VANDER YACHT, Douglas R., 1935-
QUEEN VICTORIA'S PATRONAGE OF CHARLES KEAN,
ACTOR-MANAGER.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1970
Theater

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QUEEN VICTORIA'S PATRONAGE OF
CHARLES KEAN, ACTOR-MANAGER

DISSERTATION

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

By

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* * * * * * *

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INTRODUCTION

Smiling with pleasure as she recalled the hilarious antics of Buckstone and Harley two nights previously in the new Ruben's Room theatre, Queen Victoria paused in her letter to King Ernest of Prussia, then continued:

Chevalier Bunsen has been helping us in an attempt to revive and elevate the English drama which has greatly deteriorated through lack of support by Society. We are having a number of performances of classical plays in a small, specially constructed theatre in the Castle, and are collecting what still remains of the older art.\(^1\)

Her Majesty was referring with pride to the inauguration of the Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals. After more than a decade of marked indifference to the national drama of the country over which she ruled, this young enthusiast of Italian opera, French farce, melodrama and sundry foreign circuses had finally decided on a specific and unexpected course of action which was to aid greatly in effecting a vital change in the British theatre. This change, Professor Allardyce Nicoll concluded which amounted to a revised opinion in society of the drama and its players ranks with the Theatre Act of 1843 as one of the two most important events in the first half of the nineteenth-century British stage.\(^2\)

A significant struggle in the stage history of the early nineteenth century was the struggle by every ambitious manager to win back the aristocracy and the more critical of the general public to the legitimate drama. It can now be seen that much of the hue and
cry about the low state of the drama was merely the age-old resistance to change, the stubborn clinging in a time of transition to a dying tradition. Theatre historians like Professor E. B. Watson have since made it clear that much which constitutes modern theatre is a product of foreign influence and the "illegitimate" drama of the minor theatres. To the theatre profession, it was a national disgrace that French plays, Italian opera and even American lion tamer VanAmburgh drew the Queen, the Court and the lucrative patronage of England's nobility while Shakespeare and the English drama consistently failed. They could not know then that the "invasion" of foreign amusements, especially French dramaturgy was ultimately to be a valuable stimulus to English playwriting.

The legitimate drama of England eventually overcame both financial failure and national disgrace. The story of the nineteenth century drama's effort to survive the early decades of the nineteenth century is still being written. Most theatre historians acknowledge royal patronage as a factor in the revitalization of the stage, but none deal in depth with it. Most scholars mention Charles Kean's indebtedness to Victoria's patronage in his successful effort to win Society away from the opera and other foreign amusements. Kean served as the Queen's Master of the Revels for nine years. He also made the Princess's Theatre the stronghold of the legitimate drama in metropolitan London for nine spectacular years. However, no study to date has attempted to place Victoria's decision to aid the drama within the context of the social and political upheaval England was experiencing during the years immediately preceding the inauguration of the Windsor theatricals. No one has offered an assessment of the importance of
these private theatricals. Although several noteworthy studies have established Kean's importance as a modern director and theatre manager, none have examined the exact nature and extent of the debt which Kean owed Victoria for his position of leadership on the London stage. Finally, no one has placed Victoria's theatre patronage within the context of the history of British royal patronage of the dramatic arts.

Purpose of the Study

This study will illuminate an important aspect of the life of the drama at the dawn of theatrical modernism in mid-nineteenth-century England. First, a survey of British royal theatre patronage from Elizabeth I to Victoria will provide the necessary perspective from which to judge Victoria's contribution to the British stage. An examination of the influences which helped shape Victoria's tastes and her patronage of theatrical entertainments will cast into bold relief her significant action of 1848, the inauguration of the Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals. An examination of all aspects of the Windsor theatricals will provide a more complete reconstruction of these royal entertainments than has been offered in any previous study. Finally, I will examine the nature and extent of Victoria's theatre patronage, especially concentrating on the relationship between royal favor and the theatrical success of London's leading actor-manager at mid-century, Charles Kean.

Survey of Basic Sources

Primary Sources

The study makes use of two account records of the Windsor
Theatricals written by George Ellis, Kean's assistant director. All financial arrangements for the theatricals plus marginal notes detailing special or unusual circumstances were included in Ellis's account records. One record book owned by the Shakespeare Centre Library in Stratford, England accounts for the theatricals from their inception in 1848 to 1861, the year they ceased. The other, owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library includes records from 1848 to 1857. The published memorial records, one by J. K. Chapman and the other by Benjamin Webster provided little known facts and iconographic material. The "Windsor Correspondence Box" in the Entovhen Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum was very useful. It contains forty-five letters between Kean as director of the theatricals and Charles Phipps, the Keeper of the Queen's Privy Purse concerning the operation of the theatricals, plus various letters to Kean from members of the theatrical profession. A contract between Kean and one of his musicians from the Shakespeare Centre Library and another contract between Kean and one of his actresses belonging to the Folger Library were useful in establishing the respectability of Kean's theatre. Selected correspondence from over 500 letters in the Folger Library and over fifty letters in the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri were valuable. Several of the hundreds of published letters written by Victoria and by Albert were most helpful. Finally, written and iconographic material in the H. R. Forrest Collection of the Shakespeare Library, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, England were of value.

Secondary Sources

The study includes a number of published accounts of the
theatrical activity of each period by such noted theatre historians as
Chambers, Nicoll, Bentley and Watson. Several recent books evaluating
Prince Albert's contributions to art and politics including Eyck's
*The Prince Consort: A Political Biography* and Ames's *Prince Albert
and Victorian Taste* were helpful. A novel written by Lady Bulwer
Lytton afforded an excellent insight into the attitude of Society
toward Charles Kean in 1838. The vast resources of the British Museum
newspaper library at Cöldendale proved to be of great value for little
known facts recorded in various newspapers. Among contemporary stud-
ies, Shattuck's *Bulwer and Macready: A Chronicle of Early Victorian
Theatre* and Watson's *Sheridan to Robertson: A Study of the Nineteenth
Century London Stage* were most valuable. Two dissertations were
heavily relied upon. First, M. Glenn Wilson's "Charles Kean: A Study
in Nineteenth Century Production of Shakespearean Tragedy" was instru-
mental in the formulation of the present study. Threlkeld's "A Study
of the Management of Charles Kean at the Princess's Theatre: 1850-
1859" was helpful for its compilation of data relating to Kean's man-
agement.

Approach to Study

Chapter I--British Royal Theatre Patronage
*from Elizabeth I To Victoria*

Inevitably the news that Queen Victoria had determined in the
Fall of 1848 to come to the aid of the depressed British stage was
greeted by optimistic comparisons with Elizabeth I, who had, by her
patronage encouraged England's crowning glory--the age of Shakespeare.
Since the professional theatre as we know it--in the sense of an
enclosed auditorium where the public pays admission to see actors perform--was born during the reign of the first Elizabeth, the Elizabethan age seems a logical place to begin an historical survey of British royal theatre patronage. In order to discover how closely Victoria's theatre patronage compares to that of her royal predecessors, this chapter will seek answers to the following questions: 1) what factors influenced royalty in its choice of theatrical entertainments? 2) what kind of amusements were most frequented by royalty? 3) what specific aid, financial or legal, and what public patronage was given by royalty to encourage the theatrical profession?

Chapter II--Queen Victoria's Theatre Patronage,
The First Decade: 1837-1848

Victoria's first decade as a royal theatregoer will be examined (using the same basic questions which illuminated the theatre patronage of her predecessors.) During the first year of her reign, the young Sovereign frequently enjoyed her favorite amusements, especially Italian opera. She contributed very little to the complicated task of keeping England economically and socially stable. Duty brought her to Macready's "purified" Shakespeare, and unabashed enthusiasm brought her three and four times per week to Her Majesty's Theatre where her favorite star Guilette Grisi reigned. She also helped swell the box-office at Drury Lane, where Charles Kean battled with Macready for first place on the London stage.

During the succeeding nine years, opera, one of the strongest influences in her formative years, continued to dominate the Queen's theatrical amusements. Three and four visits per week to foreign amusements contrasted sharply with three or four visits per year to
English performances. Only twice did English actors enjoy brief surges of royal patronage. In both instances Victoria was influenced by political pressure to favor the British stage.

