed the controversial play when it was last shown in Columbus and either the strait-laced public was growing accustomed to such fare as The Black Crook or curiosity was overruling moral judgment.

As previously noted in this study, The Black Crook possessed very little literary merit and this fact was recognized even at the height

15March 11, 1873.
attention of the Journal writer. He approved of Miss Long's excellent acting but remarked further:

... It is unfortunate the orchestra could not agree with her in her song. The man with the brass viol labored industriously to some purpose but the leader made only a half dozen scrapes then pitched the music so high that a steamboat whistly couldn't have gotten in yelling distance.\footnote{Feb. 27, 1873.}

On Friday Mr. Locke took a benefit with 

*From Bones* or *The Headless Horseman* by Charles Gaylor based on Washington Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

The final performance of the week was, by nature, quite unusual in both size and make-up. *Shadows* was performed for the regular matinee, but that evening a variety bill was presented that must have been most lengthy regardless of its merits as entertainment. It began with a performance of the farce, *Rough Diamond,* starring Messrs Stanley and Price with Miss Hannah Bailey, after which it appears the entire company contributed to a pot-pourri of variety entertainment beginning with a song rendered by Belle Renicke followed by a song and dance by John Thompson. *The Jew Clothes Dealer,* most likely an impersonation, was offered by Steele and Frank Conley, followed by an unidentified vehicle entitled "Moet and Shandon" by Mr. Stanley. Sargent, who was somewhat of an amateur magician, presented some feats of magic while Mr. Locke, who had starred through the week, was on hand to do some Dutch songs and dances. Albert Goldsborough favored with a clog dance and Steele and Thompson followed with an Ethiopian sketch. The program concluded with a three-act nautical drama called *Lonely Man of The Ocean.* It is difficult to say what prompted such a bizarre billing. The press made
of its popularity. The colorful showmanship of the piece plus its saucy disregard for an existing moral attitude made up the strength of its public appeal. The Columbus Evening Dispatch qualified the present company’s success with the play on this matter of theatrical display by inferring that a traveling company is at a disadvantage in the face of a resident company in attempting to adequately embellish such a piece.\textsuperscript{16} The Dispatch was further displeased by the excessive amount of noise permitted in the audience, particularly since Mr. Sargent had worked hard to break up such annoyances in the past and had succeeded. "He had made the house a temple of art instead of a reservation for half-civilized Comanche papooses who shrieked and whistled until the tympanums of the audience below were in agony."\textsuperscript{17}

With the conclusion of the Hernandez engagement the Sargent company traveled to Cleveland for a short time while the Atheneum was occupied for the remainder of the week by Agnes Wallace and her Comic Opera Troupe. Miss Wallace was the eldest of the four Wallace Sisters who had first appeared as a sister act in Columbus back in 1870.\textsuperscript{18} Only the three—Jennie, Minnie, and Maude—made up the act when they returned in September of 1872, Agnes having left her sisters to start her own comic opera troupe now playing at the Atheneum. Clorinda, Girl of The Period was the opening presentation with Sam. B. Villa rendering a female impersonation in the role of Clorinda. A comic version of the

\textsuperscript{16}March 11, 1873. The Daily Ohio Statesman combined with the Sunday Dispatch to form the Columbus Evening Dispatch in 1873.

\textsuperscript{17}March 12, 1873.

\textsuperscript{18}Supra., p. 229.
story of Robin Hood completed the short engagement on Saturday night, March 15.

When Manager Sargent returned to the Athenæum the next week it was to feature Miss Ada Gray as Goldie in the comedy Whose Wife? The Dispatch reviewer derived some amusement from the title itself and wrote:

"Whose Wife?" will be the bill for Monday evening. What a curious title for a play that is. Whenever a finely dressed and elegant lady is seen anywhere the question naturally arises in the inquisitive bosom, "whose wife?" This play has never been produced here. It is said to be similar in design to "Divorce" but is smoother and more pleasing in its general effect . . . 19

The play proved popular and was played through Wednesday after which Miss Gray played Camille and L'Article 47, the latter being Miss Gray's benefit on Friday as well as her closing performance.

At the Opera House on March 18 Helene D'Este was opening as Bianca in Fazio and on Tuesday she appeared as Julia in The Hunchback. Only fair houses witnessed the performances at both theaters this week and on Thursday, March 20, only a small audience was present for the Opera House rendition of Hamlet in which Miss D'Este played the queen and J. G. Stutts, manager of the Opera House, played the melancholy prince. Simcoe Lee, a popular Columbus actor under John Ellisler ten years ago, was seen as Laertes in this performance. Cynthia, Queen of The Gypsies and Oliver Twist played at the Opera House on Friday and Saturday respectively with East Lynne offered as a Saturday matinee to close out the engagement. Whose Wife? was the Athenæum matinee and the bill of In the Toils and Sketches in India made up the evening performance.

19 March 15, 1873.
Another sensation-spectacular appeared on the Atheneum stage the night of Monday, March 24. It was entitled Pomp or 'Way Down South and was publicized as featuring a steamboat explosion, a railroad sensation, a duel across a table, plantation songs, dances, and scenes of life along the Mississippi River. As was the case with most sensation plays, Pomp was weak on dramatic value and depended for its effects upon mechanical contrivance. The sensation drama was followed on Thursday with Under the Gaslight and A Glance At New York, the latter being embellished with a miscellany of songs, dances, sketches, and other specialty features which added to the play's appeal. The guest star through the week was Harry Clifford, a New York actor about whom little is known and whose histrionic ability made no particular impression upon Columbus audiences. It was rather fortunate for all concerned that the absence of an impressive star was compensated for by colorful productions and the Dispatch reviewer remarked that "Mr. Clifford did a good week's business though he enjoyed the pleasure of being the weakest star of the season." His engagement closed Saturday with Pomp being repeated in the afternoon and the evening given over to the burlesque Pocohontas followed by a "grand olio" and a performance of Jack Sheppard.

Six years had passed since Columbus last saw Miss Kate Fisher, the equestrian actress and her trained horse, Wonder, and it was equally that long since Maseppa had been upon the Columbus boards. Both opened an engagement at the Atheneum on March 31 with Maseppa enjoying four

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20 The Ohio State Journal, Mar. 18, 1873.
21 March 31, 1873.
22 Supra., p. 229.
consecutive performances plus a Saturday matinee. The Journal was pleased with the production of an old favorite and commented thereon:

The Athenæum was literally jammed last night; every seat upstairs and down had an occupant and crowds stood in the aisles and lobbies. The equestrian drama of Maseppa was put on in good style. Miss Kate Fisher makes a daring ascent to the upper portion of the theater lashed to the back of her horse Wonder . . . Miss Fisher makes the ascent on three runs; another run will be put up today and greater height will be exhibited tonight.23

The Dispatch also praised the performance of Maseppa with a brief description of the climatic scene:

She goes to the rafters of the building lashed to her magnificent steed "Wonder." The horse gallops up the inclined plane as though the pathway was a zig-zag route to the mountain summit. The roadbed is concealed from view by scenery of rocks and trees showing the body of the horse above the knees. The path is covered so the ascent is made without noise. The whole constitutes a grand scenic arrangement that commands the admiration and wins the applause of the people.24

Miss Fisher also used her horse to advantage on Friday night presenting the old stand-by The French Spy but converting it into a display of horsemanship as she played her part mounted on Wonder. Three Fast Men and Jack Sheppard composed the concluding bill Saturday evening.

The week of April 7 was devoted almost entirely to benefits for the more prominent members of the Sargent company beginning with Miss Bailey on Monday playing in A Romance of A Poor Young Man and A Conjugal Lesson. Mr. Stanley took a benefit the following night in a performance of A Widow Hunt and The Serious Family with Miss Lisa Long following on Wednesday with The Little Detective in which she personated

23 April 1, 1873.
24 April 1, 1873.
five characters. The Octo-ron was the feature of Miss Lissie Gale's benefit in which she played Zoe to complete the run of benefits. There was no performance by the company on Friday and the Atheneum was occupied by The San Francisco Minstrels who, with the exception of a matinee showing of Romance of A Poor Young Man by the Sargent company, played both Friday and Saturday.

The week which followed was equally devoid of anything spectacular both in performers and performances. The attendance, though seemingly adequate, was not large. The week's billing included Don Caesar De Basan; Pocohontas; The Widow Hunt; Robert Macaire; Meg's Diversion; Milky White; Paint Heart Never Won Fair Lady; Married Life; and The Serious Family. The Friday performance of Married Life was a benefit for Mrs. Ada Lawrence and included a grand elio and feats of magic by A. J. Sargent.

The rash of benefits spread to other members of the theater personnel on the following week with Monday's offering, the comedy Sweethearts and Wives, a benefit for the treasurer, doorman, and lesser attaches of the Atheneum staff. Following a presentation of Uncle Tom's Cabin Tuesday, Mr. J. B. Miller, bill-poster for the theater, received a benefit in which he, himself, appeared in the second piece, Limerick Boy. This unusual circumstance was explained in the next day's Journal:

The program first announced for the entertainment at the Atheneum last night was revised so as to enable the beneficiary, J. B. Miller, city bill poster, to give his startling and vivid impersonations of the gentleman from Limerick, otherwise Paddy Miles' Boy. We don't know what directed Mr. Miller's efforts in the dramatic line, perhaps it was his acquaintance with the guilt-edge liter-
ature of managers. However that may be, he went at the work of depicting the vagaries of Paddy with almost as much nonchalance as would characterize his acting in a tableau before a High Street billboard with a bucket of paste, a whitewash brush, and a three-sheet poster to carry out the effect. There was much merriment.25

What might well be considered the high water mark of the season was the playing of Edwin Booth at Sargent's Athenæum on April 24 and 25 under the management of J. H. McVicker. The Dispatch of April 23 expressed the anticipation of Columbus citizens as well as a respect for the esteemed actor by urging the public to come early and avoid unnecessary confusion once Booth had begun his performance of Hamlet, the first of his two presentations.

It is the request of the management that every person be seated by 8 o'clock of Booth's evening as the performance will commence promptly at that time. A rush of people coming in ten to fifteen minutes after the curtain rises is annoying to the actors and to those who are in their seats. Almost everybody will have reserved seats and many will have to be conducted to their chairs by the usher so that the necessity of reaching the house several minutes before 8 o'clock will be obvious to all and will be observed by those who have no desire to make a special display in the fashionable nuisance of coming in late.26

The performance of Booth was quite up to expectations and was given before a large and enthusiastic house. However, the Ohio State Journal devoted its review of Hamlet more to the company in support of Mr. Booth which it declared disappointing:

It is strange, however, that such an actor should be supported by a company so indifferent in ability. Perhaps not so strange either when we consider that Booth alone is a drawing card and the manager who secures him sees that his name and fame will bring in ducats without expenditure for subordinate talent of even mediocrity. But the contrast

25April 24, 1873.
26April 23, 1873.
between the stars and the stock is so grating that it is not tolerable; the association is manifestly an imposition on discriminating play-goers. With an exception in favor of the lady who played the Queen in an interview with Hamlet, there is nothing to be said about the support except that it was indifferent and in some cases worse. The Claudius of Mr. Jones was a mechanical characterization; the Pelonius of Mr. Stark was so far below what we have had here in this character this season that we will not institute comparison; the Horatio of Mr. Baron is possibly to be accounted for in a report that the gentleman was ill; the ghost of Mr. Mainard was as sepulchral as the cries of an auctioneer and the Laertes of Mr. Taylor would not have shed lustre on the leading man of a traveling company in the oil regions. The management could have greatly improved on the Ophelia of the evening by engaging Columbus talent. 27

The second night of the Booth engagement the star appeared in Richelieu, and although attendance fell off somewhat, the house was very adequate to the occasion. The reviews attributed the reduced attendance to the choice of play which did not give full opportunity for gratification of the great desire to "see Booth" since the character of Richelieu concealed the actor's face behind heavy makeup. The poor support on the part of members of the company was also held responsible for the fall-off in attendance at the performance of so great an actor. On this point the Journal commented:

Had the play been one in which the people, to put it in plain terms, could have seen the great actor's face and had the stock company been capable of going beyond the point of mere dramatic mechanisms there is no reasonable doubt the house would not have held the crowd applying for admission. 28

The Dispatch made an interesting comparison of Booth with Edwin Forrest:

As Hamlet, Mr. Booth is without a successful rival; as Richelieu he stands without a peer in this country, his

27April 25, 1873.

28April 26, 1873.
greatest rival having been laid away to rest from the tur- moils of the stage forever. A majority of mankind will believe that Forrest held the superior position in Rich- elieu that Booth fills in Hamlet, but no one can deny that the genius of the latter is one of the marvels of dramatic attainment in the world. 29

On Saturday, April 26, the Sargent Company played its final performance of the season beginning with an afternoon performance of Uncle Tom's Cabin and in the evening presenting Still Waters Run Deep and Number One 'Round the Corner. The evening was a benefit for Manager Sargent and the Dispatch noted the fact that Sargent's appearance in the two pieces was his first in over five years. Monday saw the opening of the Opera House with Miss Jane Coombs as the star in a performance of London Assurance beginning with Act III plus the screen scene from Sheridan's School For Scandal. With Miss Coombs were J. B. Hardie, Harry Langdon, and A. D. Bradley, all reputable New York actors. Miss Coombs' acting, however, was not up to expectations set by her previous appearance in May of 1872 as evidenced in the review of the Journal:

However good in the English comedy, her playing and mind were not sufficient to overshadow her playing of Juliet and other characters in which she appeared last season. In fact there were those in the audience who had declared that they had seen her play Lady Gay and Lady Teasle much better than she did last night. 30

With the Friday presentation of Ben McCullough and a melodramatic piece called Across the Continent featuring guest artist Oliver Doud Byron, the company closed. One more dramatic spectacle remained before the theater season closed however. The Naiad Queen, with a pro-

29April 26, 1873.

30April 29, 1873.
logue and four acts, began an impressive engagement of six nights at the Opera House on Tuesday, May 13, under the management of Arthur C. McKnight. Several years ago The Haïd Queen had created a sensation in Columbus when John Ellsler's troupe presented it for twelve consecutive performances in March, 1866. The spectacle drama under McKnight's management, was billed as an operetta and made a great impression upon Columbus, calling forth a request for a complimentary benefit to be given the manager for his excellent work. The invitation, printed in the Journal of May 19, was acknowledged by a formal letter of acceptance and The Haïd Queen was presented on Tuesday, May 20, as Manager McKnight's benefit and the final dramatic production of the regular season.

In summary.—The dramatic fare of the 1872-73 season was a continuation of the trend toward more variety and comic opera which had been evident over the past several seasons. Perhaps it was for this reason that Columbus theater appeared to be in better circumstances than it had been for some time and this was, in part, seen in the increased number of guest appearances which occurred in the season just closed. But the most significant event to transpire in the 1872-73 season was the advent of a new resident company under the management of H. J. Sargent, which opened January 1, 1873, at the Athenæum. Its significance is accentuated by the fact that the Sargent company was really the first truly resident company to successfully sustain itself in the

31 Supra., p. 166.

32 The total was 19 as against 14 the year before. The number had grown steadily from a low of 3 in the 1868-69 season but had not yet reached the all-high of 22 set in the 1865-66 season.
city of Columbus in many years. John Ellsler was always credited with being a Columbus manager and his company did occupy the city during the winter months with such regularity as to be regarded as a resident company. However, Ellsler belonged to Cleveland and, in the strict sense of the word, Columbus had no troupe of its own though several managers had tried for the honor.

In the second place, that a resident company could take hold here at a time when the Combination System was sweeping such troupes aside as an impractical enterprise must be considered most remarkable. Sargent's success at this time can only be attributed to his skill as a manager which enabled his company to exist as a legitimate resident troupe as long as it did.

The Season of 1873-1874

Two spectacular attractions unofficially began the Columbus theater season in the fall of 1873, the first to open being Buffalo Bill, King of The Border Men showing at the Athenæum on September 15 and starring the legendary figure of the west himself, William F. Cody known throughout the country as "Buffalo Bill." With him was an array of frontier characters including Texas Jack (announced in the bills as "Texas Jack himself"), Wild Bill Hickock, and one known as Snakeroot Sam, a creation of F. G. Maeder, the New York actor traveling with the company. With a cast like this there is no need to describe the nature of the piece which entertained Columbus through the following Thursday. Also what may have been intended as Opera House competition to the Buffalo Bill show was the return of Bidwell and McDonough's The Black Crook. The play featured one billed as "The Child Wonder, Baby Benson"
with the premiere danseuse Mlle. Lupo and the Hernandes troupe which had performed the spectacular in Columbus six months ago. The Black Crook played a three-night stand and then closed on the same Thursday as the Athenæum attraction.