In 1848, however, the year of revolutions, political pressure effectively moved Victoria to a significant decision in favor of the British stage. The Crown's power and confidence was severely shaken by the ferment of revolutions at home and abroad. An examination of the political and social forces at work in England during 1848 reveal the basis for Victoria's decision to inaugurate the Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals.

Chapter III--The Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals: 1848

In the Spring of 1848, a time when large numbers of English actors could not earn enough to feed their families, the Theatrical Journal expressed the sentiment of every Englishman who cared about the increasing decline of the legitimate drama:

Why does the Queen and the Court so often patronize these foreigners and so seldom visit an English playhouse? She might turn the tide in great measure if she were now and then to pay a visit to one of our own theatres.

Within six months Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had taken a step which was to "turn the tide" far more effectively than occasional royal visits to the public theatres could ever have done. The Windsor theatricals set the seal of royal favor on the British stage. If actors were sufficiently respectable to appear at the most respectable Court in Europe, then it was all right to watch them perform in public theatres.

Since the initial series of Windsor theatricals set an
acceptable pattern which was to be repeated every Christmas season until 1857, a full, detailed description of the first series of performances is presented along with necessary background information concerning the Crown's decision and choice of directors. Charles Kean, a royalist politically and a most politic gentleman privately was given the honored and arduous task of directing the first series of private performances at Windsor Castle. While the room which housed the Crown's collection of Ruben's paintings was outfitted by Thomas Grieve as a temporary theatre, Kean struggled against the pro-Macready faction to build a company suitable to the specifications of the royal family. The best acting talent available was assembled to perform the series of five performances of predominantly English plays. Kean and his wife acted most frequently, and they clearly benefitted most directly from the Crown's initial effort to come to the aid of the stricken national drama. It was in the second decade of Victoria's reign that the theatre profession began to enjoy the results of the Windsor theatricals.

Chapter IV--Queen Victoria's Theatre Patronage. The Second Decade: 1849-1859

The inauguration of private theatricals in Victoria's winter home was intended by the Crown to create a new fashion among the aristocracy for British drama and also to persuade the middle classes of the theatre's respectability. During Victoria's second decade of rule she continued the annual private theatricals with Charles Kean as her Master of the Revels. In addition, the royal family regularly patronized a growing number of English playhouses. Consequently, the aristocracy and the middle classes followed their Queen to the
playhouses in increasing numbers. Charles Kean's Royal Princess's Theatre benefited by more royal sanction than had previously been given any English theatre. In order to maintain royal, aristocratic and middle class favor, Kean kept his theatre respectable and capitalized on the educational interest of the day by offering entertainment dignified by antiquarian research and historically accurate settings of great beauty. A highly exaggerated "financial scandal" concocted by Kean's enemies may have cost him his cherished dream of knighthood, but his nine year reign as London's leading actor-manager gave him a large measure of the lasting fame he so diligently sought.

Although Kean narrowly missed being the first British actor ever to be knighted in the service of his art, royal favor had been a major factor in his rise to fame as an actor and in making his Royal Princess's Theatre the chief home of the English drama from 1850 to 1859.
FOOTNOTES: INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER I

BRITISH ROYAL THEATRE PATRONAGE
FROM ELIZABETH I TO VICTORIA

Tudor Patronage

Queen Elizabeth I: 1558-1603

Theatrical performances in England date back well before the first Elizabethan public theatre. Both religious plays and strolling players were familiar at Court in the fifteenth century and perhaps earlier. From Tudor times there is a continuous record of royal patronage. King Henry VIII supported a permanent company known as "the players of the King's interludes," the first of thousands of actors to have received a sovereign's favor.¹

Princess Elizabeth's taste and inclinations were most certainly influenced by her father's extravagance. Henry VIII not only kept his father's troupe of Court actors, but in his open-handed way he increased their pay. Royal entertainments became so frequent and so elaborate that he assigned a full-time official to look after them. The first permanent Master of the Revels was Sir Thomas Cawarden, appointed in 1544, who continued to hold office through the short reigns of Edward VI and Mary I. His last important task before he died was to arrange the festivities at Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1559.²

The theatre as we know it—in the sense of a closed auditorium
where the public pays admission to see professional actors perform—
was born in England during the reign of the first Elizabeth. At twenty-
five, young, attractive, with her full share of sensual Tudor blood and
her father's love of splendid amusement, Elizabeth began to shape
England's future and that of her high-spirited god-child, the theatre.
She dismissed the Court players when she became Queen on grounds of
economy, not morality. She was as fond of drama—and pomp and show of
any kind—as her father, but she also loved saving money. The repair
of a ruined exchequer was one of the primary objects and particular
triumphs of her statecraft.3 The extravagant cost of one two-day
revel like Henry Tudor's would have covered the expenses of
Elizabeth's Revels Office for eight or ten years; so the Queen chose
to cut down on the number and costliness of Court pageants. By way of
compensation, more and more performances by professional companies
occurred—usually at minimal cost to her. Available records show
that between 1558 and 1585, no less than twenty different companies
played before the Queen and that in the forty-five years of her reign
she saw at least two hundred and thirty professional performances, an
average of five a year. Her Majesty paid her bills promptly and until
1575, her treasurer regularly allowed six pounds, thirteen shillings
and four pence per performance; thereafter the payment was raised to
ten pounds.4

In addition to the normal tendency for the nobility to ini-
tate the sovereign's taste, the factor of her eligibility for marriage
stimulated Elizabeth's Court to lavish dramatic entertainment on her.
This constant flattery by means of pomp and show became a common fea-
ture of Elizabethan life. Any nobleman who wanted to please her
Majesty could not do better than to put on a play for her diversion. The Queen often made "progresses" lasting a month or more, when she would stay as the guest of various suitors and influential personalities: her entertainment was usually an important consideration for hosts who wished to remain in the good graces of this powerful but unpredictable guest of honor. She was accompanied in her progresses by an incredible assortment of courtiers, advisers, servants and mere hangers-on, running into the hundreds. Harassed hosts had to borrow furniture and plate from their friends, buy huge quantities of food and, perhaps, fall deeply in debt in the process.

The monstrous cost and inconvenience of these royal excursions eventually moved the leading courtiers and nobles to action. They persuaded their expensive guest to stay home by providing special entertainments in London—at their expense, of course. The Queen was quite willing to be amused in the comfort of her own palace, so it became customary for a noble to send a company of actors to Whitehall, where a royal audience enjoyed their offerings. Throughout Elizabeth's reign the nobility were constantly involved with actors—hiring them to perform in their own homes or at Court, and intervening with local authorities, when the actors were in trouble, so that they would be available if needed to entertain the Queen.

Not only did her Majesty support the infant drama indirectly through the agency of her gallants, she eventually called for the selection of the best actors to form a company under her personal patronage. In 1583, Master of the Revels Edward Tilney chose a company of players known thereafter as "Queen Elizabeth's Men." This company held favor for about five years. In 1588, impromptu comic Richard
Tarleton's death robbed the players of their chief drawing-card, and
they faded from the scene as another company emerged to write a most
glorious chapter in theatre history.

Formed in 1594 by Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain's Men
enjoyed pride of place at Court festivities during the remainder of
Elizabeth's reign and beyond. Her Majesty paid Burbage, Kempe and
Shakespeare twenty pounds for two plays—one by Shakespeare—on first
being entertained by the company at Christmas, 1594. The following
winter they played five times at Court and five times again the win-
ter after that. This was the period when Shakespeare invented
Falstaff and tradition insists that the Queen so enjoyed the charac-
ter that she commanded a play about Falstaff in love. The Virgin
Queen's delight in this bawdy character suggests that her taste had
broadened markedly during her years on the throne.

The first play Elizabeth is recorded to have seen was an un-
known religious play done by child actors from St. Paul's School at
the home of the Earl of Arundel in August of 1559, nine months after
she came to the throne, and five years before Shakespeare was born.
Although there was a strong tradition that plays should be religious
at the beginning of her reign, the Queen's taste for the classics
encouraged presentation of translations and adaptations of Greek and
Latin plays, especially those of Plautus and Terence. Thus, patronage
influenced a departure from sacred to secular drama. The players who,
in December of 1559, were commanded to "leave off" because their play
was not about Biblical characters would have been amazed to see the
same Queen, forty years later, rocking with laughter at the antics of
"sweet Jack Falstaff." The Revival of Learning encouraged royal
patronage of drama, and, in turn, royal patronage nurtured the infant drama.

This broadening of the royal outlook helped change the whole aspect of the theatre and enabled playwrights to tackle subjects which a generation past had been absolutely taboo. It was not merely a case of royalty accepting a changing view of the times, either. Many influential people were strongly critical of this new freedom in the theatre. Diatribes against the immorality of the stage sometimes included a side argument hinting that plays taught disloyalty to the throne. However, the Queen seemed to have been quite confident that this was untrue. She allowed the presentation of English royalty upon the stage, including allusions not always flattering to herself. In fact, the Queen was so little worried about disloyalty among her players that she allowed the Lord Chamberlain's Men to act at Court only six days after the inquiry into their unwitting complicity in Lord Essex's abortive rebellion of 1601.8

Elizabeth's support of her favorite pastime is best shown, though, in her long running battle with the theatre's enemies. The noisy, boisterous crowds of people swarming to public performances instead of public worship, the increased danger of infection in the thronged multitudes at plague-time, the hindrance to traffic and the interruption of church services caused by processions of players banging and tooting through the streets made actors most unpopular with church and civic authorities. Supported by the puritanical feelings of the citizens, London's Lord Mayor and his Common Council exerted their authority in every available way during Elizabeth's reign to put down the players and the playhouses. The Church argued that
"the cause of plagues is sin and the cause of sin is plays" in order to get the theatres closed. However, the Queen saw that the plague was somehow connected with hot weather. When the theatres were closed in summer, she paid small but effective subsidies to the leading companies and in winter, the City was ordered by her Privy Council to reopen the theatres to relieve the plight of the poor players and allow them to prepare for her Highness's dramatic entertainments at the Christmas season. This same pattern was followed whenever recurrent plague epidemics necessitated the closing of the theatres. The climax to this long struggle occurred at the close of the century, when the Privy Council, backed by the Queen, overruled all objections from civic and church interests and allowed the building of two celebrated theatres: the Globe and the Fortune.9

With the building of these two theatres, and the standards of acting and dramatic writing which were achieved on their stages, the English theatre achieved full adult status. It must be clearly stated that the glories of Elizabethan drama were not essentially due to patronage, except as protection allowed it to mature. The taste of the Tudor Court remained true to the traditions of the Renaissance; and this led the drama from the sacred to the secular, certainly. The learning of the universities largely reflected the same classic and Italianate taste. It was by imitation of classical models that great writers and small first sought Court favor and recognition. However, the vitality and robustness of the drama soon outgrew the confines of Court fashion under which it had started. The Court influence added but one ingredient to the psychological hybrid which Elizabethan drama became. Erudition was compounded with romance, farce and
melodrama to make this unique amalgam and Elizabeth, the habitual
playgoer, the most catholic of pleasure-seekers, embraced it in all
its diversity.

The Queen was truly as fond of all kinds of dramatic entertain-
ment as she was of flattery and economy; thereby stimulating vital com-
petition for dramatic excellence among her noble suitors. Her agile
mind delighted in wit and profundity as through her reign she revealed
an increasing enjoyment of the earthy robustness inherent in the pub-
lic theatre. Elizabeth did most for the drama by providing the free-
dom it needed to grow and develop naturally. Shakespeare had the
financial security and the aesthetic freedom that came from being a
partner as well as an actor in the most successful theatre and in
the most successful company of players in London. Elizabeth's part
in this crowning glory of England's drama is best stated by Sir Edmund
Chambers:

... The palace was the point of vantage from which the stage
won its way, against the linked opposition of an alienated pul-
pit and an alienated municipality, to an ultimate entrenchment
of economic independence ... 10

Thus, the infant art, born in the early years of Elizabeth's
reign, had grown with her care and protection to lusty manhood before
she died.

Jacobean Patronage

King James I: 1603-1625

On his accession to the throne in 1603, James I found the
drama flourishing. Although the Stuart monarch had lived in fairly
simple style in Scotland, he soon developed a taste for spending
amidst the heady pleasures of London. His Queen was extravagant, and he did nothing to discourage her. During the first year of his reign, James commanded far more plays and masques than his predecessor had ever contemplated.11

At his consort's suggestion, his Majesty placed all the men's companies under the patronage of the royal family, thereby depriving provincial companies of status and centralizing theatre activity in London.12 Slowly all London companies were withdrawn from the service of noblemen and entered into what was really one royal service, subdivided in name, but still members of one body known as the Five Companies. These players enjoyed a quasi-monopoly of the metropolitan stage.13

The Lord Chamberlain's Men, who became under James the King's Men, performed at Court far more frequently than the other four companies put together. On the average King James probably saw three times as many plays as his predecessor--and he paid more for them. From a standard fee of ten pounds during Elizabeth's time, the payment rose to twenty or thirty pounds under James. He also sent subsidies to his players of from thirty to forty pounds during plague-time in the years 1608, 1609 and 1610.14 This generosity must be understood in light of the fact that Queen Elizabeth's companies had usually to wait for no more than two or three days before being paid. They often had to wait two or three years under James and Charles.15

The superiority of Shakespeare's company and the high favor it enjoyed at Court are attested to by the fact that of all the payments to players from 1603 to the closing of the theatres, almost two thirds went to this company. The companies under the patronage of the Queen, the
Princess Elizabeth and the two Princes were also called upon from time to time, but the Court was to all intents and purposes closed entirely to all other companies.16

Over and above the regular fees for their performances at Court, players in Shakespeare's time as well as after the Restoration, enjoyed certain privileges and emoluments. As early as 1583, the Master of the Revels had chosen from all the companies playing in London the twelve leading actors. These players were at once sworn in as Grooms of the Chamber in the Queen's household. In this capacity, they drew annual wages of three pounds, six shillings, four pence each, plus liveries from the royal wardrobe. Their official position gave them valuable privileges and immunities both in London and when travelling in the provinces.17

King James made both the King's Men and the Queen's Men Grooms of the Chamber in 1604. In addition to their annual stipend of two and one half to five and one half pounds, they were granted an allowance of cloth for livery, plus a regular and substantial allowance of light, food and fuel. Most important, they were issued licenses granting them exemption from being impressed, arrested or otherwise molested while engaged in their business.18

One of the most remarkable characteristics of this period was the freedom with which the players, in spite of superintendence of the Master of the Revels and the vigilance of other authorities, continued through James's reign to introduce political matters and contemporary events on their stages. During Elizabeth's reign, they did this on the public stage, but they either confined themselves to matters pleasing to the Court or made an attempt to veil their
allusions. But under James, treatment of political issues and unflattering references to royalty were blatantly undisguised. These plays were repressed eventually, but not until after great numbers of people had witnessed their performances. 19

The King never went to public theatres, but his Queen did—to have a good laugh against her husband. Presumably, since he was a Scot from the wild north, the civilized English felt they were entitled to poke fun at him. "The uncouth speech of the sovereign, his intemperance, his gusts of passion, his inordinate devotion to the chase, were caricatured with what appears to be incredible audacity." 20 Queen Anne, who often quarreled with her husband, went to see the satires whose performance was allowed in public but never at Court.

James's consort had been born and brought up in Denmark at a time when plays done by strolling players from England were high fashion at the Danish Court. Anne acquired a taste for theatricals which led her, on her arrival in England, to play a large part in the final perfection of the masque, a form of theatrical entertainment which grew popular during Elizabeth's reign. She loved masques even more than the theatre, and they appealed to James as well. For one thing, they helped to keep his wife happy, a feat he was not always able to accomplish himself.

Masques and triumphs were exclusively designed for the entertainment of the Court and the nobility. The stage play was open to all the world at the theatres; but the masque was essentially courtly and exclusive in its character. As Professor Allardyce Nicoll observes,
"The entire production was bound up in the strictest intimacy with court procedure and naturally the centre about which it moved was the King." The banquet halls in which the masques were performed were prepared so that the auditorium where royalty sat came to possess a richness almost as elaborate as the stage spectacles themselves. In essence, the masque was, as in the ancient seasonal rituals of pagan religions, a procession of people in fantastic dress honoring their ruler with gifts and a ceremonial dance. The gift remained the focal point, though often in Stuart times, the King himself had to pay for it in order to bluff the foreign guests who saw the ceremony.