It was Monday, September 22, that the Athenæum was officially opened for the fall under the management of Mr. Sargent whose troupe had been playing a two week's engagement in Indianapolis. The opening was a colorful one in the light of physical improvements made upon the theater itself and the special gestures of hospitality shown to the audience on the opening night.

Pains had been taken to start the season with éclat, not only as regards to stage but in the house. Each lady on entering was presented with an elegant bouquet to which was attached a ribbon bearing "Compliments of H. J. Sargent" and many of the gentlemen were similarly complimented and bore the floral trophies in their button holes. The ushers were well dressed and well drilled, the disturbing elements were curbed into propriety and in fact everything in the way of attentions to the audience was conducted in such a manner that it would be an omission of justice not to commend them.33

Fred Marsden's comedy entitled Clouds was the play presented and its staging was an attraction in itself as the Dispatch review testified:

During the play the most exquisite taste was shown in stage settings. Flowers, birds in cages, cottages, rustic seats, fences, landscape views combining mountains, woods and water; elegant parlor furniture and numerous little trinkets appeared with due regard for the proprieties of the play.

The play was met calculated to develop ranting which would "tear a passion to tatters" and happily the company appears to be free from the town oriel style. It is pleasant to be encouraged . . . Every lady in the audience received a very

33Sept. 23, 1873.
handsome bouquet of natural flowers and the neatly printed
four-page programs were delicately perfumed. 34

The production ran three consecutive nights before giving way to The
New Magdalen, the Wilkie Collins story dramatised by Mr. Sargent which
played through Friday. Clouds was given at the Saturday matinee and
Honey Moon was the feature of the evening performance along with Am-
herst's melodrama, Ireland As It Was.

For the next six nights Columbus was treated to the antics of
Baker and Ferron, a team of specialists in German and Irish characters
who presented their speciality Chris and Lena, a piece written for them
by J. A. Thompson. Excellent houses greeted these comedians through to
the end of their engagement on Saturday night.

J. W. Albaugh's last appearance in Columbus was in February of
1873 when he was the single star of his company, but when he appeared
October 6, following Baker and Ferron, he was sharing his billing with
Mrs. Albaugh, the former Mary Mitchell, whom he had married in 1867.
Their first play was a drama by Bartlet Campbell called Watch and Wait
which was performed three nights. It was followed by Eustache, The
Wanderer which was not exactly a new play but one which had not seen
many Columbus productions. On Friday the couple played The Merchant of
Venice—Albaugh as Shylock and his wife as Portia— in addition to the
farcical Day After the Wedding. Watch and Wait was repeated at the
Saturday matinee and Richard III was offered in the evening.

In the meantime the Opera House was playing host to the Chapman
Sisters whose number was now three—Blanche, Ella, and young sister,

34 Sept. 23, 1873.
Belle. They featured their burlesque company in the opener, Little Don Giovanni and playing Cinderella on Thursday and Friday with the musical burlesque The Gold Demon and the comic piece, A Kiss In The Dark as the final performance on Saturday. The Albaugh engagement resumed on Monday and Tuesday with Dicken's Our Mutual Friend and on Wednesday, October 15, the company offered Hamlet. The Dispatch reporter had made a prediction on October 12 stating that, with the exception of the role of Hamlet, the Albaugh production would be superior to that played by the Booth Combination. If the criticism of the company supporting Booth in his last Columbus appearance was at all valid as expressed in the papers at that time,35 such a prediction as was made by the Dispatch had a good chance of coming to pass. At least the remark reflected well the prevailing confidence in Mr. Albaugh's troupe.

London Assurance and Still Waters Run Deep composed the program of Thursday, October 16, and on Friday the company played Romeo and Juliet. Mr. Albaugh did not play Romeo as might have been expected however, but personated Mercutio while Mrs. Albaugh played Romeo to Mrs. H. J. Sargent's Juliet. The tragedy was repeated Saturday as a matinee while Lucretia Borgia was given in the evening after which the Albaugh troupe went on to Wheeling, West Virginia. The Albaugh engagement had met with great favor in the capital city and called forth considerable praise from the reviewers. The initial play—Watch and Wait—was commended in its structure and in its presentation according to the Journal comments:

In their new play [Watch and Wait] Mr. and Mrs. Albaugh have created a very pleasant impression. The play is merito-

35 Supra., p. 279.
rious and one of the principal points of its merit is a comparative departure from the "loud" characteristics that so pervade the drama of the new school. Mr. Albaugh is to be especially commended for his abiding faith in and taste for the legitimate.36

While Watch and Wait was being played in Columbus the papers noted that the piece was recently the subject of court action in Pittsburgh. Isaac N. Gotthold was seeking an injunction restraining the author from producing the play claiming that he (Gotthold) was the author. Bartley Campbell, supposed author, admitted that at one time Gotthold had an interest in the manuscript but insisted that the conditions of the proposed sale were not complied with. At that time the case had not yet been decided and it was indicated that, in the meantime, those now performing the play could not be deterred therefrom.

With the departure of the Chapman Sisters on October 11, the Opera House was occupied by Erskine's Great Western Theater whose three-day engagement began with Pygmalion and Galatea starring Miss May Fiske and W. T. Melville. Mr. Melville had not been on the Columbus stage in ten years. At that time he was a member of D. E. Ralton's company when it played Columbus in 1862.37 The Marble Heart was presented by the Erskine Company Tuesday evening, followed by the closing performance, Peep O'Day, Wednesday, October 15.

36 Oct. 9, 1873. One should observe here the direct reference to the loud and flamboyant stage delivery as belonging to "the new school." There has been continued criticism over the past ten years covered by this study of loud and impassioned acting and much of it has been attributed to the "gods of the gallery" (Supra., p.125). The significant fact, however, is the recency of this style of acting, as evidenced in the above quotation, and the disapproval thereof expressed by the press.

37 Supra., p. 71.
The Marble Heart was a play somewhat similar to Pygmalion and Galatea in some of its appointments and neither of these plays had been performed in Columbus to any great extent. The gist of the play concerns a beautiful female form sculptured in marble which comes to life, is capable of talking, and is totally ignorant of the ways of the world including the matters of love. Consequently, she unwittingly excites jealousy among the other women and gets the entire group into endless trouble and many ludicrous situations.

At this time an interesting commentary on audience behavior appeared in the Ohio State Journal which was undoubtedly motivated by conduct at that time, but could also apply to some modern audiences:

**NUISANCES:** The greatest bores who frequent our theaters and public places are: first, the people who never come on time; second, the people who always leave during the climax of the last act; third, chatterboxes who talk and bore you with questions during the performance; and last—not by any means least—the thirsty souls who consider it a necessary part of the program to liquor up or irrigate at every available interval. If dramatic entertainments are really thirst-creating things, if pleasure must be washed down with a cup of sack, then let us suggest that the viands be sold within the theater.

At the Alhambra Palace in London there is outside of the orchestra circle a promenade and at every available point there are stationed cisterns flowing with ale and porter and every specie of liquid from adulterated brandy to pure water. Perhaps the introduction of such a promenade in our theaters well deafened by carpetings might enable the peaceable and attentive listeners to enjoy the play without the distracting influences of the unmitigated bores referred to, 38

Jane Coombs returned to the Opera House on October 20 to play The Wife's Secret and Clouds and Sunshine on Monday and Tuesday. This theater had been closed for several days to undergo decorative improve-

38 Oct. 15, 1873.
ments and Miss Coombs' performance was in the nature of a minor re-opening of the renovated theater. The Journal described the improvements as follows:

New chairs have been put in place in the parquet of the Opera House and the accompanying improvements will be completed in time for . . . Jane Coombs' engagement tonight . . . The chairs have iron frames fastened to the floor and walnut backs and are upholstered in plush. The seats fold up by means of hinges giving wide and comfortable passage. The center aisle is wide enough to allow three persons to walk abreast; indeed, all the aisles are roomy. The purchaser of a seat in the center of a row can reach it without any of that squeeze which is so common in places of amusement on account of the desire to occupy every inch of space with seats.

The patrons of the house will observe several other changes tonight. New and elegant hangings for the private boxes, Brussels carpets for the aisle of the parquet, new matting in the lobby and so forth . . . The Opera House is popular with managers of first class entertainment and Mr. Comstock is commendably energetic in introducing those things which conduce to the pleasure and comfort of the public.39

The Athenæum at this time was featuring an actress known only as "Little Nell," a song and dance artist of youthful age and an exponent of the protean farce. She played five characters in her opening performance of Fidelia which held the boards through to her close-out on Saturday, October 25.40 The Athenæum continued to draw attention, this time with Miss Ada Gray in the oft-played East Lynne and the farce, Benedick Boy, Monday, October 27, followed Tuesday with The French Woman. The latter was repeated for two more performances before Miss Gray took her benefit on Friday in a presentation of Whose Wife? Miss Gray's engagement closed Saturday with Core or Pride of Wealth, a new play to

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39Oct. 20, 1873.
40Ibid., Oct. 21, 1873.
Columbus, and the older piece, Sketches in India. Meanwhile the Opera House, which had opened the week before with Jane Coombs, was now hosting an English Opera Troupe featuring Miss C. Kellog in Genoud's Faust.

Two sensation pieces, presented by the resident company without the usual guest artist, took up the following week. Under the Gaslight played through Wednesday and was followed by Lost in London to complete the week, except for a performance of The Corsican Brothers on Saturday night. Mrs. Sargent and Mr. Sydney Smith carried the leads throughout the week supported principally by Mr. Grismer and Miss Wiedman.

It is a curious thing that the celebrated actress Charlotte Cushman, who had been playing professionally for thirty-seven years, had not played Columbus, Ohio, before this time. Nearly every actor and actress of note had visited Ohio's capital over the past fifteen years and yet it was not until November 10, 1873, that Miss Cushman favored Columbus with a brief engagement of three nights. Charlotte Cushman is considered by most as the first great tragedienne of the American theater and was called by Lawrence Barrett "the greatest Lady MacBeth of her age" although the role of Meg Moriles in Guy Hammering was considered her most popular. She was born in Boston in 1814 and after her schooling she determined upon a singing career. Her first appearance thus was in The Marriage of Figaro at the Tremont Theater in Boston in 1835. Miss Cushman's attention to acting came about shortly thereafter when she came very close to losing her voice in an attempt to force it into the soprano register. After appearing at the Bowery in 1836 as Lady MacBeth, she played the usual theatrical centers before going abroad
and establishing herself as a celebrated actress in the London theaters. She played there four or five years before returning to the United States.\[41\]

Guy Mannering was the first Cushman presentation at the Athenaeum and on the following Tuesday she performed as Lady MacBeth in Shakespeare's tragedy. Miss Cushman's acting was most impressive as described by the Journal on the day following her opening:

> When in the latter part of the second act Miss Cushman made her first appearance the sensation was a profound one. When she came on with that quick, firm step characteristic of a true conception of the character, the impression was an overpowering one. She seemed to gain the position in which she suddenly confronts Bertram and Dimont before the audience could realize that she had entered. No words can describe the power she there exhibited without uttering a syllable. A round of applause greeted her as she stood there with expressive poise, pointing her finger at the astonished Dimont and with a face that was justly expressive of dramatic effect. Perfect quiet reigned in the house until the audience, moved by a picture at once terrific and beautiful, broke into a second demonstration before the lady had pronounced the first word of her opening speech. When she spoke, the magic of her voice added to the impression and she seemed to exercise a power which could no more be resisted by the audience than, in the author's conception, it could be by the gypsies over whom she exercised authority . . . She is grand and powerful in every part with a quick easy movement, a countenance wonderfully expressive and a voice of great strength and purity. She converts those who have not before seen her to the proposition of those who have—that she represents the highest standard of acting extant.\[42\]

Charlotte Cushman's closing piece on Thursday was Henry VIII with the star in the role of Queen Catherine, after which both she and Sargent's company, which had supported her, went on to Dayton and


\[42\]Nov. 11, 1873.
Springfield, Ohio, for two performances. The excellent engagement of Miss Cushman, made so in part by the fine support of the resident company, provoked a bit of complimentary editorializing on the part of the Journal stressing the merits of the resident troupe:

It should be born in mind continually that in a city of our population plays must necessarily follow each other in rapid succession and that the best company on earth, cast for all conceivable kinds of business, with but a few hours out of the twenty-four for study, is liable to show weak points at any time. Taking this company as a body, the circumstances under which it appears—cast as near as possible with regard for special fitness for difficult characters—it works well together; better, perhaps, than most of the regular stock companies outside the metropolitan theaters. The members, in private life as well as in a professional way, have endeavored to merit the esteem of this community and while we are not personally willing to admit that they are unworthy professionally, it is simple justice to ask those who have not given their great mental labor due weight in making up judgment to consider this point. It speaks well for our city, in fact is one of the evidences of its growth in trade and transient population to have a place of amusement open through the regular season. There are but two cities in Ohio that can claim this honor—Cincinnati and Cleveland. Our manager is pleasant; his prices are popular; his company up to the average—if not better—good order is preserved; no orchestra in the state will compare with Professor Eckhardt's, and all the little points that add to the general pleasure of the public receive prompt attention.

This article is unbought and unsought and is written as we would write upon any other subject which would have a tendency to render public and private advantages of the city pleasant and profitable to ourselves and to sojourners within our gates.43

When the company of H. J. Sargent returned to Columbus on November 17 they re-opened the Athenaeum with a production of Rosedale. At the same time Sherry's New York Theater, which had made several visits to the city in recent years, once again occupied the Opera House and presented the Irish drama Beneath the Gibbet starring Miss Virginia Germon and Walter Benn. On Tuesday Miss Germon played Mary Warren in The

43Nov. 12, 1873.
Wife's Trials including the farce We All Have Our Little Faults for the final program. Lady of Lyons and Nick O' The Woods was the Wednesday bill at the Athenæum after which that company also withdrew and relinquished the theater to Furbish's Fifth Avenue Theater Combination from New York which had appeared in Columbus previously and would play Divorce and David Garrick before closing out on Saturday, November 22.

It was on the opening night of Divorce, November 20, that racial discrimination in Columbus theaters lead to an incident when Richard Porter, a colored man, and his girl companion were refused admission to the parquet of the Athenæum. The parquet was an area not open to Negroes. They were restricted to the gallery maintained for their use. On November 20 Porter approached the doorman with two tickets for the parquet whereupon the latter took the tickets to the office and returned with the purchase price which he offered to Porter along with the explanation that he could not be admitted to that part of the theater. According to accounts, Porter refused the money and, after angrily stating that it was time the theater manager and others learned that not all Negroes are rowdies, he departed from the building.

Shortly thereafter, Henry Colwell, the doorman, chanced into the saloon where Porter was employed, there to distribute Athenæum bills which was a part of his employment. He was again accosted by the disgruntled Porter. According to the Dispatch Colwell refused to discuss the matter and, as he turned to leave, Porter struck him down from behind and proceeded to kick and beat the prostrate doorman. Porter was arrested and fined for the offense.

Nov. 26, 1873.
The matter did not end there, however. The contention was that Porter could not have purchased the tickets himself that night as he claimed, as the parquet seats had been sold out that afternoon and allegedly to white patrons. Furthermore, in the accounts of the Dispatch it was asserted that no responsible colored citizen would attempt to violate the established practice of seating Negroes in the gallery only. The inference was that some white person had provided Porter with tickets purchased in the afternoon.

The attitude and conduct of Porter in the theater and later in the encounter with Colwell became a secondary matter and the right of Manager Sargent to deny admission to the theater on a basis of color became the primary item of discussion. A meeting of colored citizens was held at Shiloh Church to discuss the question of racial discrimination at the Atheneum but their discussion soon made obvious a jealousy existing between the lighter-skinned Negroes and their darker brothers and little was accomplished. Meanwhile the Dispatch published a long article on the rights of those who operate places of amusement among which was the right to bar any unwanted persons by refunding their money as stated on the back of the ticket itself.

Outside of a statement from Sargent diving his reasons for discriminatory practices at the Atheneum, little more came of the incident. A committee of colored folk called upon Sargent and were courteously received but netted little more than a restatement of Sargent's position. In the meantime press releases implied strongly that the Journal and the Dispatch were more interested in the accuracy of each other's reporting and were using the incident to feed the long existing rivalry between
the two papers. Historically, the event was, as far as can be determined, the first instance of a race problem focusing on places of amusement in the city of Columbus. Porter's letter to the editor of the Dispatch claimed that the Atheneum was singular in its practice of segregation, the Opera House having "long since abolished the barbarous practice of proscription." The accuracy of Porter's statement must remain a matter of uncertainty, but the issue as here described became the source of much discussion in Columbus for many months.

It was inferred in the meeting at Shiloh Church that Negroes had previously gained access to the parquet without difficulty, but the only case actually cited was explained on the grounds that the party was extremely light-complexioned for a colored man. The Dispatch, noting this, referred to the man's complexion as having "a tint of spring butter." This reference was resented by Fred B. Roney, the man described, and he demanded an apology from the Dispatch which he received along with a lengthy sermon on taking pride in one's own kind along with the claim that the remark was intended as a compliment.