In addition to diverting James's consort and affording the royal family opportunities to dress in lavish jewelled costumes and perform before their Court, masques were a primary means of diplomatic jousting. England's friendship at this time counted as a vital factor in the struggle for continental supremacy between Spain and France. Masques were written especially for diplomatic occasions on which great interest was generated by the question of which ambassador would get the place of honor. The words spoken, too, had a significance beyond mere entertainment and invitations to foreign diplomats were considered not mere social gestures, but as matters of deep political significance.

The presence of "foreign representatives" was an excuse for every extravagance. On one occasion, James I was so financially embarrassed that he had to make a desperate appeal to the City of London for a loan, and they, in turn, had to sell some of the City's plate to raise the money. The King promptly spent a large part of it on presenting Ben Jonson's masque, *News From The New World*. He pleaded
that a visiting French ambassador had to be entertained in a style which would convince him of England's wealth and greatness. Across the channel, Louis XIII was being equally lavish in his entertainment of the English ambassador.\textsuperscript{23} Years later, when France unexpectedly established an alliance with Spain, England countered by arranging an alliance with the Count Palatine of the Rhine, thus binding England to the forces of European Protestantism and against Catholic Spain and France. To force home the idea, King James ordered a series of masques which almost bankrupted him.\textsuperscript{24}

In consideration of the masque's significance beyond the realm of international politics, the splendor of these courtly shows gave a decided impulse to spectacle as an integral part of the plays being acted on the public stage.\textsuperscript{25} Its chief distinction in theatre history, however, was that it led to the most exciting and prolific period in the history of English staging. Staging of masques and court entertainments prior to the Jonson-Jones collaboration in 1605 followed medieval simultaneous staging practice with stations or mansions set around the sides of a large hall. About 1605 Queen Anne invited Ben Jonson to write The Masque of Blackness. In order to have a proper stage designer, she brought from her brother's court in Copenhagen London-born architect Inigo Jones, who had studied the scenery and machines of Italy's theatre. From this pivotal production in 1605 to the closing of the theatres, there was a complete rejection of medieval settings and the subsequent use of Italian illusionistic staging forms.\textsuperscript{26}

James's reckless spending for Court theatricals was equalled only by his son Charles's extravagance in British theatrical history.
The instigators of it all were their wives. Danish-born Anne took a leading role in one of the first masques given during her husband's reign and later acquired the distinction of being the first British Queen to give her patronage to the public theatres. King Charles I's consort was to surpass even this achievement.

King Charles I: 1625-1649

In 1630, when Charles I commanded the first masque of his reign, *Love's Triumph* for the pleasure of his French bride Henrietta, the Jonson-Jones creative collaboration was still viable. It marked, however, the beginning of the final dying phase of the masque's glory. Charles succeeded to his father's throne in 1625, and he retained the exclusive patronage of the recognized companies, but there was little theatrical activity at Court for the first five years of his reign. The King had so many political problems that he had little time or money to spend on his special passion, the theatre. He worked, instead, to conciliate hostile Puritan opinion.

His Catholic Queen cared little about public opinion and went frequently to the public theatres. She, like Anne before her, demanded elaborate entertainment for her pleasure. From 1630 until the outbreak of civil war in 1642, there were almost as many masques and plays at Court as there had been in King James's day. In 1631, the players' fee was doubled when their court performances forced them to close their own theatres. Still another clear testimonial to Charles's personal interest in his players was shown in a warrant issued by the Lord Chamberlain in 1633 authorizing the King's
Men to recruit principal actors freely from any London company for the sake of strengthening the royal players allegedly weakened by sickness.28 Also, the King occasionally assumed the duties of Master of the Revels. He reformed the plays; marked the passages to be deleted; proposed plots for his favorite dramatists and even investigated offenses of the players.

During Charles's reign, the masque soon degenerated, without the genius of a court poet of Jonson's stature, into a formless, meaningless welter of external detail.29 In February, 1635, William Davenant's The Temple of Love was given a lavish production at Court. From this masque until the end of the reign, Davenant, who became Poet Laureate in 1638, was the principal masque writer. In 1639, he was granted the King's patent to build a theatre. This privilege remained unused at the time, but was to play a large role in the development of theatre in Restoration times. By 1643, this theatrical entrepreneur had served his beleaguered sovereign so well as a soldier that he was knighted.30

As Charles's reign moved toward its final fitful days, he became more and more adept at irritating the very factions he needed to placate at all costs. Even by their love of the theatre, he and his consort alienated a vast section of their subjects. Elizabeth was fond of displaying her dancing; Anne had performed at Court and attended the public theatres, but Henrietta was the first English Queen to take part in a play. Actually Charles contrived to help her with her English by having The Shepard's Paradise written with many long speeches for her to remember, rehearse and recite. The King also counted on this performance to bring the foreign Queen closer to her
adopted people. Instead, it helped drive a wedge between the people and the throne.31

A notorious Puritan propagandist wrote an hysterical condemnation of the stage at about this time. It seemed to cast aspersions on the Queen for performing in a play. He was prosecuted for this, punished harshly and thus became a martyr. Added to this was Henrietta's open patronage of a French company with their women actresses, for whom the restrictions against playing during Lent were lifted. Also, the King's patronage of a company of Spanish players (when the very name Spain was hateful to Englishmen) antagonized the people.32 Thus, the Court's theatricals can be seen as an important factor in the growing hostility felt by the populace. In addition, Puritan feelings against the drama as a palpable fiction, Satan's work, added incentive to their revolutionary impulses.

In a wave of righteous indignation, the Puritans did their best, when they took power, to cut the theatre completely out of the body politic. An entry in Sir Henry Herbert's account records dated June, 1642 seems a fitting epitaph to Stuart patronage of the stage:

*Here ended my allowance of plaies, for the war begun August, 1642*33

There was virtually no theatre in London from 1642 to 1660. Playhouses and players were suppressed in the name of God and judgement. Players caught acting in one of the playhouses were to be whipped, the spectators fined, and the playhouse itself demolished. The King's masqueing house at Whitehall was razed and the theatre was made to suffer for its long period of royal patronage.
Both James and Charles were much more prodigal with their patronage of plays and players than Elizabeth had been. They followed basically the established practices of financial support, legal protection and frequent Court performances for the few companies under their care. There was, however, a difference. Ironically, in Elizabeth's efforts to counteract the tyranny of the Common Council over the players, she centered all authority over the stage in the hands of the Master of the Revels, thus inaugurating England's long tyranny of censorship. During the Jacobean and Caroline reigns, there was an ever more rigid control from above. The price players paid for relative stability and non-interference from City and Church authorities was the ultimate loss of company independence—the supplanting of a free theatre by a royal monopoly. Censorship also tended to limit the range and scope of the drama produced. It can be argued that the marked decline in the quality of the drama was a consequence of catering by a theatre under Court control to the tastes of that Court.

Another difference between the Stuart and Tudor patronage of the stage was in the shift in function of the Court masque. Whereas Elizabeth had taken pleasure in the masque as a flattering mirror which showed her off to best advantage, under the first Stuart monarchs, this flattering aspect had underlying it a hard core of practical political reality. The masque was for James and to some extent for Charles a diplomatic device for manipulating international politics. It was also an extremely costly method of maintaining domestic tranquility with their pleasure-seeking consorts.

With the ideal requisites of brilliant court poet, extravagantly generous patron, royal halls in which to experiment and the
manifold genius of Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson, the masque, as a dramatic form, reached in this period an ultimate peak of perfection, both mechanically and artistically. The staging practices evolved by Jones during this short thirty-five year period are still in evidence in scenic art today.

Restoration Patronage

Charles II: 1660-1685

In May, 1660 England had a King again. The Royal Charles brought a colorful new ruler to a nation sickened by the drab, repressive government of the Commonwealth. The England to which he returned may have been "purified," but general standards of behavior still included a healthy relish for cock-fighting, bull-baiting and hangings. Even the social code was adapted to a bloodthirsty creed. Trifling insults regularly led to duels and often death. All this was distasteful to Charles II. He went to cock-fights, to be sure, but for the gambling, not the bloodletting. He enjoyed riding, not hunting. Field dogs became domestic pets in his household, and he enjoyed meals of French delicacy while a string orchestra played.

Perhaps, if Charles II had not made his wenching so obvious, his virility so apparent, his delight in fine clothes and the arts might have earned him a reputation for effeminancy. The thirty-year-old monarch's personality and outlook had been given its peculiar bent by a number of factors not commonly the lot of a young prince. For eighteen years, since the outbreak of civil war between his father Charles I and the Parliament, war, defeat, flight, exile, humiliation, poverty and even hunger had been the future king of England's
experience. J. W. Krutch suggests that much of the debauchery of the period can best be understood as over-reaction to the excessive piety of the Commonwealth. He cites a story of how young Charles had been subjected mercilessly to prayers and sermons by Scotch Presbyterian clergy, who denied him all pleasurable pastimes. Consequently, when given the opportunity, King Charles II indulged himself with abandon in all that had been forbidden by the Puritans.

One of the first things he did after his return to England was to encourage in London a revival of that most forbidden of Puritan evils--the professional theatre. Admittedly, he found no pleasure in the emotional and physical violence of Elizabethan tragedy and melodrama. The more vigorous of Shakespeare's plays were re-written and hopelessly emasculated to suit him and his Court. The sentiments of the King's courtly and Cavalier audience gave rise to heroic tragedy after the French manner but without the French spirit of a Corneille or a Racine. To the King's credit, however, he did compensate posterity by launching a comedy of manners which often reflected the amoral but intellectually brilliant atmosphere of the boudoirs, salons and taverns frequented by Charles and his coterie.

In addition to contributing a new genre of playwriting, theatre historians claim Charles II's reign to be significant as the dawn of the modern stage. The regular employment of actresses, the general use of movable scenery, elaborate costumes, mechanical devices and the cutting of the stage at the proscenium by curtains or flats are distinguishable marks of a distinct break with the pre-Commonwealth theatre.

In this two-fold transformation of the theatre, the King had
three brilliant, if erratic aides in Sir William-Davenant, Thomas Killigrew and the Earl of Rochester. Without them he might not have accomplished very much in the theatre; without him, they would probably have accomplished nothing. Davenant, whose loyalty to Charles I had earned him a knighthood and the post of Poet Laureate, nevertheless had friends and influence in the Commonwealth. In 1656, he proposed to produce propagandistic plays geared to Commonwealth ideals. Though turned down, he felt it was safe enough to produce dramatico-musical entertainments in his private theatre. His own The Siege of Rhodes is generally regarded both as the first English opera and the first play done outside the Court with full use of scenery. With the assistance of Inigo Jones's most brilliant pupil, John Webb, as designer-machinist, Davenant provided for the staging conventions which were to be adopted in the Restoration.39

Davenant soon sensed that the changing political atmosphere dictated another shift in allegiances, so he joined the exiled English Court in Paris for the purpose of getting the future Charles II to honor the patent to build a theatre granted in 1639 by Charles I. However, Thomas Killigrew's service and close personal friendship with the exiled prince had already won him a promise of exclusive monopoly over the stage at the Restoration. Eventually a compromise was reached, and the pair agreed to divide the London theatre between them.40

On their arrival in England, Davenant and Killigrew moved with the speed and ruthlessness of modern businessmen to crush several rival claims to theatrical patronage. By August of 1660, less than three months after he had returned from France, Charles issued an
order which made the two wily entrepreneurs virtual monopolists of the British stage. They were each allowed to build a theatre, form a theatrical company and censor plays—they, and no one else.41

The royally endorsed monopoly did little to improve the actor's lot. As formerly, the players in Killigrew's King's Company and in Davenant's Duke's Company were sworn in as Grooms of the Chamber in the households of their respective masters. This official act gave them immunity to arrest, cloth for livery and access to the donated cast-off finery of the aristocracy, but the players were more tightly controlled and regulated by royal wishes than ever before. By agreement of the twin despots, a player who left one company could not be engaged by the other during the following year. This agreement was endorsed by the Crown and enforced by the Lord Chamberlain, so an actor had no chance to improve his position by playing one management off against another. The Lord Chamberlain had, as well, the power to have drunken and riotous players jailed or whipped or both, and both managers could fire any player without cause.42 Salaries and working conditions remained intolerable for years; the only exception being the favored few actresses who were able to use the stage as a stepping stone to better things.

The King's "Court Jester," Tom Killigrew was the first to open in the latter part of 1660 with Henry IV on a bare platform stage. Davenant followed with a revival of The Siege of Rhodes for his inaugural production. His pleasure-seeking sovereign made this a gala affair by going in State, thus becoming the first reigning English monarch to attend a performance in a public theatre. The production was a great success. Davenant's use of the Court masque staging
conventions of pre-Commonwealth days was a revelation to many in the audience. They were thrilled by the proscenium arch, the painted settings treated in illusionistic perspective, the multiple set changes and the eye-filling spectacle of it all. They were pleased too, by the presence of his Majesty, whose box was at the rear of the pit facing the stage in the same position of prominence as the "state" or "king's seat" of continental and pre-Commonwealth Court practice.

The new roofed-in theatres of the two monopolists had had time and money spent on them to make them both attractive and comfortable. The King, who liked warmth, had instructed his Surveyor-General of Works to advise the managers on the best methods of eliminating draughts. He liked warmth and comfort in all his residences, and in many ways the two public theatres were extensions of his private domain where the general public could, if they wished, pay to join in the Court Revels. In fact, Charles distinguished so little between Court and public theatre performances that he allowed the sale of tickets for several productions at Whitehall in order partially to allay debts he owed his players.

At Whitehall and Drury Lane the public paid to see a new attraction which their monarch had been accustomed to since the Court masques of his father's day—the presence of women acting on the stage. A special clause in the theatre Patents allowed women to act in the public theatres. About two years after he had opened his Theatre Royal, Killigrew provided history with one of its more intriguing subjects by hiring a young actress named Nell Gwyn. King Charles eventually found the saucy comedy actress to be a delightful change on occasion from his other mistresses. When, however, after bearing
her sometimes lover a royal bastard, she still had no monetary proof of her position, she went back to work as an actress. The embarrassment of having the mother of his half-royal son work for a living moved the King at last to throw the rich gift of royal favor her way. Nell left the stage a royal mistress and raised children who became Dukes and Lords of the realm. Her property at her death was worth over 15,000 pounds.45

King Charles's open association with Nell Gwyn helped to identify him completely with the theatres and their interests. Considering the great amount of work which he had to and did get through, it is amazing how often the "Merry Monarch" managed to go to the theatre and how much he became involved in their affairs. He suggested plots to dramatists, soothed the ruffled feelings of his two actress-mistresses Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis, among others, and arbitrated the business disputes of the managements much as his father had done. Certainly no previous monarch had been so intimately involved in theatre, nor has there ever been a monarch whose personal tastes have been so clearly reflected in a whole style of acting and playwriting.46

Like their King and chief arbiter of taste, the young aristocrats who formed the coterie on which the theatre was dependent had been demoralized by the break-up of their family life, by exile and confiscation leading to sudden poverty and by the endurance of injustice done to them in the name of religion. Consequently, a hard and cynical disbelief in virtue of any kind was characteristic not only of the King, but of the leaders of art, politics and fashion. The plays written by and for this group reflected their view of life by being
shorter and more superficial, with an interest in verbal duelling and amoral behavior rather than dramatic action or poetic flights. A good new comedy gave the King more pleasure than anything—except, perhaps, a beautiful new mistress. The theatre quite often supplied both; for playwriting became a recognized way of gaining literary fame and fortune, and playacting, for some, became a path to a royal, or at least, a noble boudoir.