The engagement of M. W. Leffingwell virtually meant the return of a native son to Columbus. Leffingwell was an accomplished burlesque actor and a leader in that profession, according to the reviews, and could give a good account of himself in other dramatic lines. Columbus was his home thirty years ago when he came to learn the carpenter trade only to become convinced that he was not suited to that profession.

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45 Nov. 26, 1873.
46 Dec. 4, 1873.
On November 21, Leffingwell began a week of comedy and burlesque with Romeo Jaffier Jenkins and a piece entitled Hot Coals. Billiards, a farce replete with ridiculous characters, was introduced Thursday along with Romeo Jenkins again. The latter was repeated once more on Saturday along with a burlesque entitled Gushing Clorinda or Cinderella, Leffingwell's final presentation.

It seemed Leffingwell had the city well primed for burlesque and variety, for the following week the Atheneum featured Fox and Dennier's Pantomime Troupe assisted by a vaudeville company presenting their repertoire of variety Monday through Wednesday. A real departure from the normal theatrical fare occurred on Thursday, however, and continued to the end of the week: Fox and Dennier's variety troupe combined with the legitimate company of H. J. Sargent to present what might be called "stepped up versions" of three well-known legitimate pieces—The Idiot Witness; Mr. and Mrs. Peter White, and The Hidden Hand. The motive for creating this unusual combination of talents is best explained in the review of the Journal which referred to the innovation in its December 12 issue:

As promised at the beginning of the week, the program at the Atheneum has been undergoing change. It has been decidedly improved too. More of the dramatic has been introduced while all the most striking and popular features of the vaudeville program have been retained including the inimitable singing and dancing of Delahanty, and Hengler and the banjo accomplishments of Oscar Willis. "The Idiot Witness" is the drama now running. A superior entertainment is in rehearsal for the matinee tomorrow afternoon and for tomorrow night. The popular drama of "The Hidden Hand" with a good dramatic distribution and Delahanty and Hengler introduced through the play in their
peculiar business. Their specialities are in accord with many phases of the drama and will be excellent features.48

The camel now had a good bit more than his head in the tent, if the old fable is applicable to the position of variety in relation to theatrical popularity. There was a time when variety was limited to between-scenes entertainment; then variety and minstrel were competing with the legitimate theater for public favor. If the Journal's remarks are indicative of anything, it seems that the legitimate stage was being forced to choose between making variety a competitor or a partner and Manager Sargent, for one, was at least willing to try the latter.

Thursday, December 11, was also the first of a three-day engagement of the dialect comedian, Robert McWade, at the Opera House. At the time of this particular engagement McWade was concentrating on character parts and most particularly upon the role of Rip Van Winkle which he performed before good audiences on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.49

The pantomime and vaudeville combination closed out at the Atheneum on Saturday and on Monday, December 15, Miss Augusta Dargon, new on the Columbus stage, opened a week's run at the Atheneum with Deborah or The Jewish Maid's Wrong and a farce called My Wife's Maid. Camille; Guy Mannering; The Hunchback; and School For Scandal followed in sequence through the week providing a variety of drama climax-ed on Saturday with a matinee of Camille and an evening performance of Macbeth.

48 Dec. 12, 1873.

49 Ibid., Dec. 10, 1873.
Another newcomer to Columbus was Harold Forsberg whose opening show, *The Streets of New York*, played through Wednesday, December 24, followed by *The Hunchback* on Christmas Day. No show was given on Friday, but on Saturday a new piece entitled *Six Degrees of Crime* along with *Two Convicts* lent a penal atmosphere to Mr. Forsberg's closing performance. The next week another "Tom Show" (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*) played the Athenæum presenting Little Nellie Irving in the role of Eva. Performances lasted until Thursday when T. G. Riggs returned to Columbus for a week of Irish drama.

At the Opera House J. H. Stoddart of Wallace's Theater in New York began an engagement of three nights with *A Struggle For Life* on Monday, December 29. The play bore a title new to the Columbus theater but actually it was another version of Boucicault's *The Long Strike*. *Broken Vows* and the comedy, *One Touch of Nature*, followed by *Secret Marriage* and *Americans in Paris* made up Stoddart's repertoire and completed his engagement on Wednesday. The next night the Opera House was occupied by Sam Ryan with a Combination from New York City and more Irish drama.

As can be seen, the new year was ushered in with a series of Irish plays being performed by T. G. Riggs at the Athenæum and by Sam Ryan at the Opera House. Attendance at both theaters had been no better than average over the past few weeks, but visiting stars and the companies which attended them were doing satisfactorily. The financial panic of 1873 may have been a real spectre in some parts of the country, but Columbus did not suffer greatly. On November 3 the Dispatch sought
to discredit comments about the allegedly sorry economic conditions in the capital city with these remarks:

All the croaking to the contrary, Columbus suffers as little from the money stringency as any other city. The material wealth and prosperity of our business interests are unimpaired. There are no failures or suspensions that we hear of to any alarming extent or to any amount whatever. The approach of winter always throws a great many mechanics and laborers out of employment but there is nothing extraordinary about this and this is no excuse for fears of an increase of the panic. 50

True as this may have been of the city as a whole, the theater was having to struggle for its patronage. It would take a little more time, but the city would eventually learn that two prosperous theaters was more of a luxury than it could afford.

Solon Shingle returned to the Atheneum on January 8 in the person of John E. Owens who opened a three-day engagement with that popular piece and the play, Everybody's Friend. On Saturday Married Life and Dream of Delusion played the matinee before the evening performance of The Poor Gentleman and another performance of Solon Shingle. Mr. Owens was succeeded by Dominick Murray who gave Columbus another week of crime-in-melodrama playing Escaped From Sing Sing, written by Mr. Murray and Charles Barry, and Gambler's Crime.

A three-night engagement of the popular Edwin Adams began at the Atheneum on January 19 assisted by the former Hannah Bailey, now Mrs. Sargent. Wild Oats, the five-act comedy by J. O'Keefe, offered Mr. Adams as Rover on Monday with Lady of Lyons -- still a welcome piece after years of playing -- presented on Tuesday. Next came The Marble Heart and Adams' concluding performance of Enoch Arden. The acting of

50 Nov. 3, 1873.
Mr. Adams was of the finest quality in the eyes of the press and the
Journal in particular made an editorial effort to remind Columbus
citizens of their obligation to support such reknowned actors:

Mr. Adams appears tonight in his great character of
Enoch Arden and we hope and feel that there will be an
overflowing house. As Jefferson is as Rip Van Winkle,
Adams is as Enoch Arden—without a peer, yet the former
has his imitators and the latter has none. Let enough be
said of Columbus that they will flock to see the trashy and
sensational and allow such an actor as Mr. Adams appear to
only moderate business. It lays [sic] entirely with our
public which our manager, Mr. Sargent, may give us—the
claptrap sensational or the legitimate.

... Mr. Adams has been induced through his personal
friendship for Mr. Sargent to come to Columbus and shall
we tell him by our staying away that we don’t want good
plays well acted, but that we do want trash, red fire, and
railroad disasters? It lays sic entirely in the hands
of the public what will be presented. The business of
the management is to please the public.51

What was considered a most impressive scene from Enoch Arden
was described by the Dispatch reporter and gives some idea of the type
of theater in favor at this time:

There is a scene in "Enoch Arden" which is perfectly
natural and extremely thrilling. Huge rocks are massed upon
each other and jut out into the sea. Under a palm tree on
these rocks kneels a man so worn, so haggard looking, almost
like a wild beast. His body is bent forward with one hand
pointing seaward, while the eyes, with bitter longing, gaze
over the glassy waters. His vessel has been cast away and
twelve long years has he watched with his eyes turned ever
seaward. His hand points forward as though immovable and
he hoarsely whispers, "A sail, a sail!" Then as his eyes
sweep over the smooth burning waters, his head drops upon his
bosom in agony.

Here the acting of Mr. Adams rises to sublimity. The
utter hopelessness depicted in his face, the agony in his
gestures, cannot be described. It is misery, misery, misery.
After a spasm of passing insanity, he kneels peaceably on the
beach, raises his hands heavenward, and calls on Him who holds
the sea in all of His hand, then rising he goes to the woods.
While he is gone a vessel comes into sight under full sail.

51 Jan. 22, 1874.
There is an intensity of feeling in the spectator amounting almost to anguish, for the perfect art of the famous actor has transformed the tinsel of the stage appointments into a vivid reality and the simulated earnestness of the artist seems to be no longer a passion of the moment.

The vessel stands out at sea so distant that the sailors are not visible though the spectator can see that the sails are being furled. The crew take boats and come ashore for water. The sight of the sails being furled fills every heart with joy and there is great applause, but when the boats leave for shore the joy is immeasurably greater. Suddenly Enoch comes out of the bushes. "A sail, a sail," he cries, "God be praised, a sail!" . . . White handkerchiefs are brought forth to brush away tears when Enoch and the sailors shout, "For home to Annie and the babes," and leap into the boats and leave the shore which has been his prison for so many years.52

When Miss Alice Harrison opened her engagement at the Atheneum on Monday, January 26, she played six different parts in The Boy Detective in addition to favoring with songs and dances, and for the rest of the week the spectators enjoyed a return to a repertoire of old favorites including Fanchon; The Hidden Hand; and Bertha, The Sewing Machine Girl. The next week Lillie Eldridge, who had been playing on the stage since the age of five, presented two performances of Olive, or The Mysterious Stranger on February 2 and 3. Wednesday began Fred Marsden's society play, Alma or Held In Bondage, which also was repeated a second night.

Miss Eldridge had appeared in Columbus a number of years ago and on Tuesday, following her opening, the Journal remarked: "Among those who saw her then as well as last night, there was much comment on the great progress she has made. Cultivation has done much to correct what . . . came under the head of a lisp. It seems possible that time may overcome the peculiarity altogether."53 Miss Eldridge's benefit

52Jan. 24, 1874.
53Feb. 3, 1874.
on Friday was an adaptation from the opera Mignon and the week's engagement was concluded Saturday with a matinee of Alma followed by an evening performance of Ingomar.

The Dispatch was not pleased with the support Miss Eldridge received from the cast in her rendition of Mignon and pointed out specifics in the next day's issue:

Owing to some cause, perhaps to lack of time for study, the company was not in the plight for playing well. Mr. Huntley was not brilliant as usual; Mr. Young was thinking more about the prompters than the play; Mr. Lee was quite acceptable as Laertes; Mr. Smith "gagged" through to great disadvantage to himself; Miss Weidman was not adapted to her part by nature but did all she could to please, though it was apparent she was out of her element . . . With one or two changes in the cast and with a little more time for study and rehearsal, the company could have done better.54

After the close of the Eldridge engagement, the Sargent company did not perform for five days due to the presence of a pantomime troupe at the Atheneum. However, on February 12 the company began a week of "resident engagements" with a benefit for Sidney Smith who appeared in the twin bill of Paul Pry and Among the Mormons, followed on Friday by The Railroad to Ruin starring Harry Coulton and J. H. Hunley. Another twin bill composed of A Glance At New York and The Duel In The Snow served as a benefit Saturday evening for J. R. Grismer. All the next week the Atheneum featured the singing and dialect specialist, Joseph Murphy, who played four characters in Maeder's comedy Help!

54Feb. 7, 1874. The remark that "Mr. Huntley was not brilliant as usual" causes one to wonder if a printer's error destroyed the writer's inference that Huntley was not up to par, or are we to take the literal meaning which infers that a dull performance was always to be expected of him?
It was to recognize the personal achievement and professional maturity of one of its own that Columbus welcomed the week's engagement of Clara Morris, beginning February 23, 1874. Miss Morris, received her start as a young actress with John Ellsler some ten years ago and had played Columbus a number of times in that period as a member of the company. Now, after having gained that New York recognition which proclaims one a success, she was appearing at the Athenaeum—a star in her own right—playing Cora in Adolphe Belot's drama _L'Article 47_. The rise of Miss Morris in her profession had obviously been the result of patience and hard work made evident by the fact that the most successful of her roles bore the distinctive Morris imprint on them. The character of Cora was such a case and was noted by the Dispatch reporter on February 24:

One of the things a little remarkable about her career is that she has saved "_L'Article 47_" from going the way of many other modern productions of playwrights . . . As originally constructed, this play did not possess a feature which could redeem it from oblivion. She played it in New York, made a hit in the part of Cora, changed the construction of the play to suit her talent, and started out as a star—subject to the gauntlet of cold and critical public opinion—but genius carried her beyond the critic's sphere.  

A further testimony to the height of Clara Morris's achievements was the commentary found in the Chicago Evening Journal reprinted in the Ohio State Journal of February 18:

The character of Cora as drawn by Belot is in every way too small for the genius of Miss Morris. He was satisfied with the Parisian woman of the present day, but Miss Morris sees further into the depths of the human heart and has given us instead a grand historical personage . . . While you are watching her the person who comes upon the stage for the hour is she who lived 2000 years ago on the banks of the mysterious

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55 Feb. 24, 1874.
river that divides the Libyan Desert from the trackless sand of Arabia. We behold in all her magnificence, once again, the glorious sorceress of the Nile... If Miss Morris had nothing but her wonderful voice which is in sympathy with every varying sentiment, which sometimes pours on us like a torrent and sometimes comes stealing softly from afar as though swept in by a zephyr from a summer sea; if she could not make it grow husky and stifled as though filled with fears, or cause it to ripple with the melody of joy—if she had nothing in the world except this voice, we should never forget her.

If she had nothing except the expressive beauty of her face which shifts from emotion to passion, with the rapidity of lightning—if this was all the power she possessed, we should never forget her. If she owned nothing besides those long slender arms which she knows how to twine together in anger or despair or throw from her with the precision and effect of lances; if she owned nothing but those arms which she can raise upward in such pleading as though she knelt at the gate of Paradise; if she had nothing but those mighty arms, we should never forget her.

If she did nothing but make that advance upon Duhamel at the close of the third act when she seemed for a moment to be only three feet high and her body had the lateral sway of the panther ere she springs; if she did nothing else but make this progress and then freeze into that erect statue of triumph with her hands stretched into the sky—if she did only this one thing we should never forget her—never! She was no longer Morris nor even Cora. She was a mighty Cleopatra, dead after the poison of the asp had entered her blood.56

L'Article 47 played through Thursday and then a new play called Alixe was featured on Friday as a benefit for Miss Morris, the play being repeated at both the Saturday matinee and evening performances.

It is worth noting the Dispatch comment on the production as it clearly reflects the public's wearying of exaggerated melodrama, even at this early time, which often undermined the true emotional experience intended in the drama:

The drowning does not occur in the presence of the audience and is therefore devoid of that threadbare and worn out attempt at dramatic effect which is usually practiced by men and maidens leaping from bridges and all that sort of work. But the body is born upon the stage by two of the prominent people...

56 Feb. 18, 1874.
in the play, not by "supes" who invariably rob such scenes of all that is truly expressive of tenderness and tears.\(^\text{57}\)

Columbus theater patrons surely must have missed the regular appearances of C. W. Gouldock and his daughter and they may have wondered as to his whereabouts since he had not been on the Columbus boards since December of 1871. However, the old gentleman once again appeared before them in a week's engagement which began March 2, but his daughter, Eliza, was not with him. **King Lear** was Mr. Gouldock's opening performance and on Tuesday he returned to the play with which he was inseparably associated---**Willow Copse**---which he repeated the next night. **Henry IV** and **The Merchant of Venice** were offered Thursday and Friday with **Milky White** accompanying the latter on benefit night. **Willow Copse** was the Saturday matinee and **Henry IV** was played that evening.