Standing high in the list of the King's closest friends and advisers was one such noble, John Wilmot, the second Earl of Rochester. This handsome, young, excessively sensual intimate was at the center of many of the literary feuds which constantly burst upon the Court. His own literary output was small, his best play being too obscene for public performance, but he had a keen eye for the talent in others and was prepared to encourage them. Confident of his literary ability and social standing, he posed as arbiter of taste and donor of royal blessing. Rochester influenced the King to appoint John Dryden Poet Laureate, then later, in a fit of pique, he boosted Elkanah Settle first and later John Crowne over poor Dryden. He sponsored as well Thomas Otway and William Wycherly. But by far the most interesting of his personal triumphs as a promoter of art and literature was his Pygmalion-like efforts on behalf of Elizabeth Barry whom Davenant despaired of ever making an actress. Rochester had laughingly boasted and bet that within six months he could make her the finest player on the stage. It needed a good deal more than six months, but after much work, Miss Barry conquered the capital as Queen Isabella in a play called Mustapha.
Rochester's creation of Miss Barry was a significant contribution, not only to the status of the actress on the English stage, but also to dramatic literature as a whole. Her acting inspired playwrights like Otway, Vanbrugh and Congreve to create roles for her. Her brilliant success on the Restoration stage persuaded playwrights that actresses were worth writing for.48

Elizabeth Barry's influence on playwriting in Restoration times was, however, of considerably less importance than that exercised by the special audience King Charles II created. In order to delineate this audience's influence properly, it must first be noted that for most of the period two theatres (and for over twelve years only one theatre) catered to the desires of the entire play-going populace. Far from being overcrowded nightly, both theatres were rarely filled simultaneously. Most often, a crowded pit in one theatre meant an almost empty pit in the other.49 Since the lower classes couldn't afford to go, and the growing middle classes avoided it as the den of iniquity it was, the small coterie audience who patronized the theatre consumed plays so rapidly that a new play could scarcely run more than three or four days before everyone had seen it.50

The old adage "the drama's laws, the drama's patrons give" was never more true than in the period from 1660 to 1700. For these pleasure-seekers, the theatre had become a private plaything of their own devising. Their identity is none too approvingly summed up by Professor Nicoll as:

The noblemen in the pit and boxes, the fops and beaux and wits or
would-be-wits who hung on to their society, the women of the court, depraved and licentious as the men, the courtesans with whom these women of quality moved and conversed on equal terms, made up at least four-fifths of the entire audience...51

To these must be added a fringe group of politicians, place-holders, minor officials, officers in the services, students, members of Parliament and serving people.52 These were the patrons for whom the poets tailored their plays. Their tailoring always affected to cut the King's measure first of all, because his attendance at a new play assured a full house. When he laughed, all laughed with him. His presence could make a new play an overwhelming success on its first night by his approbation and he always brought a full house at double prices. As at no other time in the history of patronage, the King's verdict could make or break a playwright or a player.53

King Charles II's reign may be said to have climaxed a growing tendency for English monarchs to be directly in control and personally involved in the theatre. The distinction between Court and public theatricals sharply observed in Tudor and Jacobean times, disappeared with the Restoration. Private theatricals ceased to be of artistic importance. With the change to regular attendance by his Majesty at the two Patent theatres, the introduction of actresses, greater physical comfort and attractiveness in the theatres, plus the introduction of the spectacular staging conventions of the Court masque, it is as though Whitehall had been moved to Drury Lane, for truly, the major Court entertainments of the Restoration period were staged in the houses of the King's Servants, Davenant and Killigrew.
The Restoration period is considered by theatre historians to include three reigns: Charles II, James II and William and Mary. This is primarily because the unique stamp of Charles II's influence on the theatre, especially the comedy of manners, was sustained through the reign of these succeeding monarchs. Somewhat paradoxically, the new genre was perfected during the reign most antagonistic to it, that of William and Mary. The acknowledged capstone of Restoration drama, Congreve's *Way of the World* premiered in 1700, though Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* had capitalized on the drift in the public taste toward sentimentalism in the drama five years earlier.

The two most important conflicts of the age were religious and political—and each was inextricably bound up with the other. The slow, painful process (extending into the nineteenth century), by which almost absolute monarchy gave way to limited constitutional monarchy parallels the disintegration of royal interest in the drama. Few rulers after Charles II had either the inclination or the stamina to fight the political battles and the religious battles of monarchy, and devote themselves, in addition, to the course of the drama.

The first of Charles's successors had the inclination, but neither the wit nor the time to stamp his personality on the drama. In 1685, King Charles II died and his dull-witted brother came to the throne as James II. The new King was as keen a playgoer as his brother had been, but in his short, troubled reign, his only influence on the drama was indirect and mostly negative. His religious bias led him to replace all Protestant courtiers with ardent fellow Catholics. A minor consequence of this policy was the destruction of the last
remnants of Charles II's predominantly Anglican and aristocratic audience.  

To his credit, however, James was generous in his patronage of certain individuals in the theatrical profession. At his dying brother's request, he paid Nell Gwynn's debts and provided her a generous pension. He was so taken with Wycherly's last play, The Plain Dealer that he bailed the destitute playwright out of debtor's prison. And of the several stories concerning his generosity to individual players, one in particular reveals his support. Upon hearing that a nobleman had struck an actor, James took the unprecedented action of barring the nobleman from Court.  

The acting profession as a whole was not immediately affected by Charles's passing. Three years before the old King's death, the Davenants had accepted a forced union with the Drury Lane company. The United company was patronized quite regularly by James at either Drury Lane or the Dorset Garden theatre, the choice apparently determined by the nature of the play to be performed. In addition, the troupe played somewhat regularly at Court.  

This patronage was short-lived, however, for the gathering political storm broke in 1688. The affairs of the United company were so disturbed by James's struggle with his religious and political antagonists that theatrical activity declined to a low ebb. A bloodless revolution sent James to seek asylum in France and brought new difficulties to the theatrical profession as William and Mary acceded to the throne.
The new King was one of the very few British sovereigns who can be said to have had no taste for the theatre at all. There are only two instances of his having seen a play, and both were Court performances. His Queen, Mary, was somewhat more predisposed toward the theatre and occasionally visited the playhouses with her maids of honor. Although she was sufficiently sophisticated to appreciate Congreve, the Queen seconded her cold, morose husband in her determination to clean up the degenerate state of the theatre. In April of their first year, the joint rulers issued notice that players were not in favor and that all former licenses were void. All were to apply for new ones. In August, Betterton and his splinter group were licensed to act in a separate theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Aided and abetted by the popular Societies for the Reformation of Manners, William and Mary issued frequent proclamations against all forms of debauchery and urged the law to enforce them.

A new influence had begun to exercise a purifying pressure not only on performers but on playwrights as well. Although three of the most typically Restoration playwrights, Congreve, Farquhar and Vanbrugh did not start writing until the reign of William and Mary, the tastes of the London audience were beginning to change as the make-up of the audience changed. Dramatic fare was beginning to bow to a neo-classic insistence on decorum. A preoccupation with politics and business combined with a growing sentimentality to drive the higher species of comedy off the boards in favor of farces, politically flavored ballad-opera, pantomime, and opera. The conviction of man's innate goodness, so convenient a rationale for the mercantile concerns
of the growing body of middle class patrons, coincided with the
zealous neo-Puritan stage reform campaigns fought by such outspoken
critics as Jeremy Collier. King William's lack of personal interest
in the theatre and his frequent royal proclamations against immoral
behavior lent tacit support to the "purifiers." While historians can-
not agree on the amount of influence Collier's famous tract had on
the stage, it certainly contributed to polarizing public opinion about
the theatre's immorality. Charges and counter-charges, heated coffee-
house discussion and zooming publication profit resulted as the voluble
and volatile public took up the issue. Yet, when production records
of what turn-of-the-century audiences actually saw are considered, no
great change in the morality of the fare is discernible until after
mid-eighteenth century. The explanation of this fact is found in
Professor Nicoll's helpful observation. Theatre audiences did not,
in few short years, change from aristocratic to middle-class. The typi-
cal early eighteenth-century audience was a mixture of people of
quality and newly affluent upper middle class bent for the most part
on aping the habits and attitudes of their betters but without the
background to appreciate their newly won opportunities for dramatic
patronage.64

Queen Anne: 1702-1714

The last of Charles's successors in the Restoration period
came to the throne in 1702. In the wake of violent arguments over the
theatre's moral standards, Queen Anne followed the lead of her imme-
diate predecessors by issuing a number of decrees designed to correct
improper behavior on the stage. To her credit, she put a stop to the
activities of hypocritical stage informers, who profited by providing
evidence against players who were then charged with blasphemy.\textsuperscript{65} She
also supported the new theatrical world in process of formation by
appointing Richard Steele to the post of Gentleman Waiter in her
Court.\textsuperscript{66} Anne made clear her personal taste in drama in still another
way; one which was to set a useful precedent for Victoria many years
later. She commanded four innocent comedies to be performed for her
at Court, then permitted each to be repeated at the public theatres
with the advertisement: "As Performed Before Her Majesty."\textsuperscript{67}

The theatrical age that had begun with such energetic revolt
against everything Cromwellian and Puritan slowly wound down to the
end of the century engulfed in the tears and morality of sentimental
comedy.