Mr. Gouldock's repertoire for the week was considerably stronger in Shakespeare than any he had played before and, according to the **Dispatch**, his rendition thereof was done in good taste and with great effect:

Mr. Gouldock's style of impersonation in Shakespearean characters differs from that of most actors having a pathos and subdued air peculiar to all his dramatic business. He does not tear a passion to tatters but reaches the better nature of his audiences by being quiet and natural. He is one of the few belonging to the old school who have never departed from this rule; one of the few who have been instrumental in begetting a temperance that gives smoothness; one of the few who does not o'er step the modesty of nature; one of the few who does not saw the air but speaks gently and yet is not too tame.\(^\text{58}\)

\(^{\text{57}}\text{Feb. 28, 1874.}\)

\(^{\text{58}}\text{March 3, 1874.}\)
The Gouldock engagement was followed by E. T. Stetson who began a week at the Atheneum with Neck and Neck which was played three consecutive nights beginning Monday, March 9, before being replaced by Hamlet. Friday Mr. Stetson played T. S. Arthur's Ten Nights In A Bar Room taking the role of Joe Morgan, and what might be termed its companion piece--The Drunkard--played Saturday with a repeat of Neck and Neck. Said the Journal of Stetson in the Drunkard:

Mr. Stetson's presentation of Edward is the result of accurate and laborious study and deep knowledge of human frailty and is spoken of at times as terribly real--particularly the scene of delirium tremens which, though abounding in terrors of that dreadful malady and appearing to those unacquainted with the disease to be over-stepping the bounds of nature, is pronounced true to the letter. In this scene . . . it is no uncommon thing to see scores of men and women in the audience weeping like children, while at the next moment their faces are radiant with smiles at the quaint humor of Bill Dowton or the pompous peculiarities of Miss Spindle.59

It is very likely that Mr. Stetson was attempting to take advantage of the temperance movement then being felt in great strength in the capital city, at least to the extent of his playing two temperance plays. The Dispatch had commented a few days earlier that "the temperance movement had affected [theater] business somewhat, but nevertheless, the audiences have been appreciative and the receipts very satisfactory."60

James H. Stoddart, who had played the Opera House in December,61 returned to that place on March 13 to play Secret Marriage and American in Paris while Stetson was still occupying the Atheneum. Stoddart was a specialist in eccentric characters and was regarded by T. Allston

59March 14, 1874.
60March 6, 1874.
61Supra., p. 298.
Brown as having no equal on the American stage in this form of acting. Mr. Stoddart remained in Columbus only two nights despite a fine reception, and he concluded on Saturday with The Long Strike and One Touch of Nature.

The dialect comedians, Baker and Ferron, also returned to Columbus for a second engagement this season, having played the Athenaeum early in September. Their specialty, Chris and Lena, played to standing room only from opening night, March 16, to their closing five nights later.

Both the Opera House and the Athenaeum opened with attractive engagements on Monday, March 23, featuring two actors popular in Columbus. Lawrence Barrett, who had not been in the city since 1866, played two performances at the Opera House—Richelieu on Monday and Hamlet on Tuesday—while Kate Fisher once again played Mazeppa at the Athenaeum with her trained horse, Wonder. Once again the press saw fit to point out the common weakness of poor support for star performers, this time in the Lawrence Barrett engagement:

Mr. Lawrence Barrett closed a brief engagement last night with an admirable interpretation of Hamlet before an audience which the high prices kept very far below the just deserts of the distinguished actor. Miss Hawthorne as Ophelia was particularly commended. As to the remainder of the company, the support was generally not uniformly good. The Horatio of the evening detracted from the impressiveness of the first platform scene by very indifferent declamation.

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62 Brown, op. cit., p. 351.
63 Supra., p. 285.
64 Supra., p. 151.
65 March 25, 1874.
Miss Fisher's engagement ran the entire week with Mazeppa playing three nights followed by The French Spy (on horseback) and Dick Turpin's Ride to York. For her Friday benefit the actress offered Three Fast Men and, again, Dick Turpin, with the program being further embellished by the presence of the Atheneum Minstrels and The Mulligan Guards, the latter's identity no longer of record. Mazeppa was again presented Saturday as a matinee and evening performance with The French Spy added to the evening presentation.

Kate Fisher's final performance marked the temporary closing of the Sargent company at the Atheneum except for one or two company renditions which ran through Wednesday, April 1. Mrs. Sargent was starred in a production of Frou-Frou on Monday and W. M. Ward received a benefit Tuesday with Artist's Wife and Secret Service. Also Mrs. Harry Jordan and Miss Lulu Jordan took leads in a Wednesday performance of Rob Roy with the special attraction of Professor Anderson's pupils of the city performing on the parallel bars.

Again, Bidwell and MacDonough's Black Crook played the Opera House, but it remained there only two nights, closing on April 7. It was becoming more apparent that the once sensational, if not shocking piece, had about run its course and, while it played to fairly good houses, the novelty and the spectacular were no longer sufficient to conceal the fact that the drama itself was of little value. While The Black Crook was at the Opera House, the Atheneum was presenting Charlotte M. Stanley in a drama called Crime or Secrets of City Life which ran three nights. Then followed A Fight For Life on Thursday.

66The Ohio State Journal, April 1, 1874.
along with a Civil War drama entitled Between Love and Honor. A Fight
For Life was repeated on Saturday at the afternoon and evening perform-
ances along with the farce Siamese Twins.

Miss Ettie Henderson, known in private life as Mrs. William
Henderson, was expected at the Athenæum on April 13; however, for
reasons not given, she was unable to appear, but the program of the
week continued as scheduled with Mrs. Sargent taking her roles. The
week included Little Sunshine and Under The Gaslight plus a sensation
western called The Far West. A similar western played through the fol-
lowing week with Oliver Douds Byron as the guest star. Across the Con-
tinent was the play which played the week except for Friday when Ben
McCullough or The Wandering's Divorce, another sensational, was staged as
a benefit.

The remainder of the dramatic season in Columbus took a definite
turn toward the lighter variety fare. That is not to say that there
were no heavy dramas, but the remaining engagements leaned heavily upon
novelty and variety to augment the legitimate productions. The Jackley
Family, specializing in gymnastics, played on the same bills with H. J.
Sargent's acting company offering Rough Diamond and Pocohontas, two well-
known farce pieces. A novelty version of Rip Van Winkle, featuring Sid-
ney Smith, was presented on Wednesday. In the meanwhile, the Opera
House was playing Little Nell, referred to as "The California Diamond,"
in Fidelia, The Fire Waif. Little Nell, whose real name was Nellie Ida
Louisa Gibson, was one of those child-wonders common in this particular
period.
John Thompson, another variety specialist, was announced at the Athenaeum for the week of May 4.\textsuperscript{67} He was advertised as one who "sings, dances, and plays musical instruments"—hardly a distinctive description for any actor or actress playing in the last decade. He opened with a piece entitled \textit{On Hand}, described as a mélange of drama, music and dancing.\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Dixie}, another variety piece, was presented Thursday, but on Friday and Saturday the bill was \textit{Face to Face} or \textit{Katy, The Jew}, a now-forgotten play likely to have been of the heavier order. There is no suggestion of there having been any social stirring in favor of minority groups or advocating of racial tolerance in the United States at this time. There had been nothing of this nature since the Porter incident back in November,\textsuperscript{69} but it is hardly likely that this episode could have had anything to do with the more than coincidental frequency with which plays appeared expressing a sympathy for the Jews in particular. In most of them the story portrayed was of a beautiful, but very lonely, Jewish girl whose virtues, combined with her abuse at the hands of an intolerant society, made her a most sympathetic character. \textit{Leah, The Forsaken; Katy, The Jew;} and \textit{The Jew's Daughter} were but three of such plays whose appearance was fairly frequent.

At the Opera House Caroline Richings Bernard's operatic concerts were being featured nightly, having begun the week of May 4. Mrs. Bernard was the former Caroline Richings, daughter of Peter Richings who frequently played Columbus in earlier years and was remembered for his

\textsuperscript{67}\textit{Ibid.}, May 2, 1874.
\textsuperscript{68}\textit{Ibid.}, May 4, 1874.
\textsuperscript{69}\textit{Supra.}, p. 293.
likeness to George Washington and the patriotic tableau he built around that likeness.70 Pierre Bernard, of the opera troupe was Miss Caroline's husband to whom she had been married on Christmas Day in 1867.71 At the conclusion of the operatic engagement, the Opera House was host to John A Stevens who played the single piece Daniel Boone from Thursday, June 19, through Saturday including a Saturday matinee. The Journal was most pleased with Mr. Stevens' production and commented as follows:

Just enough license has been taken with the story of the Kentucky pioneer to give us a drama of attractive romance and a series of the most effective tableaux and striking situations that we have noticed in any of the recent histrionic productions. And the beauty of it is, this is done at a small expense of gun powder. It is not "Buffalo Bill business" but the aim of the author has evidently been to refine border representation. The style of Mr. Stevens acting too is calculated to judiciously round the bloody corners of the sensation drama.

Tony Pastor will appear at the Athenaeum... the well beaten track of minstrelsy has become somewhat monotonous and those entertainments which introduce specialties in music, dancing, ventriloquism, etc. best meet the public demand.72

The concluding remark by the Journal reporter just about summed up the trend in legitimate theater in Columbus at this time. Minstrelsy had served its purpose and was now giving way to that form of entertainment which it had helped to lift to a level of social respectability and the legitimate stage was having a difficult time remaining legitimate--variety was best in meeting current demand.

70Supra., p. 97.
71Brown, op. cit., p. 313.
72June 20, 1874.
When T. Grattan Riggs attempted his second Columbus engagement of the season on Thursday, June 26, he found it necessary to postpone his opening because of difficulty in getting the proper musical support.73 No mention was made by the press or elsewhere as to the exact nature of the difficulty, but Riggs opened at the Atheneum a week later supported by his own company playing Shin Fane. The Irish Detective followed on Wednesday with Fastest Boy In New York and O'Toole's Castle playing on Thursday. The dramatic billing for Friday called for Home From The Wars and The Emigrant, but the real attraction of the evening was a sparring exhibition between the light-weight champion, Sam Collyer, and his trainer, the ex-champion Barney Baron. The public was delighted with a second sparring exhibition the following night which was given between a repeat performance of The Irish Detective and O'Toole's Castle. This event concluded the engagement of T. G. Riggs and brought to an official close the theatrical season in Columbus.

The Ohio State Journal writer commented the next Monday, "The Shin Fane Combination closed the summer season at the Atheneum Saturday night. The season has not generally been favorable to the drama and the Shin Fane Combination enjoys the honor of being about the only summer company that has completed its route."74 Such a comment marks clearly the significant fact that the greater number of visiting Combinations--especially those playing only legitimate drama--were finding Columbus sufficiently disappointing at this time to force them to seek more profitable locations.

73Ibid., June 26, 1874.
74July 7, 1874.
CHAPTER IX

THE DEATH OF A RESIDENT STOCK COMPANY

The Season of 1874-1875

Sargent's new resident company roster.—Following a summer of rather limited theatrical activity in Columbus, the Atheneum was once more opened in the fall under the management of H. J. Sargent. The date for the grand opening was Monday, September 7, and Sea of Ice, a spectacular by a now-unknown author, was the opening bill, starring Harry Richmond as Carlos. A rather colorful opening to the season included the presence of the governor of Ohio and a number of other state dignitaries. The Dispatch of September 8 describes the occasion:

The curtain went up at 8 o'clock showing the entire company artistically grouped upon the stage and a general hearty applause greeted the party. Nannie Sargent advanced a step or two toward the front and read Charles Sprague's "Ode to Shakespeare." ... Miss Lotta Francis assisted by the company sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" ... At 8 o'clock, just before the curtain went up, Governor Allen came in and was ushered to a box on the right; as he passed down the aisle the audience greeted him with the usual token of respect. He was accompanied by the Honorable A. T. Walling, Hon. John T. Thompson, Gen. W. T. Wilson, Col. Charles H. Sargent, Mr. Amos Layman, and others. During the performance the distinguished governor seemed to be a most interested spectator.¹

The Opera House also began its season, and did so by presenting Robert McWade in the dramatic version of Rip Van Winkle. McWade was

¹The Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 8, 1874.
supported by a company from the Robinson Opera House of Cincinnati and was happily received by a large house. According to the reviews of the Dispatch, Mr. McWade's version of the popular Irving legend was particularly satisfying because it was "original and more truthful to the story as told by Irving than that of any other performer that has ever put it on the stage."²

Both the Atheneum and the Opera House were gratified by large houses which continued through the entire week. The two theaters retained their billings through Saturday, September 12, when McWade's company at the Opera House closed out and Sargent's resident company prepared for the presentation of Lady Clancarty by Tom Taylor at the Atheneum on the next Monday. Sargent's company had changed somewhat over the summer and as far back as July the players of the company who had been engaged for the fall were listed in the Journal along with their positions or specialties. The company included the following:

Harry Richmond .......... Leading man
F. D. Allen .......... Juvenile
W. Scott Davis .......... Heavy
W. H. Collings .......... Old man
M. C. Curtis .......... Comedian
Harry Pierson .......... Walking gentleman
G. W. Shields .......... Character
Geo. A. Stevens .......... Responsible
Fred Challiner .......... Utility
Maud Davidson .......... Juvenile
Lottie Francis .......... Singing soubrette
Lizzie Herbert .......... Old woman
Archie Walters .......... Walking lady
Clara Seabrook .......... Second soubrette
Mrs. Sargent .......... Stock star
W. H. Collings .......... Stage manager³

²Sept. 8, 1874
³July 20, 1874.
Lady Clancarty played for three nights and was followed on Thursday by Augustin Daly's Griffith Gaunt and the old farce favorite Nan, The Good For Nothing. A feature of the evening was Nannie Sargent's recitation of Sheridan's Ride. The bill was repeated on Friday and on Saturday the company returned to a matinee presentation of Lady Clancarty with J. S. Jones' romantic drama The Carpenter of Rouen offered that evening.

Once again Baker and Ferron, comedians in eccentric characters, returned to Columbus with their usual delight, Chris and Lena, which held through the entire week. On September 28 they withdrew before two artists new on the Columbus stage—William A. Mestayer, who opened at the Atheneum in Hoodlum or Life In Frisco, and Miss Kate Putnam who opened at the Opera House. Miss Putnam, in contrast to most of the visiting actors, was from the mid-west. Most of her theatrical career was played in the vicinity of the western Great Lakes including Chicago and Milwaukee where she was engaged several years as a soubrette. W. A. Mestayer, after two years in the Army of the Potomac, played in Troy, New York, and later at the Howard Atheneum in Boston.

A comedy entitled The Odd Trick was offered by Mestayer on Wednesday accompanied by a second comedy, Woodcock's Little Game, the bill being repeated Thursday. Said the Journal:

Mr. Mestayer has a fine presence and a full distinct voice over which he has the most admirable control either in delivered speech or sparkling dialogue. His action is easy, natural, and graceful and he has a faculty of thor-

4 Brown, op. cit., p. 301.
5 Ibid., p. 247.
ouglhy amusing the audience without resorting to the ex-
travagansa and comedy which passes current among "the gods"
but which is not real acting . . .

For the Friday and Saturday program, the company had arranged a five-
act comedy spectacular called Up In the Clouds which, according to the
advance notices, was to feature a balloon ascension from the stage:

The novelty of the balloon ascension from the stage
will be a feature of the play. A representation of an
airship with basket, ropes and so forth complete—not ex-
cepting the auronant—will move up from the stage floor
and disappear among the mysteries of the rigging above . . .

Miss Putnam's opening show at the Opera House on September 28
was Old Curiosity Shop in which she as the character, Little Nell, was
sustained by J. J. Sullivan in the male lead. On Tuesday Miss Putnam
offered The Female Detective in which she played five characters plus
singing, dancing, and playing the banjo. Fanchon was presented on Wed-
nesday with Sullivan again in support. It is curious to note, however,
that the Wednesday performance of Miss Putnam was apparently her last
of that week as no further announcements of her activity were carried
by the papers nor was any mention made of her departure. With no ex-
planation to the contrary except the ever-possible oversight on the
part of the press, one could assume that Miss Putnam cut short an en-
gagement that was not working out financially.

Edwin Adams again favored Columbus with a week's engagement
beginning October 5 with his production of Enoch Arden. The well known
play ran for three nights, after which Adams turned to Hamlet with
Nannie Sargent playing the part of Ophelia. On Saturday Enoch Arden

7 Ibid., Sept. 30, 1874.
was given a matinee and Macbeth was billed as the evening attraction. Good houses received the Adams engagement although they were not quite up to those of his previous engagement in January of the past season. 8

Joseph Murphy opened on Monday, October 12, with Help, the same piece he had presented in a Columbus engagement last winter. 9 He was seen in a number of different characters and in songs and dances in the show which ran three nights before giving way to the Irish drama, Maum Cree. In the meantime, the Opera House was opened by a company under the management of Mr. Macauly of Woods' Theater in Cincinnati with W. J. Florence as guest star. Florence's initial bill included Irish Emigrant and Handy Andy, two plays which gave him ample opportunity to engage in his specialty of Irish characterization. The bill was repeated the next night for Florence's final performance after which the Opera House closed until October 19, when the Wallace Sisters, rendered two performances of Little Dorritt, a dramatization from Dickens by John Brougham, plus a comedy, Minnie's Luck, on October 20, 1874.