The excesses of amoral behavior typical of Restoration comedy
and the rowdy, sensuous Court who patronized it have been a constant
target for bitter diatribes in the press and from the pulpits in
succeeding generations. Nevertheless, King Charles II had, during
his reign "achieved a change in English taste far greater than any
transient turn of fashion . . . The calm and balance and beauty of
the eighteenth century is Charles's legacy to his people."\textsuperscript{68} The
"Merry Monarch" had gone farther perhaps, than he could have guessed
to transform a rough and woolly theatrical realm into a gentler more
urbane world.

Georgian Patronage

\textbf{George I: 1714-1727}

Upon Queen Anne's death in 1714, the British throne passed,
for the purpose of assuring Protestant succession, into the greedy hands of her distant relative George Louis of Hanover. To the new King, the coarseness and crudeness, the drinking, whoring, raping, bloodthirsty sports and rampant crime still characteristic of much of his new realm were no shock. He was as gross in his habits and predilections as the worst of his new subjects. He came to England with his two grotesque old whores and his bizarre retinue of German servants and Turkish slaves fully intending to stash away every English pound he could lay his hands on.69

The new ruler could understand not one word of English; the theatre afforded little interest, and he went infrequently. Apart from a few plays like Henry VIII in which George could see direct relevance to his own reign and a few plays of Restoration vintage which were salacious enough to arouse his debauched sensuality, he suffered through plays he could not understand nor appreciate for entirely political reasons.70 It is primarily in light of party politics that the first George can, with reservations, be said to have influenced at least one major aspect of theatrical activity.

When the decisive Whig victory at George I's accession made clear the direction that political power would take, the actor-managers of Drury Lane moved swiftly to associate themselves with the winning side. Drury Lane became staunchly Hanoverian and Whig--and succeeded in attaching to their rivals at Lincoln's Inn Fields, under Rich, an anti-Royal, Tory label. Booth and Cibber quickly exchanged their Tory partner William Collier for a distinguished Whig--Richard Steele. This powerful political ally was invited to join them in petitioning for a new theatre license. Quite predictably, since George I's policy
was to consolidate friendly English support for his reign, the petition was promptly granted. Three months later, as though to assure support, the theatrical license was replaced by a patent. This more substantial legal instrument was conveyed by the King to Steele alone for the duration of his lifetime plus three years. This patent, which Steele generously shared with his partners, was similar in powers to those granted by Charles II to Killigrew and Davenant. The trio chose to interpret the royal gift as freeing them from dependence on the Lord Chamberlain and his subordinates; so they ceased to submit plays to the Master of the Revels for approval.

George I eventually permitted John and Christopher Rich to open the new Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, but protest though they might, they were from the first associated with anti-government sentiments. Protestations of royal support and veiled criticism of the King and his opportunistic Prime Minister Robert Walpole cropped up repeatedly in the prologues, epilogues and in allusive passages within the plays themselves at this time. Occasionally whole plays were devoted to the lucrative art of political flag-waving. Drury Lane's Colly Cibber calculatingly adapted Tartuffe as a tract in favor of the King's stance in the Jacobite rebellion and, predictably, received a royal gift of 200 guineas for his pains. Instances of the opposite kind are also available, as when players from L.I.F. were fined or jailed or both for cursing his Majesty and for seditious or treasonable words spoken from the stage.

In all this theatrical activity, it must be pointed out that King George's influence was only nominal. He served as a symbol of one political attitude, but his government, led by chief minister,
Walpole, was at the center of the political battles being fought in the press, the coffee-houses and on the stage.77

In this age, "shot through with politics," a pattern of theatrical rivalry based on party politics was established and persisted throughout George I's reign. Needless to say, Drury Lane received conspicuously more command performances than their Lincoln's Inn Fields rivals. These "command" performances, a tradition begun by Charles II, were to be almost the only form of royal support given the theatre during the eighteenth century. Always specially advertised in the bills and produced with all the splendor the manager's resources could provide, these gala occasions proved an unfailing attraction. King George's personality and predilections—his lack of love for England and the English had no effect on the fashionable audiences who crowded the theatres and cheered themselves hoarse in demonstrating their loyalty to their sovereign.

Early in this first George's reign, the theatrical profession thought they had good cause to cheer. High optimism was stirred by rumors that a theatre was to be built in Hampton Court for the entertainment of the King. Unfortunately, it was merely a plan to acquaint the German-speaking George with the English language—entertainingly. The King was not entertained, and the first series of seven performances in 1718 was also the last.78

In fact, far from cheering their good fortune at having a Hanoverian on the throne, even the infrequent command performances may well have been as much a burden as a benefit. As an editor of The London Stage suggests, the losses accrued from forced closing at the latest death in the burgeoning Hanoverian family probably offset the
profits from royal attendance at the theatre. All in all, King George I's positive influence on the theatre is seen to have been as inconsequential as that of King William III, who really disliked the theatre. Only by viewing the King as a symbol of political power can he be said to have helped generate the political slant given much of the drama written during his reign.

King George II: 1727-1760

In June of 1727 it was the second George's turn to be King. Although there had been great animosity between them, father and son were much alike. King George II and his Queen Caroline were for the most part, an ill pair. The King was stupid, blustering and brave with no genuine interest in life outside his drinking, debauchery, his royal guards (whom he kept about him as a reminder of his military prowess) and his music. He is said never to have read a book. The mere sight of one sent him into a rage; and the Queen, who loved reading, was forced to enjoy her books in the privacy of her closet. Caroline was clever and accomplished with a wide range of interests including music, their only artistic link.

The King, who was violently opposed to being ruled was, nevertheless, ruled in all things except the choice of his mistresses by his capable wife. His English was not good, nor was his taste in theatre more elevated than his father's, but he always liked to be entertained. Besides, his Caroline was most adept at making suggestions in such a way that he thought he was acting of his own free will. We can only guess at the number of times King George II went to the play because Caroline secretly wished it. At times, royal commands
for such immoral plays as *The London Cuckolds* and *The Fair Quaker of Deal* created considerable upset among his less liberal minded subjects, but to his credit, he improved upon his father's record of theatre visits by attending each house on the average of five times each season.81 Like his father, George II responded with childish delight to the grossest flattery. One author, for instance, received 1,000 guineas for a play vindicating George I's adultery.82 But it was Caroline who knew how to flatter him best by allowing him to think that his political decisions were his own.83

It was on the advice of Caroline that George retained his father's governmental leader, Robert Walpole. And it was by constant backstairs politicking that Caroline and Walpole ruled the land.84 In the decade from 1727-1737, the theatre's involvement in politics became much more openly and aggressively hostile to the King's chief minister and, less directly, to the King himself.85 Though ambiguous in its political parallels to the current regime, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* became a strong source of encouragement to Walpole's opponents.86 The King, so far from being concerned with the political storm swirling about the throne, was for months at a time indulging his sexual appetites in Hanover with a variety of fat, willing mistresses. In one instance, the open hostility shown toward the King was given expression by a decrepit old horse having been turned loose in the streets bearing a placard: "Let nobody stop me--I am the King's Hanover Equipage going to fetch His Majesty and his Whore to England."87

The theatres, mirroring public sentiment, grew increasingly
critical. During the 1730's, Henry Fielding had added to the political maelstrom by writing the best and most literate contemporary satires on governmental policy. With *Pasquin* in 1736 and *The Historical Register* in 1737, Fielding made dramatic satire such a forceful political weapon that Walpole, acting in the name of the King, was compelled to act to arrest the growing turbulence. He did so with a single repressive measure; the Licensing Act of 1737. It silenced forever the dramatic efforts of Walpole's most effective and outspoken critic, Henry Fielding.®® It silenced as well a whole chorus of less telling but insistent voices by bringing all stage performances under the strict censorship of the Lord Chamberlain.®® In addition, after the promising development of four and sometimes five theatres during the 1730's, the Act reduced the London theatre once again to two authorized houses.®®

Neither Garrick, who became a patentee at Drury Lane in 1747, nor Rich at Covent Garden was to enjoy frequent patronage in the remaining years of George II's reign; for within months of the 1737 Licensing Act, Queen Caroline was dead. No longer would the King be subtly led by her somewhat acquisitive and cultured mind. Though Walpole had effectively silenced the theatre's rage against his politics, Caroline's death marked the beginning of the end of his ministry; for without the Queen's help, he could no longer influence the King favorably toward his decisions. His successful young opponent William Pitt took his place in 1747. Though the King hated Pitt, he was forced to bow to new links in the chain of constitutional monarchy. From 1747, the King was to accept the Cabinet and the Prime Minister's nominees for positions on the Cabinet.®® This slow evolution during
the eighteenth century from absolute to constitutional monarchy paralleled the growing distance between each succeeding sovereign and his personal influence on the theatre.