At the Atheneum, the Frank Lawler Dramatic Company opened Monday, October 19, with Mrs. W. F. Lander playing the title role in Marie Antoinette. Mrs. Lander was the former Jean Margaret Davenport and a native of Great Britain who began a stage profession at the age of eight years. According to Brown, "Mrs. Lander ranks among the most accomplished of the tragic actresses of the day, and in the quiet characters of the drama is equal to any actress on the American stage." 10 Seven

8 The Ohio Statesman, Oct. 10, 1874.
9 Supra., p. 302.
10 Brown, op. cit., p. 213
years had passed since Mrs. Landers last played in Columbus which was a brief engagement in November of 1867.\footnote{Supra., p. 199.}

Among others who supported Mrs. Landers in the company were James H. Taylor, who had previously traveled with the guest star and supported her with great credit during the 1867-68 season, also Miss Henrietta Osborne and Mr. DeGroat. The latter was most likely the same actor who, along with others, refused to play at the benefit of Melissa Breslau in November of 1869.\footnote{Supra., p. 221.} Mrs. Landers' second appearance was as the queen in \textit{Elizabeth, Queen of England} with Mr. Taylor as Essex. The performance called forth the generous praise of the Dispatch critic:

Last night we were taken back to the Golden Age in which Queen Bess lived and reigned, Shakespeare wrote, Bacon philosophied, and Essex loved and was beheaded. An audience which filled every seat of the first floor witnessed and criticized one of the ablest dramatic representations which has ever taken place in Columbus. It was one of the most refined and intelligent assemblies which we have ever seen in the Athenæum, creditable alike to the city and to the excellent company which gave the entertainment.\footnote{Oct. 21, 1874.}

Mrs. Landers' concentration upon historical presentations continued on Wednesday with \textit{Mary Stuart} by Schiller which was followed by \textit{Henry VIII} on Thursday with Mrs. Landers carrying the role of Queen Catherine and Mr. Taylor appearing as Cardinal Wolsey. \textit{Anthony and Cleopatra} was offered as the Friday benefit and Saturday's bill featured a matinee of \textit{The Stranger} and an evening performance of \textit{School For Scandal}. During this time the Opera House presented a single perform-
ance of **Rip Van Winkle** by its famous exponent Joseph Jefferson, followed by a two-day engagement of Mae. Janauschek, the German-born tragedienne, who played Schiller's **Mary Stuart** on Friday just two days after Mrs. Landers had played the same piece at the Atheneum. Her concluding performance was **Macbeth** on Saturday evening.

An unusual piece called **The Poor and The Proud of Columbus** was staged at the Atheneum Monday, October 26, featuring an actress identified only as Rena. The play was written by Fred G. Maeder, an actor and playwright, who designed the novel script around the city of Columbus. The **Journal** described it as follows:

The piece as produced here will have special application to Columbus things and Columbus people and a mélange of racy local bits may be looked for. Mr. McCutcheon, the artist, has been at work for some time on appropriate scenery. High Street will be produced on the stage; The Neil House, American Hotel, Odeon Building, and other buildings opposite the capitol will stand out conspicuously and the thoroughfare will be shown in perspective as far south as Mound Street. . . . The play is constructed to represent high and low life, to reflect the joys and sorrows, the sentiment and frivolity, and more especially the humors of our city life. Mr. Maeder has peculiar and special qualifications for bringing out the popular idea here briefly sketched and "Rena" will attract on account of the excellent commendations she has received as a charming actress.\(^{14}\)

James F. Sherry's New York Combination returned to Columbus on Monday, November 2, and played the Opera House for three nights, opening with **Rose** or **The Mystery of the Deserted House**. This play had been written by Celia Logan especially for Mr. Sherry's featured artists, Miss Rose Wood and Mr. Lewis Morrison. The remainder of the engagement included **The Marble Heart** and **Field and Fireside**, the latter a

\(^{14}\) Oct. 26, 1874.
drama based upon incidents of the late war. The Atheneum, in the meanwhile, featured Tony Denier's Pantomime Troupe which performed three nights before giving way to John Thompson and his company. The Thompson Company played On Hand or True to The Last and Dixie or Our Colored Brother before closing on Wednesday and proceeding to Zanesville, Ohio. Furbish's Fifth Avenne Theater Combination, arriving from Dayton, Ohio, opened at the Atheneum with Divorce on Thursday, November 12, followed by Monsieur Alphonse on Friday. The final performance of the company on Saturday included a matinee of Led Astray and an evening performance of Geneva Cross.\textsuperscript{15}

The Furbish Company played to good houses, especially on Saturday when Geneva Cross was declared to be "an improvement over most of the military plays shown in Columbus."\textsuperscript{16} As a rule, the relatively few military dramas presented in the past decade had not really proven popular in spite of the current appropriateness of the theme because, as the Dispatch put it, "they were generally written to cover lightweight dramatic talent by substituting red fire, songs, dances, and all that sort of stuff, wrapped up in the American flag."\textsuperscript{17} The Misses Georgie Langley, Ada Morie, and Dollie Pike, and Messrs George Boniface, Charles Loveday, B. C. Porter, Harry Hawk, G. W. Farren, Gideon Ryder, and F. W. Sanger were the company's principal players.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15}Nov. 12, 1874.
\textsuperscript{16}Nov. 16, 1874.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., Nov. 12, 1874.
After the departure of the Furbish Company, Manager Sargent re-occupied the Atheneum on November 16 to star John Brougham, an actor, theater manager, and playwright who was presently touring the mid-west in some of his own writings. The Journal writer commented on Brougham as follows:

He has written so many successful plays that he would probably find it difficult to make a dictionary of them . . . If he had never done anything but write the unapproachable "Pocohontas" he would be entitled to monumental distinction, but that is only a tythe [sic] of what has flown from his pen.19

Mr. Brougham's initial appearance in Columbus was in the performance of Playing With Fire, a piece of his own creation in which he starred along with Nannie Sargent. On Wednesday the bill was changed to Flies In the Web, also written by Brougham, and on Thursday to Domby and Son, a dramatization from the writing of Charles Dickens. The Friday benefit performance featured Lottery of Life from Brougham's pen which was repeated Saturday night following a matinee repeat of Flies In the Web.

Katherine Randolph joined the Sargent company for a week on November 23, opening with two nights of Gilbert's comedy, Pygmalion and Galatea, followed by Romeo and Juliet. Miss Randolph played Juliet with Harry Richmond of the Sargent company as Romeo. The remainder of the week saw performances of The Hunchback; Lady of Lyons (for Miss Randolph's benefit), and Leah, The Jewish Maiden, which probably was Leah, The Forsaken under a new title. Miss Randolph closed on Saturday and proceeded to an engagement in Rochester, New York.

19November 16, 1874.
By the time Miss Ella Wesner played the Athenæum on Monday, November 30, the old protean farce was not appearing as frequently as it had been in the past. There were instances, of course, where such pieces, demanding that the star play several characters, were still presented as the tag to a benefit, but the popularity of such pieces seemed to have passed. Miss Wesner, however, was a specialty actress and quick change artist of the old school and she played the entire week to good houses in a piece called Mixed. Miss Wesner was particularly skilled in making changes from female to male roles and her efforts in this line brought forth the commendations of the Dispatch:

Miss Ella Wesner, as we have said, is the best actress in her line in America. She is graceful, elegant in form, has a cultivated and pleasant voice, sings well, presents the poetry of motion in dancing, is equally adapted to the dress of either sex, and in all respects is a study for inquiring minds in the audience. She smokes a cigarette, fires a pistol, walks and talks like a man, wears short and beautiful black hair, and has a complexion peculiar to that sex. Again, in costly female apparel her short hair and olive complexion are apropos. Vestvali made a specialty of male characters but was a woman in ways under all circumstances except in stature. Ella Wesner is better adapted to the average size of men and to the exquisite style of dressing observed among the large class of the diminutive Lord's creation.20

Monday, December 7, began a week's engagement at the Athenæum for Charles Pope, supported by the Sargent company. He had arrived from St. Louis bringing with him the scenery and accoutrements used there in his rendition of Samson, the Biblical story of the strong man, with which he opened his Columbus engagement. Nannie Sargent played as Delilah. The Journal was particularly pleased with Pope's presentation of Samson, both from the standpoint of the actor's

20 Dec. 1, 1874.
general fitness for the role and his skill in handling it. The level of technical perfection achieved in the production was also commended by the Journal:

The whole play is intensely and sublimely interesting. In the last act as a crowning glory for the star and the enterprise of the house, the fall of the temple of Dagon is a realistic effect that is startling. The auditor who expects to see two or three flats and a plank fall is astonished at the spectacle. The whole stage apparatus seems to give way—pillars, wings, borders, and all, seemingly burying Samson and the Philistines in the ruins... The people on the stage who have some means of avoiding broken heads, look upon the affair lightly, but to the people in the audience the scene has an effect which can scarcely be described with language less expressive than such words as "terrific."21

Samson played three nights before good houses. It was followed by Richard III and Richelieu with a repeat of the Biblical story at the Saturday matinee. Schiller's Robbers and a farce called My Country Cousin closed the engagement that evening.

While Mr. Pope was playing the Atheneum, Maggie Mitchell began at the Opera House on Friday, December 11, after an absence from Columbus of several years. Maggie Mitchell's presence under these circumstances was, in itself, a matter of special note and the Dispatch commended the marvelous retention of her acting skills which diminished not at all from the time of her last appearance in 1866.22 However, of even greater significance was the fact that the opening of the Maggie Mitchell engagement December 11, 1874, marked the first use of elec-

21 Dec. 9, 1874.
22 Dec. 12, 1874.
Electricity to light a theatrical production in the city of Columbus. The manner in which the new medium was introduced and its effect upon the assembled patrons was described in the Columbus Dispatch:

The electric lighting apparatus of the house was put to its first test last evening in dramatic business. The effect was charming fairly magnetising the audience with quietude "til the spell was broken. Then applause testified unmistakable appreciation of the improvement. It was at the close of the first act Lorle, observed through a gauze-covered window to her bedroom, was arranging her hair to retire for the night. Rainhard, her lover and artist, was lying on a lawn seat under stately and spreading trees by the house. The villagers had gone home and all the lights in the house were extinguished except those of the gallery circle and they were lowered to a deep twilight shade. Lorle, in a sweet and low voice was singing a love song and seemed to be some distance away. Before the attentive hearers were scarcely aware of the fact the curtain had descended slowly and noiselessly to the floor. Instantly a flash of electric current lighted the whole house. The spell was broken. The audience applauded. The lights were instantly extinguished again. The curtain went up and the song was resumed and the same scene was re-enacted with wonderful effect.23

Miss Mitchell remained at the Opera House for only two nights. On the following Monday Lawrence Barrett appeared for a two-night engagement, playing Richelieu and The Merchant of Venice. On Wednesday Mr. Fechter, supported by a company from Wood's Theater in Cincinnati, played a single performance of Hamlet. The latter was the subject of much controversy among the theater sophisticates who recognized in Mr. Fechter's acting an interpretation somewhat different from the usual and with which they were not completely willing to agree. Especially difficult for Opera House patrons to accept was the freedom with

23Dec. 12, 1874.
which the script was altered, not to mention the physical concept of
the principal character.

Mr. Fechter's method of playing Hamlet is about as
strange as the character is difficult to interpret. He
occasionally adds to the text, cuts out whole scenes, brings
in no end of new business, presents a robust body crowned
with a large head which is covered with a blond wig and his
red face is Tutonic and jolly as though his belly "was with
rich kapon lined." He was no melancholy Dehre according
to the education of American audiences . . . Mr. Fechter led his
appreciative audience out of the beaten dramatic paths to
new fields of thought . . .

The most conspicuous cutting was Hamlet's advice to the
players and the entire graveyard scene. The latter was by
direction of Mr. Fechter. The necessary people were here
to play the parts. As a novel way of playing Hamlet the
impersonation of Mr. Fechter was very entertaining, but our
education is deficient as to the method and until time and
contact with his way can work a legitimate change of public
opinion, Mr. Fechter's conception of the character will
breed discussion and tend greatly to confuse students of
Shakespeare. A strong point in Mr. Fechter's favor is that he
discards very much the old time stage strut—a step and a
halt alternately—and modernizes the picture by easy personal
deportment. 24

When the Atheneum opened on Monday, December 14, it was to
feature H. J. Sargent's company in Sheridan's School For Scandal with
Nannie Sargent as Lady Teazle and Mr. Collings as Sir Peter. The bill
was repeated Tuesday night. Then, what might have been designed as a
method of competing with the new lighting facilities of the Opera House,
as well as a means of stimulating patronage in general, was introduced
in the form of a "give away," involving the distribution of $100 each
night in lots of fifty, fifteen, ten, five, and two dollars. In addi-
tion, one half of the net receipts was to be given to aid the city's
poor. This practice was to continue until further notice. On December

24 The Columbus Dispatch, Dec. 17, 1874.
16, Frou-Frou was offered. It played well through the first act after which Mr. Richmond, of the cast, was overcome by illness and a Mr. Davis read the part in the subsequent acts "with much credit considering the disadvantages at which he was placed." The press did not say whether or not Richmond was able to resume his role the next night when Frou-Frou was repeated. Meanwhile, The Hidden Hand, which had not played in Columbus for some time, was billed for Friday with Lottie Francis of the resident company playing Capitola. The play was repeated on Saturday with School For Scandal given at the matinee. With no particular reason being given, the give-away feature, which had run the entire week, was discontinued.

A series of brief engagements at the Opera House and the Athenæum occupied the next week beginning December 18. At the former, J. K. Emmet played a dialect specialty called Fritz, Our German Cousin for two nights. A week later the Wallack Comedy Company from New York played two performances of Fred Marsden's comedy, Clouds, and then turned over the Opera House to Jane Coombs who played The Sphinx for one night only on December 26. The play, however, was not well received and drew criticism both to the play itself and to its poor production. The Journal was merciless in its review:

"The Sphinx" is a stupid play without a beginning and without an end; it enforces no good lesson ... creates no sympathy, and does not present even a connected story. There are four acts in the piece, but it would do just about as well to close at the end of the first, or the second, or the third ... and it would still be better never to bring up the curtain upon the non-entity.

The company supporting Miss Coombs is made up of young men apparently just out of amateur experience. The only actor of maturity is Mr. J. J. Prior and he was principally notable Saturday night for indifference in make-up. When a man appears before an audience with his black hair straggling out under the edges of a white wig and a mustache white at roots and black at the ends, the manager ought to have an immediate and peremptory interview with him. Miss Coombs is an excellent actress, but she gains nothing by her present association with The Sphinx.

Once again, the week of January 4, 1875, the resident company at the Atheneum resorted to its own devices (less a visiting star) by playing through the week such favorites as Uncle Tom's Cabin, Under the Gaslight, Cricket On the Hearth, and The Corsican Brothers with but fair houses greeting each performance. The next week C. W. Barry was engaged to play Escaped From Sing Sing in which the star played five roles. The patrons evidently enjoyed the play for it continued through the week until Friday when the Barry benefit featured the sensation play, Roped In or Lost In New York, which also played on Saturday along with a matinee repeat of Escaped From Sing Sing.

The Opera House, which had been closed for two weeks, opened on Monday, January 15, under the management of John Ellsler, the old Columbus favorite. Ellsler had not been in the city, professionally, since September of 1873 when he brought William F. Cody and the Buffalo Bill show to the Atheneum. On January 15, Ellsler was starring Frank E. Aiken in a three-day engagement playing the title role in Van, The Virginian, a play based on the late war written by Bartley Campbell. This particular play was well received and called forth the commendations of the press writers who looked upon it as a contrast to the

26 Dec. 28, 1874.
usual specimens of this type of drama. It was quite divorced from the explosive claptrap which had made failures of nearly all the war plays of the period. Said the Journal, "It has no powder or red fire or battle scenes, but depends upon natural acting."27 The Dispatch took the production as an occasion to express regret over the poor state of dramatic writing generally at this time and the lack of moral responsibility reflected in a great many current writings:

About "The Virginian," the Pittsburgh Leader says, "A really good play is a rarity nowadays. Dramatic authors have fallen into the habit of late of making adultery the theme of their productions and choosing for their heroes and heroines men and women of such character that if they existed in the flesh all respectable people would shun them as a Hebrew does the leprosy; but when they are put in a drama with all the advantageous surroundings of an author's romantic imagination, with a lovely stage background . . . the people crowd to the theaters to see the plays and thus the popular taste becomes depraved. That "The Virginian" is an entirely new and original play no one can deny. There is not the slightest taint of the French school about it.28

The week following C. W. Barry, Oliver Doud Byron was guest artist at the Athenaeum and he opened a series of performances beginning with the western sensation Across the Continent followed on Wednesday by Ben McCullough. This was the identical repertoire introduced by the actor nearly a year ago when he played the Athenaeum in April.29 However, the Friday benefit consisted of a colorful piece called Donald McKay, the title being the name of the hero of the Modoc War. The play was described as combining love and adventure and being colorfully scenic, spectacular, and sensational. A military exhibition was a

27Jan. 12, 1875.
28Jan. 6, 1875.
29The Ohio State Journal, April 18, 1874.
special feature of the play and, to give the proper effect, the Capital City Band was engaged to appear in the performance. 30

The presentation of Jane Eyre on Monday, January 25, with Charlotte Thompson as guest artist, marked a change of pace in Columbus theater fare and was so noted by the Journal reporter: "A large and appreciative audience was present on opening night and continued throughout the week." 31 The Journal used the occasion to once again editorialize on contemporary drama:

The delivery of the Athenaeum stage from the temporary despotism of sensation was signalized by a large and brilliant patronage last night . . . The enthusiastic reception given the play and the actress—and indeed the whole company—tends to set down as a slander on the public that frequent comment that nothing but storm, powder, tinsel, or magnificent dressing can find favor in front of the footlights. It is delightful to find such emphatic approbation as was exhibited last night of playing which has no relationship to the modern mechanism of the stage, which does not cover up intellectual deformities with the folds of expensive wardrobe and which does not substitute explosion for dramatic force, but which makes large demands on unadulterated histrionic ability and finds the fountain equal to the requirements. 32

Such remarks were in the highest praise of Miss Thompson's performances and certainly constituted a good word for the production of plays possessing literary merit, but they bore no compliment for the previous engagement though Mr. Douds had been received with considerable favor. There is the possibility that the dramatic fare of Douds' engagement was not up to expectations or to the prevailing tastes of Columbus patrons. If the comments of the Journal reporter

30 Ibid., Jan. 22, 1875.
31 Jan. 26, 1875.
32 Ibid.
can be taken at face value, they provide an excellent view of such
tastes which recognized the necessity of genuine dramatic values in a
theatrical production and the devices employed to conceal their occa-
sional absence.

Legitimate drama was temporarily set aside during the next two
weeks in favor of dramatic specialties, the first of which was the per-
formance of Edmund Coles in a rewritten dramatization of Undine, now
entitled The Black Fiend. First notices of the play were seen in the
January 30 issue of the Journal which described it as a great spectac-
ular superior in many ways to The Black Crook of a few seasons ago and
whose similar title tended to suggest more than a coincidence. However,
The Black Fiend fell far short of the advertising claims and the per-
formance thereof was a great disappointment. The Dispatch, honoring a
request made earlier by the play’s manager—to say nothing bad about
the performance if they could say nothing good—withheld any direct
coment on the show saying, "We’ll take his [the manager’s] advice;
merely venturing to suggest that the same caution ought to be extended
to the 1400 people who were present, for we understand every last one
of them are sic calling the show 'The Black Fraud'."

On the same performance the Ohio State Journal was somewhat
more outspoken:

Nearly all there was in "The Black Fiend" was on paper.
The management . . . seems to have ransacked the show print-
ing houses for illuminating bills pertaining to "The Black
Crook," to "Undine," the "Naiad Queen," and so forth, and
plastered them all over the bill boards to bolster up the
imposition known as "The Black Fiend." Taking into consider-

33 The Columbus Dispatch, Feb. 2, 1875.
ation the voluminous promises of the bills, the show was a
fraud with extremely little mitigation.

The spectacular drama has had a long vacation in Columbus
and the printing, therefore, drew a very large audience, but
the manager knew better than to bill for two performances.
The show was a "fly-by-night" and ought to stick to the back
townships or "go west."34

At the Athenaeum that same week, Majiton's Eccentric Comedy
Company performed a novel production called Ding Dong accompanied by
the farce, The Laughing Hyena, which played through Saturday, February
6. During the next week the Kiralfy Brothers spectacular drama, The
Deluge or Paradise Lost, featuring Miss Julia Seamon and the "famous
premiere character danseuses, the Kiralfy Sisters," all from Niblo's
Garden, was presented and it was supported not only be members of Sar­
gent's resident company, but also by a large number of volunteers who
had been solicited from the citizenry.

Manager Sargent still wants a few more young ladies for
"The Deluge." No stage experience is necessary; all wardrobe,
even to shoes, is furnished and good pay is assured. Fifty
men are also wanted to take part in this grand spectacular
drama . . . 35

The performance of The Deluge in all its display of local tal­
et was well received and commended by the press. The Dispatch spoke
well of the play itself but criticized the production:

If the play called "Deluge" had been introduced be­
fore "The Black Crook" was brought out, with the same
accessories which made that play famous, the result might
have been the same--great popularity. Since spectacular
plays have become noted for financial success, quite a num­
ber have been brought out, all more or less a copy of "The
Crook," in the matter of introducing ballet girls' graceful
movements . . . As a rule, dialogue of these plays have
been pruned to admit the greatest quantity of spectacular

34Feb. 2, 1875.

35Feb. 6, 1875.
and specialty features. "The Deluge" . . . has a better plot than any other play of the kind, none of which are noted in this respect. There is sufficient in the story of Adam's fall . . . to have formed a most interesting play without the aid of all these accessories, but they have been added and if they are not dispensed with they should be made more perfect, especially in tidiness on the part of some of the ballet and in drill . . .36

On Wednesday, February 10, 1875, the Opera House opened to an engagement of N. D. Roberts' celebrated Jack and Jill Pantomime Company advertised as "direct from Niblo's Theater in New York." It remained in Columbus to the end of the week. A minstrel troupe then occupied that theater until Friday, February 19, when a traveling opera company appeared in support of F. S. Chanfrau, guest artist and author of the featured play Kit, The Arkansas Traveler. John Marble had been engaged to play Judge Suggs in this piece which marked Mr. Chanfrau's first appearance in Columbus since 1862. The play itself possessed what the Journal described as "a budget of the startling that ought to satisfy the most persistent of the patrons of sensation."37

Agnes Booth and Joseph Wheelock opened a joint engagement at the Athenaeum on February 22, playing Much Ado About Nothing, sustained by Manager Sargent's company. Three more performances—Lady of Lyons and Camille played through Thursday, and King John completed the engagement. The presentation of King John on Friday, however, was special to the extent that it featured Junius Brutus Booth, Jr. as the king with Agnes Booth as Constance and Joseph Wheelock in the part of

36 Feb. 9, 1875.
37 Feb. 16, 1875.
Falconbridge. *Much Ado About Nothing* was again played at the Saturday matinee, with *King John* repeated that evening.

Agnes Booth was a popular actress who, at the age of nineteen, was playing with the company of Ada Isaac Menken at Booth's theater in New York in 1867, at which time she married Junius Brutus Booth, the elder brother of the famed Edwin. As an actress she belonged to an earlier generation in training and style. She had no "line," but played well in various roles and showing great versatility. She was best liked perhaps, in roles calling for a mixture of light comedy and sentiment, but she was also competent in tragedy and melodrama.38 The Booth-Wheelock engagement proved most satisfactory. The *Journal* writer commended Mrs. Booth's acting saying, "The pure quality of her voice, her admirable elocution, and the absence of affectation together with her great power emphasizes the acclamation she has so widely received."39

During this engagement at the Atheneum, another noted actress, Lotta Crabtree, made her first Columbus appearance in six years.40 She played Wednesday and Thursday at the Opera House in *Zip* or *The Point* *Lynde Light* followed by *Musette* or *The Secret of Guilde Court* on Thursday. Despite six years' absence from the Columbus stage, Miss Lotta, as described by the *Journal*, "was as charming as ever":

> From the moment she pops out of a basket into the presence of the audience to the time she tosses her farewell respects at the last curtain she presents a constant stream

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39 Feb. 26, 1875.

40 Supra, p. 217
of spirit. Last night she kept a vast sea of countenances before her in continuous smiles excepting when she had the people in convulsions of laughter. Talk about the Lotta school of acting, etc! Lotta is the whole school herself.\footnote{Feb. 25, 1875.}

Once again Kate Fisher, with Wonder, the trained horse, opened a week's engagement at the Atheneum and entertained spectators with the repertoire with which she had become identified. The French Spy (on horseback) and Dick Turpin's Ride to York played on Monday, followed by the old favorite, Mazeppa, on Tuesday. The latter was repeated Wednesday and Thursday evenings with Nan, The Good For Nothing added as the farce afterpiece followed by Three Fast Men and a repeat of Dick Turpin's Ride as the Friday evening benefit. Mazeppa was again presented as the Saturday matinee. Miss Fisher closed that evening with The French Spy and Jack Sheppard.

While Kate Fisher and her trained horse were playing at the Atheneum, the Opera House was occupied once again by the Buffalo Bill Combination, this time under the management of William F. Cody--Buffalo Bill himself. The play, especially written for Mr. Cody by Hiram Robbins, was called Life On the Border and possessed all the features expected of a Buffalo Bill Show. Buffalo Bill, Kit Carson, and Arizona John were some of the originals who were duly recognized and acknowledged,\footnote{The Columbus Dispatch, March 3, 1875.} while the play itself, although abounding with specimens of wild border life, had a great deal of the gunpowder business trimmed out to make the entertainment more acceptable. A similar piece called Scouts of The Plains concluded the engagement on the second night.
With the departure of the Western spectacles, the resident company turned to benefit programs within their own group which began on Monday, March 8, with Harry Richmond and his wife in a performance of *Americans In Paris*. The bill included a number of interim songs and dances plus a second drama identified only by the title *Smoke*. The next night Clara Seabrook and W. H. Collings shared a benefit playing *Asami* or *The Green Hills of The Far West and Dutch Brothers.*

For several seasons now, variety-vaudeville had been steadily growing in popularity. This once-considered-naughty form of theater began to work its way into the attention of the public through the press early in 1868. The *Journal* then noted briefly that a variety troupe "continues at this place of amusement" referring to the Atheneum, then sometimes called the State Street Theater. The theater had earlier been leased by Christie and Miller with J. A. Hayes as stage manager and T. B. Williams as orchestra leader. From January 16 the *Journal* carried an advertisement for this activity but with no indication of the nature of the artistry. The advertisement disappeared after Tuesday, January 28. More and more theater managers were being forced to recognize this form of theater as challenging the legitimate drama for control of public favor and they began to incorporate variety into the weekly billings. More variety troupes were touring the country and the nature of their entertainment made them a more remunerative investment than the legitimate company. Although H. J. Sargent had engaged a number of burlesque and variety companies over the past several seasons.

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43 *The Ohio State Journal*, March 9, 1875.

44 *Ohio State Journal*, January 8, 1868.
The Dispatch also noted that the play was much better in every respect than the average new play being introduced to Columbus in these times and remarked that it was well constructed, had several good characters, and was free of the "thin sensational stuff." Neck and Neck, a sensation drama which Stetson introduced a year ago, was presented on Friday as a benefit. It was repeated as the close-out performance Saturday evening, April 3.

Miss Ada Gray followed the Stetson billing on April 5 at the Atheneum playing two nights of Josephine or White Lies, a five-act drama by L. W. Harris based upon Reade's novel. On Wednesday Miss Gray played Cora in L'Article. The role had earlier been made popular by Clara Morris whose reputation as an actress was, to a great extent, due to her handling of the part. Miss Gray, however, appeared in her own version of the play and the Dispatch so praised her handling of it as to almost suggest a total eclipse of Miss Morris' artistry:

Miss Gray has given the character of Cora careful study. She has, in fact, so individualized the part as to stamp it with her genius and to lift it up to the level of a great creation . . . In Miss Gray's hands the character had a meaning and a purpose . . . Miss Gray's performance of Cora will take rank with the best creations of the stage.

Burlesque, always a popular attraction in this period, made an appearance at the Opera House on April 5 with a two-night performance of the Bricktop Burlesque Combination. On Monday, April 12, the burlesque piece Alladin, The Wonderful Scamp opened at the Atheneum with the Misses Eliza and Jenny Weathersby, formerly stars with Lydia

46 April 1, 1875.
47 April 8, 1875.
Thompson, with whom she had formerly appeared, was the subject of discussion in the Journal of April 12:

Miss Eliza Weathersby was in the Lydia Thompson troupe on the occasion of her last appearance in Columbus. Lydia Thompson was then at the height of her glory in this country, but the truth that Eliza Weathersby decidedly eclipsed Thompson in all of the requisites of a burlesque actress, not excepting beauty, was so clear that the public awarded her the distinction due by courtesy to the leading artist. 48

The Dispatch went further in its comments and criticized the management for current theater offerings which, in its opinion, were failing to meet the public tastes:

The truth is that the managers made a mistake: they deal too much in the heavy and the exalting legitimate. There is a legitimate which would have drawn, but we were not presented with it. Fortunately the season is not to depart without a taste being given. We refer to the legitimate burlesque... It will be remembered that Weathersby and Markham were the principal attractions of the Lydia Thompson Troupe... in burlesque Miss Weathersby is superior to Miss Thompson... her versatility is wonderful embracing every shade of character and embodying the most delicate and widest delineations... We feel no hesitancy, therefore, in commending Miss Weathersby to the lovers of the humorous, feeling assured that she will so portray character as not to offend taste. Her field is one which has been much abused but which is as legitimate and worthy as any in the profession. 49

Alladin played through Thursday of that week and was replaced by The Enchanted Beauty, starring Eliza Weathersby on Friday. A special feature of the evening was Miss Weathersby occupying the box office and selling tickets during the hours from seven to eight, which may have helped to increase sales, at least among certain of the patrons. Alladin was given a matinee performance Saturday along with the

48 April 12, 1875.
49 April 12, 1875.
as "accents" to the regular dramatic fare, it was on March 10, 1875, that he completed arrangements for a large vaudeville company to open in conjunction with the regular company. The idea was not a change in the strict sense of the word, but actually constituted a "doubling up" by which both legitimate and variety would share in the nightly performances. Said the Journal of March 10:

The new people have been selected after patient investigation of voluminous correspondence by the manager. Mr. Sargent is not new to this branch of theatrical business. He has personal knowledge of the qualifications of nearly all the people who are engaged in the line of business which will be inaugurated at the Atheneum tonight.

Mr. Sargent's idea of the combined dramatic and variety troupe was a decided success and the Atheneum was filled to standing room the majority of nights from March 10 to March 22 when the old favorites, Baker and Ferron, returned with their songs and dances. Once more they played Chris and Lena and The Cut Glove And The Hand Vot Fits It—a billing which lasted until Saturday, March 27.

The next week E. T. Stetson played the Atheneum beginning with a performance of Hamlet sustained by the Sargent company and followed on Tuesday by Richelieu. A new play entitled Struck Blind was then introduced to Columbus by Stetson on Wednesday which pleased the writers of both city papers:

We are always suspicious of new plays as long as red fire and powder are purchaseable commodities, but rejoice to say that "Struck Blind" depends on no such stuff. There is no explosiveness in it, but it is rather of the emotional school marked with several strong characters with a very fair sprinkling of comedy which is not buffoonery. The plot is well digested, the language is good, and there is a succession of surprises that is charming.45

45 April 1, 1875.
farce *Kiss In the Dark* which also accompanied the evening repeat of *The Enchanted Beauty*.

The next few weeks at the Atheneum were rather turbulent ones for the manager and members of the company. The regular season was soon to close and financial difficulties which had been developing within the company over a rather long period of time finally manifested themselves in open expression of discontent culminating in a refusal to play on the part of some of the members. The public became fully aware of some form of internal strife on Saturday, April 17, when the matinee and evening performances of Eliza Weathersby were suddenly cancelled. The first attempt at an explanation was made in the *Dispatch* that same afternoon:

A great many people were turned away from the Atheneum matinee this afternoon . . . on account of a card posted on the door reading "No performance this afternoon and evening."

. . . Knowing that business had not been good, the public naturally jumped at the proper conclusion that some difficulty had occurred on account of non-payment of salaries . . . About the same time a note was received at this office . . . stating that the matinee could not be given on account of the illness of Miss Weathersby . . .

The actual closing of the doors against a matinee at 2 p.m. brought the trouble to a focus. All the parties concerned had made statements. To avoid taking sides with either, the statements of each will be given.

. . . . January 9 the manager failed for the first time this season to pay the orchestra its full weekly salary. Since that day the orchestra has received small amounts in sums ranging from ten dollars to eighty dollars at a time. The Friday night of Baker and Ferron's engagement the orchestra struck for its salary and received sufficient to satisfy the leader and the performance went on. Mr. Eckhardt states that inasmuch as the receipts had been very large that week and the manager had not tendered the orchestra any back pay the musicians were led to believe a strike would promote their financial interests.

These things went on until last night, the occasion of the benefit for Miss Weathersby when the orchestra struck again, the manager owing the musicians $270 not including the present
week. Including this week the amount is $130 in addition to that, Mr. Eckhardt has a claim for professional services last season amounting to $160, money paid out of his own pocket to members of the orchestra.

It is due to Mr. Sargent to say that he has endeavored by every possible means to give Columbus good entertainment... The fact is the city is not large enough to support two theaters.

It was obvious in this writing that the Dispatch was doing its best to inform the public of the circumstances as objectively as possible and at the same time render what support it could to the Atheneum manager who, over the past three seasons, had won the confidence of the citizenry to a degree comparable to that invested in John Ellisler's management several years back. However, on the following Monday an open letter to the editor of the Dispatch appeared in that paper signed by H. J. Sargent in which the Atheneum manager attempted to correct errors which he claimed had been made in the previous day's account:

When I engaged Mr. Eckhardt the previous season to furnish me an orchestra I limited him to $150 per week which I felt was even more than should be paid in a city of this size. When he made his engagements he increased the amount to $175 and, in addition, contracted for me to pay the fares of the musicians from New York to Columbus. I yielded that to him. At the end of this season, which proved to be unusually severe, I was in his debt $160.

I received offers from other leaders of the best standing for this season at a much smaller rate, but as he had accorded me some indulgence I felt he should have the engagement... This season he increased the amount to $180 and fares and some members of the orchestra could hardly be called musicians as they cannot transpose. Stars have been forced to sing in keys unsuited to them on account of it... If Mr. Eckhardt had furnished me an orchestra according to agreement I would have been quite free from debt to him and several hundred dollars better off—twenty-five dollars per week excess last season and thirty dollars this in addition to $150 for fares.

The statement that the manager commenced cutting down in salaries either in September or any time is false. On the contrary, in two cases I increased the salaries and have not reduced them in any case. I did not expect to be able to free

April 17, 1875.
myself from all indebtedness to the company before closing, but intended to pay it sometime. It is not the first time a manager has found himself pressed after a season of general financial depression ... I have endeavored to make an equal division of the receipts and the trouble today was caused by demands from the orchestra with which I was unable to comply. When I opened the theater in January of 1873 I had all the capital I desired at my command and during the past two seasons I have lost over $5,000 in addition to my time. In conclusion I would state that I am only one of nearly all managers in the country who have lost money this season and I don't want it to be understood that this is an abandonment of the theater. On the contrary, I have a long lease and intend to hold and run it.

Respectfully,
H. J. Sargent

In the meantime a benefit for F. D. Allen and Phil Sager, treasurer of the company, was given at the Atheneum with Don Caesar de Bazan and the farce, The Quiet Family, in addition to songs, dancing, and an unidentified trapeze act. The following night Married Life and Mr. and Mrs. Peter White constituted a benefit for W. S. Davis. That same day, prior to the performance, the Dispatch issued a statement which was intended to help the benefit:

The daily press of the city has quite a job on hand this week and, we may truly add, a work of pleasure aiding and working up a proper benefit for dramatic people who are not to blame for needing this assistance. They have earned their money but failed to get it or to get collaterals that could be converted into script. This is not the first time in the history of dramatic management that professionals have suffered embarrassment, it'll not be the last time. Financial disaster is liable to overtake a manager in any kind of business. 

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51April 19, 1875.

52April 20, 1875.
On Wednesday, April 21, *The Hidden Sin* was presented as a benefit for Fannie and Lottie Francis. This performance officially closed the season for the Sargent company. The *Dispatch* remarked:

... Quite a number of people that we know have bought tickets who are not in the habit of going to theaters and who may not go on this occasion. The cause of the close of the dramatic season on Friday is a theme of some discussion. There are some differences of opinion on the subject, but there seems to be almost a unanimity of sympathy for the members of the company and especially the ladies.53

The next day the *Dispatch* attempted to analyze the theater situation and printed a number of facts relative to the Atheneum's financial situation:

That there was actual necessity for making the benefits ... will be apparent from the figures which follow. These figures indicate a very disastrous season if they represent the actual deficiency at the box office. The position taken by the manager is to that effect. His creditors are disposed to be skeptical ...

There will be more or less speculation upon the subject of two theaters next season whether the management of the Atheneum is changed or not ... It is quite clear from the alleged deficiency that should the coming season prove no more remunerative than this has been, the keeping of two places of amusement open will prove a greater drain on the purses of the local dramatic people than they can possibly endure ...

A gentleman who has been figuring up the loss of the season states that it will amount to $3000 or $3500. The losses are distributed among gas men, property owners, bill posters, printers, hotels, stage men, doorkeepers, actors and others within the legitimate scope of expenditures connected with the business. To open next season under this indebtedness and resume the same expenditures hoping to retrieve the loss of this year and pay the current salaries and expenses of next and make enough over and above all, pay for time and lay by some script for a rainy day shows more pluck than is ordinarily possessed by prudent business men.

The *Dispatch* made some effort to bring about a different state of affairs, likewise the *Journal*. The *Statesman* behaved nobly also. The *Gazette*, *The Sunday News*, *The Herald*, *The Columbian*, and several other periodicals had nothing to say but good words for the tottering dynasty. The failure of all

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53April 21, 1875.
to bring about better results has temporarily weakened our faith in the power of the press.

As the public have taken considerable stock in the benefits given this week, it is proper to say something about the disposition of the money. The Francis Sisters canvassed for the sale of their own tickets; they were repeatedly met with this expression, "I want to help you but I want to know first whether you are to get the exclusive benefit of the money." The answer, made in good faith, was in the affirmative. They were informed that the house would be opened for twenty dollars and that forty dollars would be charged provided the benefit was well attended. The twenty dollars had to be secured.

The benefit was a success and when the additional twenty dollars was called for, the ladies replied, "Charge it to our account." Mr. Allen paid forty dollars for the use of the house Monday evening—twenty dollars to the manager and twenty dollars to the owner of the building . . .

The gas bill each night, as we learned from the treasurer . . . is about seven dollars. Lately the management has paid ten dollars per night for the use of the house making the actual expenses of opening for the benefits about seventeen dollars, the people about the building having volunteered.

In spite of the official closing of the season, there were members of the company who felt equally deserving of benefit performances, particularly under the circumstances, and arrangements were made by M. B. Curtis for a program at the Opera House on Saturday, April 24, at which time Maud Davison, Lizzie Herbert, and Archie Walters would receive benefits. With the arrival of Saturday, a variety bill was staged at the Opera House consisting of sketches, dances, and impersonations with M. B. Curtis benefiting. That same evening benefit performances were given at the Athenæum for Frank Altemus, Fred Challinor, and Harry Pierson. Said the Dispatch:

The whole company have volunteered for the benefit of Messrs Pierson, Challinor, and other people of the company who have not had benefits or who are not booked for one. The sole expense attached to the performance will be the

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54 April 22, 1875.
gas bill, the manager having tendered the free use of the house. Such a course earlier in the week would have met with general approbation and would have made the benefits already given better than they were. It may be proper to say that the people who will receive benefits at this matinee drew small salaries when they had the pleasure of indulging in that very important part of a salaried man's duty.55

On Monday the planned benefit at the Opera House for Maud Davison, Lizzie Herbert, and Archie Walters materialized with the presentation of Naval Engagements and Perfection. It is likely this benefit was postponed a day to permit these actors to assist in the benefit given at the Athenæum since the entire company had volunteered to this purpose according to the press. However, more fuel was heaped upon the fires of controversy developing over the management of the Athenæum with the Dispatch printing of a lengthy letter from W. H. Collings, former stage manager under H. J. Sargent. In his letter, which was headed "Richmond, Virginia" and dated April 23, 1875, Collings related his personal experience with Manager Sargent, most of them financial disagreements, which caused him to withdraw the services of himself and his wife (Clara Seabrook). Collings accused Sargent of failure to keep faith with members of the company, neglecting to pay salaries even in the wake of successful engagements, and refusing to come to any understanding with the troupe as to how they might eventually be paid. Wrote Collings:

During bad business the money would be doled out in five and ten dollars on Wednesday and some lucky ones might, by chance, get a trifle more on Saturday night if they were so fortunate as to catch him in the box office. And when the business was good they invariably got less.56

55 April 23, 1875.
56 April 26, 1875.
Collings concluded his letter stating that he had initiated suit against Sargent for $183 salary due and had instructed his attorney to pursue the case to the limit of the law. "I think it but right the citizens of Columbus should know (if they do not already) the kind of person they encouraged," wrote Collings.

With the printing of Collings' letter in the Dispatch the matter became the occasion for a writers' free-for-all. Sargent again wrote a lengthy reply in his own defense fraught with explanation and counter-accusations including the assertion that Mr. Collings was intoxicated on several occasions when he (Sargent) had called the company into conference. The letter was followed by a series of statements from members of the company--some defending Collings' state of sobriety and others picking flaws in Sargent's statements regarding the exact details of the many circumstances he tried to explain. These letters of accusation and counter-accusation served only to make most obvious a serious rift among the company's personnel and to air the financial difficulties of the Atheneum in particular and of the theater profession generally in these difficult days.

For the next five days both the Atheneum and the Opera House were dark, but on Tuesday, May 4, Miss Emma Webb played a single performance at the latter, announced as "the accomplished elocutionist in dramatic personations." Miss Webb's appearance at this time is noteworthy since she had been exceedingly popular in Columbus fifteen

57 April 26, 1875.

58 Ibid., April 29, 1875.

59 The Ohio State Journal, May 4, 1875.
years ago when, with her sister Ada, she played the Columbus Atheneum at a time when that theater was extricating itself from financial difficulties under John Kinney. On Friday of this same week M. B. Curtis, who had been comedian with the Sargent company, undertook the management of the Opera House with Frank Grismer and opened an engagement starring Miss Charlene Weidman in Ireland As It Was in addition to scenes from Taming of the Shrew with Grismer as Petruchio. The bill was repeated at the Saturday matinee with Ticket of Leave Man and Sketches In India following that evening. The next week-end the Curtis-Grismer management presented Boucicault's new version of The Octoroon with Robert Graham and Frank Bosworth of Cincinnati as the featured artists.

It was apparent that the Opera House was attempting to operate solely on a week-end basis leaving the theater free to other troupes and traveling combinations during the week, most of which turned out to be minstrel and variety companies. However, the week-end idea did not work out as expected. On Saturday, May 22, The Colleen Bawn was staged with Miss Mary Davenport and Miss Julia Bosworth who had come from the Grand Opera House in Cincinnati, but this was the final performance under the Curtis-Grismer management. Mr. Curtis departed from the city unexpectedly, taking what cash was available and leaving a number of unpaid debts behind him. The disgust of all concerned was reflected in the comments of the Dispatch:

Another Dramatic Fraud.—M. B. Curtis, comedian at the Atheneum this season, left the city under circumstances that are exceedingly disgraceful considering the poor mouth

60Supra., p. 59.
he made about being left in the lurch by the management and the tremendous benefit our people gave him on that account. The late manager of the Atheneum owed Mr. Curtis less money, perhaps, than was owed to any other member of the company. Our people gave him a $700 benefit. Mr. Comstock made the rent of the Opera House to Mr. Curtis at very reduced rates. Everything that Mr. Comstock and a generous public could do for Mr. Curtis was done. He left the city leaving bills to the amount of forty-five dollars for Mr. Comstock to pay . . . It has been the custom of Mr. Comstock when parties have played to bad business ... to knock off part or all of the rent and call it square forever. He would have done so in the case of Mr. Curtis if it were not positively known that that young fraud drew his money out of the bank and skipped out of the city with the design of defrauding generous creditors. No language is too strong to condemn the meanness of the act and we feel at liberty to do so all the more because the Dispatch did all in its power to help Curtis along. 61

On the day previous to the announcement of Mr. Curtis' sudden departure, the Dispatch carried an announcement of a benefit to be given H. J. Sargent at the Atheneum by members of the company who had volunteered for the purpose. The play to be presented was The Widow Hunt which included in the cast Harry Richmond, Oakes Rose, Harry Pierson, Nannie Sargent, Mrs. Sargent, Charlotte Crampton, Charles Stanley and Eliza Long who had been with the company in 1872. The dramatic attraction was to be followed by walking and running matches and parlor magic by Mr. Sargent.

It was obvious from the activity of the past two weeks or more that there had been a split in the Sargent Company. Some of the actors had spoken out against Mr. Sargent or had, at least, risen to the defense of those who were at odds with him, while others had stayed out of the controversy and were willing to render service to Sargent at his benefit performance in spite of the attitude of others. It had been

61May 31, 1875.
announced in the Dispatch that some of the company had organized their own traveling stock company and these names were absent from the Sargent benefit.62

The future of the Atheneum was, at this point, very much in doubt. H. J. Sargent had struggled to maintain a resident company in the city of Columbus and had been successful in some ways. Whatever his personal merits or faults may have been, the difficulty of the past few weeks was—at least to a great extent—the result of the general theater situation. The Combination System had just about completed its victory over the resident company. A brief article appeared in the May 3 issue of the Dispatch entitled "Amusements Next Season." It quoted the New York Clipper as saying that the Atheneum would be run as a Combination house next season. "That means we are to have no regular theater open in the city but only such Combinations as may be upon the road, they dividing their patronage between the Opera House and the Atheneum."63

The prediction was correct for the most part. In spite of the packed houses that from time to time greeted certain productions they were not frequent enough to put either theater on a solid financial footing. The circumstances were often just encouraging enough to induce a manager to gamble just a bit more of his money thinking that the next season would be different. John Ellsler had tried it and failed. H. J. Sargent had also made a great effort, but the disintegration of

62 May 4, 1875.

63 The Dispatch did not indicate the issue of the New York Clipper from whence it had taken this statement.
his company and the Collings dispute was evidence of more than irregular management. It reflected two basic economic principles, theatrically speaking: Columbus, Ohio, was not large enough to support two theaters and the Combination System was a more efficient means of providing theatrical entertainment. Columbus was aware of the first factor; the press had repeatedly remarked to that effect. The second factor was being forced upon the city as it was being forced upon all cities having an active theater.

There were other factors at work here also, such as the drawing power of a visiting player and his company over that of a resident troupe. Also there was the growing popularity of vaudeville over the legitimate drama at this time. A nation-wide economic depression of the past few years also made a theater's financial success less certain. However, regardless of what other factors may have been involved, the major influence was the Combination System. John Ellsler recognized it several years back and managed to stay in the business as long as he did by making a road company out of a resident troupe. This troupe played the entire state of Ohio and, to some extent, western Pennsylvania, but concentrated on Cleveland and Pittsburgh with occasional engagements in Columbus, in the later years, when the circumstances were right. As Ellsler stated himself, "In 1871 I obtained control of the new Opera House at Pittsburgh; by this time Combination had begun to travel and I utilized the one organization between the two cities Pittsburgh and Cleveland. And Ellsler might have added—"with an occasional stop-over in Columbus."

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64 Weston, op. cit., p. 144
CHAPTER X

THE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

Major Developments

To all appearances the fifteen year period immediately following the Civil War was a significant one in the development of the American theater. There was a tremendous growth and expansion in every phase of national culture and the theater was not exempted therefrom. Several new trends in theatrical practice were well underway and the outmoded customs and policies of the earlier part of the century were gradually disappearing.

The Civil War, as such, despite a four-year-hold upon the interests and activities of an entire nation, had little or no lasting effect upon the theater. Except for a very short period spent in recovering from the shock of the news from Fort Sumter, the theater steadied itself and, for the most part, carried on as usual. Actually, the war placed no particular burden upon the theater in New York or in the areas further west, nor did the theater assume any particular responsibility toward the war effort as it did in the more recent conflicts in which this country has been engaged. There was very little evidence found indicating any attempt on the part of the theater to build or maintain the morale of soldier or civilian in an organized and determined manner as occurred years
later during World War II or even World War I. A number of actors rushed to the Colors and others, like James E. Murdoch, aroused the patriotism of the North with recitations of poetry such as Janvier's *The Sleeping Sentinel*, Whittier's *Barbara Fritchie*, and Bryant's *The Battlefield*. A few theaters hastened their seasons to a close in anticipation of difficult times ahead, but most of them soon re-opened and carried on the same activities as they had before the war began.

Very few plays of any significance could be said to owe their existence to the war. Some so-called "war plays" were around for a time but most of them were overburdened with the patriotic spirit and flag waving to such an extreme that they were considered unrealistic and so failed to win contemporary approval, much less lasting recognition. The few that did succeed were quite independent of the war in their structure and content and only used the struggle as a backdrop for their action which was further enhanced by familiar names and places. The stories could easily have taken place in any locality at almost any time. Not one of them would begin to compare with *Gone With The Wind* written over eighty years later. Two notable exceptions to the rule might be found in Beuclisalt's *The Octoroon* written just before the war and raising delicate issues of slavery, and the ever-popular *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. However, Fuller discredits both pieces as true war plays due to the authors' evasiveness and the preponderance of melodrama.¹

Most of the plays supposedly written about the Civil War were actually romantic melodramas. William Gillette's well known Secret Service is one example. It follows the usual formula of the Union secret service agent who, during his course of duty in the Confederacy, falls in love with a loyal Southern girl. Similar plays include Shenandoah, by Bronson Howard, The Copperhead, by Augustus Thomas, and Gillette's Held By the Enemy. Not one of these could be said to actually have its roots in the Civil War itself.

We cannot discount the fact that the war did have a lot to do with an increased attendance at the theater. This would only be natural with the cities crowded with soldiers and the adjacent army camps filled with bored and homesick men looking for some diversion, but of course other forms of amusement and activity benefited thereby as well. Nor can we overlook the efforts of such as the Webb Sisters who did attempt to serve the war effort directly in catering to the soldiers. Lee states in his History of the City of Columbus, Ohio:

> In Columbus, as in other military centers during the Civil War, the tone and character of the drama were much impaired by the prevailing tendency to cater to purely military tastes and adopt the mannerisms and current expressions of the camp. Some of these expressions were far from being refined; they were not even decent. They were tolerated while hostilities lasted, but after the war closed a better taste began to assert itself and demanded their discontinuance.  

While Lee's statement is most logical, it is strange that there is absolutely no evidence of this either in the press reviews or in

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the theatrical billings written at this time. With very few exceptions would one ever guess that a war was in progress by reading the theater advertisements throughout the entire war period and the plays presented were so well known by press and public in this era that any deviation from the script, as known prior to the war, would be—and was—immediately detected and criticised. Away from the presentation of strictly legitimate drama, however, this circumstance may have been most probable.

It appears that the War Between the States had less effect upon the American theater than did the Fenian Movement which began in 1866 and lasted a number of years. Probably because of the great number of native-born Irish in America at that time and because of their sympathies with the problems of the homeland, a far greater number of Irish plays were written and produced than plays about the Civil War. The fact that Dion Boucicault, John Brougham, and other theater personalities were of Irish background probably did not hinder the trend. Even the financial panic of 1873 had an effect upon theater operation greater than that of the military conflict. The major effect of the Great Rebellion materialized in subsequent years through the changing social pattern, the discard of old prejudices, and a generally enlightened attitude on the part of the public, not only toward the theater, but toward life in general making the theater's influence in the social scheme of greater significance.

However, there is one lamentable association of the theater with the Civil War. The fact that President Lincoln was shot in a theater while watching a performance and that the deed was committed by an actor will long prove an embarrassment to the American stage.
That the assassin was a brother to the one regarded as the greatest American actor to come out of the nineteenth century makes that tragedy an even greater embarrassment.

As for new theater trends following the war, there are several to be noted. First, the Combination System introduced in 1860 by Boucicault greatly reduced the number of successful resident stock companies to be found outside of New York. Theater managers found it more profitable to book a traveling troupe for a short engagement and then replace it with another traveling troupe than to try and maintain a resident company. For the audience it meant new faces and greater opportunity to see ensemble acting by stars and by companies rehearsed as a unit. The star was no longer superior to the play to the extent he once was and Boucicault's vision of the play itself as the feature attraction was soon to be realized.

Of course there were disadvantages. Local playwrights and budding actors were deprived of what was a natural outlet for their talents—a hometown company. Both actor and writer now had to go to one of the nation's theatrical centers, most of which were surrendering their claim to that title in favor of New York City. Also lacking was the intimate feeling and the familiarity between patrons and actors which had been possible with a resident company and which gave the patron a personal interest and a pride in a local troupe, the members of which he knew and with whom he often did business in his shop or store.

In examining the types of stage productions prevalent after the war, one notes a trend in the direction of the domestic drama and toward realism in production philosophy although staging methods
are still somewhat the same. The old social idealism and views of life based upon imagination and lofty sentiments, but lacking any real semblance to contemporary life, were now quite a thing of the past. The most singular development in theater was the rise of the variety show and the increase in the popularity of burlesque. Both forms received their encouragement from the minstrel and from the practice of presenting interim entertainment in the form of songs, dances, and acrobatics. To all this was added the fascination of the "leg show" heralded by Ada Isaacs Menken's performance in *Maseppa* and further encouraged by *The Black Crook* and by the success of Lydia Thompson's British Blondes.

All forms of theater in this period faced a continuous struggle for social acceptance and moral vindication which added to their burdens. By 1875 considerable advancement had been made in this matter by all three theatrical forms—variety, burlesque, and the legitimate stage. Opera had been "in the clear" for some time. Progress was to continue into the twentieth century except for burlesque which later fell from grace in the hands of the Minski brothers who made of it a vehicle for risqué humor, sex, and acting of low moral standards.

What can be said of public taste and standards of performance in the theater after the Civil War? Finding answers to this question was, perhaps, the most enlightening phase of this study, especially as reflected against modern concepts of late nineteenth century American theater as well as more recent practices. As to the former, there has long been a prevailing notion that this era of American theater suffered from a naive form of dramatic clap-trap, symbolised by the mustached villain and the helpless maid and heavily loaded
with unconvincing stage gimmicks and crudely constructed scenery all
praying upon a simple-minded public which possessed neither taste nor
judgment. It is quite true that the theater of this age did lack a
depth of concept and a finesse of execution in the eyes of a later
and more sophisticated age, but what phase of culture does not fall
under the same condemnation? One does not have to go too far back to
be amused at what was once the vogue in art, dress, and social custom
and the means by which it was manifest.

A number of significant principles governing the judgment of
post Civil War dramatic practices are quite evident in the commentaries
found in the press of this era and in the personal writings of those
who were a part of those practices. Recognition of these principles
does not make the drama of the era any more acceptable by modern
standards but it does tend to vindicate both the theatrical attitude
and the procedure of a hundred years ago.

A summary of theatrical attitudes shows first that the late
nineteenth century audience did not approve the practice of star per-
formers appearing with inferior companies. This circumstance was
common and may have been, in part, an economic necessity. Possibly,
after hiring a star to boost the drawing power of a Combination and
its play, there was little left to spend upon quality players for the
lesser parts. If this was so, or even if it was merely a manifesta-
tion of the manager's greed, the fact remains that many a good play-
er was undermined by the lack of adequate support. No less an actor
than Edwin Booth suffered in this manner and the papers—at least
those in Columbus—were more impressed by the weaknesses of the sup-
porting cast than with the talent of the star.
In spite of our tendency to characterize the late nineteenth century acting style as "the grand manner," those to whom we attribute it were very much aware of its weaknesses and struggled constantly to achieve a more natural style. There was strong criticism of the ranting and ravings of some actors who tended to "tear a passion to tatters" and praise was often meted out to actors who chose to avoid the "stage walk" and other easily recognized traditions of earlier stage deportment. In fact, occasional reviews tend to suggest that the so-called Grand Manner (at least the ranting and raving) was a kind of stylised form of acting popular with the theater sophisticates of the day but hardly in line with the old school of acting which, as they imply, was more subdued. This possibility is suggested in the remarks made upon the acting techniques of C. W. Coul-dock in the Dispatch of March 3, 1874:

Mr. Couldock's style of impersonation . . . differs from that of most actors in having a pathos and subdued air peculiar to all his dramatic business. He does not tear a passion to tatters but reaches the better nature of his audiences by being quiet and natural. He is one of the few belonging to the old school who have never departed from this rule; one of the few who have been instrumental in begetting a temperance that gives smoothness . . . who does not o'er-step the modesty of nature . . . who does not saw the air but speaks gently . . .

The Journal of October 2, 1874, describes Mr. Mastayr's acting as "easy, natural, and graceful and he has a faculty of thoroughly amusing the audience without resorting to the extravagansa . . . which passes current among the 'gods' but which is not real acting."

It is also apparent that the public and the press were quite aware of the inaccuracy prevalent in the portrayal of regional and racial characters of which the American Indian was but one pitiful
example. The Indian was either highly idealised beyond all belief or, as in later years, was made the villain who was responsible for any trouble that occurred west of the Mississippi River. Fuller bemoans the bad handling of this natural source of American folklore even in recent times:

The Redskin has done little in the American drama except bite the dust. Yet he would seem to have been a natural source for native material to the American dramatist. The Indian appeared frequently enough in the early American drama but not with any distinction or naturalness and very few of the forty Indian plays of which record has been made have come down to us. They were popular between 1830 and 1850, but they were usually artificial and their picture of the Indian was not a true one. The Negro of the Southern plantation was also misrepresented as were other peoples and geographical areas outside the scope of common contact.

That the critics of the era were well aware of the excesses in sensationalism and overdrawn theatrics is evident in the press reviews of the Journal and the Dispatch. In spite of the popularity of the melodrama—or "sensation drama" as the more extreme pieces were called—and its apparent domination of the dramatic fare of the 1860's and 1870's, patrons and producers alike knew exactly what it was and for what it was designed. Actually, the late nineteenth century cannot be criticised for the domination of melodrama any more than can the mid-twentieth century be criticised for the popularity of the motion picture and television drama, the greater percentage of which is outright melodrama.

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3 Fuller, op. cit., p. 244.
4 Supra., p. 250.
Whatever our reactions might be to a mid-nineteenth century play produced under then-prevailing stage techniques, they do not alter the fact that such productions were then both enjoyed and admired. The reason for this cannot be written off entirely to the unsophisticated standards of a past generation. A study of the press reviews of this era clearly reveals that the generation was very much aware of the tendency to feature mechanical devices and rigging for the display of illusion. This era was still the age of the stage manager and, while there was a standard of verisimilitude to be maintained, considerable value was placed on the technique, the skill, and the smooth operation by which those illusions were achieved. In other words, the stage manager, the scenic artist, and their assistants played a more obvious role in production than would be approved today where the work of these men is often more praiseworthy when it cannot be singled out.

There are some, however, who feel that, had the technical director of that day possessed the facilities of his successors, there might have been a closer alignment with reality at a much earlier date. This is a logical conclusion at which to arrive, but an examination of theatrical practices in the fifteen year period following the Civil War shows that modern three-dimensional scenery would have proved unsuited to the theater of the day even if available. This is true because the theater of the age was attempting to provide a popular and variable form of entertainment for the masses, an objective never fully realised until the advent of motion pictures, but which was pursued as ambitiously as existing theater know-how would permit. Stage reality was second in importance to stage flex-
ibility, settings had to be a bit more theatrical and a bit less realistic than they might have been otherwise. It is simpler to roll up a backdrop than to tear down a constructed three-dimensional set.

While the objective of the theater in the period 1860-1865 made necessary a high degree of artificiality, there is also the possibility that theater patrons of this age may have preferred it that way. Had the duplication of nature been the theater's prime objective at this time there is every possibility it might have come closer to achieving it than it actually did. The achievement of realism on the stage may have been held in check as much by preference as by physical limitations. Eventually the increased responsibility for providing entertainment for the masses, especially in the realm of vicarious experience, tended to move the emphasis away from the artistic and toward the realistic. As long as the theater audience has been select the theater has tended toward the artistic; when the audience became common, the theater became realistic and this principle is evident today in the contrasting philosophies of stage and screen.

Again we are forced to challenge the alleged naivety of the period. Did the patron accept the artificiality of the stage because he knew no better or because he actually did? It is a known principle of art appreciation that the work must maintain some degree of

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5 There have been periods in which legitimate theater was exclusively the plaything of the courts, nobility, and the well-to-do.

6 The screen, because of low cost and the near-perfect illusion achieved through photography, is better able to cater to the masses while the stage appeals to a more select segment of society.
artificiality. In fact, true art shuns the exact duplication of nature. Thus statues are placed upon pedestals and pictures are mounted in frames—to aid in the preservation of some degree of non-reality or artistry, if you will. One might suspect that the theater patron of the 1870's was, in truth, fully aware of the artificiality of the art form and so refused to be swept away by the demand for complete illusion so typical of modern tastes. It is possible he was not only willing to accept it, but he was also willing to admire the technical skill that produced it.

In the meanwhile, the Combination System, introduced by Boucicault, which shifted the focus of attention from the actor to the play was rapidly changing theater practice. The play had been only a vehicle for demonstrating the actor's skill. The same plays had been seen many times before, performed by this or that actor. They would be seen again under like circumstances. Thus, a variety of plays had been provided at each engagement as essential to the display of the actor's talent and versatility. The Combination System changed this tradition slowly but certainly although the growth of the new practice was not looked upon with favor by every theater manager. Not the least of these was John Ellsler who saw it as seriously restricting the opportunity for an actor's practical training and development:

The Combination System has largely destroyed the practical school of acting which endowed the actor with a personal individuality, rather than a reproduction of characterisation acquired by constant attendance at performances where the actor has been in-
structured to copy as nearly as possible the originals in the several parts of the play, the idea being another company presumably for the "road." 7

As for the theater patron of 100 years ago and whatever level of artistic appreciation he may have held, the fact remains that he did often tire of over-worked themes and hack writing glossed over by mechanical clap-trap and sensationalism to make it sell. The nineteenth century press often scoffed at plays whose sole justification for existence was said to be the discharge of fireworks while the drama itself was worthless. The frequency with which this reaction appears in contemporary criticism is often overlooked by some who would characterize the theatrical tastes of the late nineteenth century.

Finally, our last observation on the drama of this era was the presence of some worthy comment upon life and the social order. Such a criteria for good drama is still valid today, a major difference being that the earlier drama often made its intentions too obvious. This stress upon the better aspects of life tended to suggest to many that the theater was unrealistic and was implying the non-existence of a "seamy side" of life. The resulting reaction gave rise to a naturalistic theater which tended to dwell upon the less wholesome aspects of human existence.

Perhaps the theater did go too far in its concentration upon the good and perhaps the Victorian prudery of the last century did color the dramatic literature of the day. However, if the theater does tend to "hold the mirror up to nature" the fault lies with the

7Weston, op. cit., p. 144.
culture rather than with the theater. Besides, any study of this particular period of American history will show that the theater, as in other ages, has had to struggle for social acceptance. In this case acceptance was contingent upon proof of moral responsibility. The theater itself was no more virtuous than in any comparable period of its history, but it was simply common sense and good business at this time to cater to a public which was morally exacting. Today the theater caters to a public which makes other demands. Because the morality of the late nineteenth century was, in some instances, a mere facade, it was discredited in favor of a kind of realism which was built upon the "natural" man.

Other Developments

Developments of lesser importance which were in evidence by 1875 include the growth of the single-show run. The practice was fostered by the Combination System which meant a traveling company with but one play. No longer did a week's engagement consist of a rapid rotation of several plays, but rather it featured only one or possibly two. Also an outgrowth of the post-war era was the increased popularity of the matinee. The attempts at Saturday afternoon performances had not been particularly successful prior to 1865 and were seldom attempted. In Columbus, Ohio, the matinee did not prove satisfactory until the days when H. J. Sargent managed the Athenaeum and made an effort to launch a series of matinees which gradually won public acceptance. The success of Sargent's matinees was due, in part, to the gradual cleansing of the theater of some of its social unpleasantries. Rowdiness, disrespect for both actors and
patrons manifested in yelling, throwing of peanuts and less pleasant missiles, and the general disorder caused by that element which earlier frequented afternoon performances made attendance at a matinee of doubtful merit.

Matinees were also of doubtful quality theatrically speaking. The feature was often reserved for the evening and a stock production was put on in the afternoon along with indifferent acting and often with substitute players. It is hard to say whether the poor performances begat poor audiences or the other way around, but a matinee in the earlier days was seldom a success for audience or players. The slow change in the social order plus the earnest efforts of such men as H. J. Sargent raised the matinee to a level of respectability which it could not claim a decade earlier.

A most significant development in the post Civil War period was the rise of variety—vaudeville. This form of amusement had actually been in existence for many years, but prior to 1861 it tended to be so vulgar that its patrons were almost exclusively men of the rougher type. The only variety entertainment which the more respectable public saw was that offered in the legitimate theaters interspersed between acts and plays in the form of dances, songs, and acrobatics. The efforts of Tony Pastor (later to be known as the father of American vaudeville) toward making this kind of amusement fit for the general public were finally rewarded in 1881. Pastor then inaugurated a new era in variety—vaudeville with his theater on Fourteenth Street, New York City, described as a "straight clean variety show suitable for the family trade."
Prior to the time of Pastor the practice in legitimate houses of providing a few moments of entertainment while stage settings were changed was, by 1875, a major attraction. Now the camel had his head in the tent and it was not long before this kind of amusement, having achieved a level of respectability, was commanding a major share of an evening performance. Its final triumph in the city of Columbus occurred in the fall of 1875 when the Atheneum, which had been from its beginning a legitimate theater, was opened as a straight variety house. In other cities as well as in Columbus, variety moved on to a zenith of popularity finally attained in the early 1900's. The growth of this form of theater, however, is not a part of this study, the latter being limited to the Columbus theater of the Civil War years and the additional years necessary to see the eventual domination of the Combination System. The Atheneum in the hands of the producers of variety in the fall of 1875 might well serve to mark that culmination.
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I, William George Burbick, was born in Geneva, Ohio, April 27, 1918. I received my secondary-school education in the public schools of Newton Falls, Ohio, and my undergraduate training at Bluffton College, Ohio, where I was granted the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1941. From the Ohio State University I received the Master of Arts degree in 1947. Since 1941, excepting four years of military service, I have taught in the public schools of Newton Falls, Ohio; Bluffton, Ohio; and was a member of the faculty of Bluffton College from 1947 to 1949. After completing the residence requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, I accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Speech at Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, in 1951 where I am presently serving as chairman of that department.