When in 1760, the clownish, rampaging George II died in a water closet at Kensington Palace from a stroke, there were few tears shed at his funeral. He had always felt indifferent to the people and affairs of England. His interests, after himself, were Hanover, the Army and women; yet, despite his reign, England was more prosperous than she had ever been before—and the theatre had a glory of great acting to compensate for a lack of royal appreciation.

During the reigns of the first two Hanoverian Kings, something happened to the theatre which must be recorded at this point, even though it was the result of wider social forces than royal patronage. The mid-eighteenth century saw enormous improvements in public transportation. With this improvement, touring companies and provincial theatres began to spring up, changing the complexion of the British theatre by giving it a broader economic base and providing an important new training ground for actors. The provincial theatres helped to make the second half of the century notable for its high standard of acting. The theatre was no longer able to reflect the tastes and prejudices of any one segment of the population. It was truly becoming a national institution.

King George III: 1760-1811

During the latter half of George II's reign, the legal status of provincial theatres remained in dispute. When his grandson George III came to the throne, steps were taken to give them proper status.
In the first twenty years of his reign, royal patents were granted to theatres in Bath, Norwich, York, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and Newcastle; while theatres in Brighton, Windsor and Richmond, as places of royal residence were licensed by the Lord Chamberlain. In some important ways, George III was personally like none of the other ruling Georges. Perhaps his personality accounts in part for the fact that his record of royal theatre-going, though unequalled since Restoration times, influenced neither the playwriting, nor the acting style prevalent during his reign. The future King at age eleven was unable to read and seemed perfectly content in his ignorance. He was good-natured enough and obviously honest, but his tutors were unable to shape this dull and unresponsive clay into the future king his mother nagged him to be. He was often silent and morose out of feelings of inferiority and showed early signs of mental illness that was to cloud the last decade of his reign. In order to stimulate his slow-learner, his father Prince Frederick hired James Quin, a leading actor of the day, to supervise his children, including young George, in preparation for their own performance of Addison's Cato. The eleven year old heir struggled through a prologue in which he referred to himself as "... in England born, in England bred." This was a significant line. Unlike the preceding Georges, he was indeed the first English-born king since James II, and he spoke English almost like a native.

Though he had the characteristic low-brow taste and low-voltage mentality of his royal grandfathers, he lacked their coarse sensuality. He remained through his active rule a model of domestic virtue; true to his Queen and content to talk farming with his country neighbors.
rather than to cope with the aristocratic coterie at Court. In an age increasingly given over to sentimentalism and the sway of middle class values, the new King's pious, sober and respectable manner earned him the respect of this new class.\(^95\)

His taste in theatre was confined exclusively to comedy for the better part of his reign. And his lessons with Quin had evidently predisposed him to the stiff, declamatory style for which Quin was famous.\(^96\) The King for whom Shakespeare was "sad stuff" did not like Garrick's romantic style of playing. The great Garrick "overacted," he was "fidgety," and he "couldn't stand still." However, after seeing a performance of *The Fatal Marriage* in 1783, he could not say enough about the acting of the play's star, Mrs. Sarah Siddons. His total admiration for the classic Siddons eventually earned her a special mark of royal favor. The tragic actress was given a Court position as Preceptress in English Reading to the Princesses. As a further seal upon Sarah's authenticity, the King's life-long habit of avoiding plays with serious or tragic import was reversed overnight. After seeing Siddons do tragedy, the royal family made sure that they saw her in all her roles, often more than once.\(^97\)

Though this George was an enthusiastic playgoer with defensible opinions about the art of acting, his influence on the theatre stopped at the box office, where the many command nights of his reign always netted at least 200 pounds. His blundering stupidity as a politician, eventually earned him the hearty contempt of his subjects. He cannot, however, fairly be blamed for his lack of influence on the theatre. As with George II, the fundamental relationship between the monarchy and theatrical art was changing. The King was becoming a
distant figurehead, a symbol of what England had been, not what she was becoming. This was the period during which the birth pangs of a new industrial era, a growing population, newspapers, education and an abiding passion for politics would have made it impossible for such a capable ruler as Charles II to be all things to all men. It certainly was not possible for simple-minded "Farmer George" to be the final intellectual authority and arbiter of taste in theatre or any of the other arts.

King George IV: 1821-1830

George IV's only significant theatre patronage occurred during his long tenure as Prince of Wales and later, as Prince Regent from 1811 to the time of his demented father's death in 1821. When at last he became King, the patent theatres were to provide George IV with what he thought to be final proof of his extreme unpopularity.

Antithetical to his father in every way, George Frederick, Prince of Wales, was to become, like Charles II, the leader of current fashion in dress and morals, the self-styled "First Gentleman of Europe." Yet, though he led the fashionable world to the theatre as one stop in his constant search for pleasure, theatrical art never reflected his leadership. Among the several notable incidents linking George IV's colorful life to Drury Lane Theatre one illustrates the animosity existing between the old King and his son. One evening, as the King and his heir were moving through the crowded foyer of Drury Lane on their way to the royal box, the sovereign's hatred for his son suddenly swept over him. He lunged forward and slapped the Prince full on the face. There was a scurry of nobles to pull the old man back and
thereafter, signs marked "King's Side," and "Prince's Side" commemorate their running battle.\textsuperscript{98}

True to a recurring pattern of hatred between the ruling George and the heir apparent, there had been animosity between the two since boyhood. The young Prince, attractive, full of high spirits and blessed with a sharp, quick-witted intelligence, had from the first taken delight in tormenting his father. There is a story that when the rumblings of revolt were stirred by the sharp critical attacks of John Wilkes in the 1760s, and the slogan "Wilkes and Liberty" swept the country, the young Prince used to shout through the keyhole of his father's dressing room "Wilkes and Liberty!", sending his father into an apoplectic rage.\textsuperscript{99}

Considering the enmity between them, it is no surprise that Prince George was drawn inevitably to his father's arch political enemy, Charles James Fox. As a young man, the Prince was completely under the spell of this brilliant critic of the King's bull-headed war policy against America. Fox at thirty-four was a supreme individualist whose wit, courage and amorality suited him well for the task of completing Prince George's education in high living, debauchery and political opposition to the King's policies.

Though a frequent visitor in the royal box at the opera and both patent houses, the future King's association with the stage is most widely remembered for his ill-fated and ill-conducted affair with Drury Lane's beautiful leading actress, Mary Robinson. He became her "Prince Florizel" after seeing her Perdita in Garrick's version of \textit{The Winter's Tale}. Flattered by the royal attention, with visions of the wealth the love-stricken Prince had promised her and
urged on by her delighted husband, Miss Robinson left her home and her profession for a short, tempestuous love affair with the heir to the British throne. Their year together seemed the topic of every conversation. Its aftermath, with Fox and the Prince switching mistresses, gave the scandal-mongers and latter-day Puritans much about which to gossip and disapprove.

The long years of waiting for the Crown were to take their toll on the future king's physical and spiritual health. Rather than acquiesce to a life of enforced boredom (his father consistently refused to allow him to serve in any useful capacity), the Prince sought in the company of Fox, George "Beau" Brummell and the wits of his age the greatest possible pleasure in life, whatever the cost. He was everywhere, the theatre, the opera, the card-room, the ballroom, the race-track; in the Age of Dandyism, he became the acknowledged arbiter of taste par excellence. To be invited to his sumptuous residence, Carlton House, for instance, was to have arrived at the pinnacle of London's high life.

Two men who were to have an observable effect on the life of the British theatre jealously guarded their positions as guests and intimates of Prince George at Carlton House. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose comic masterpieces have enriched the world's drama, is less well known as manager of Drury Lane Theatre from the end of Garrick's tenure in 1776 to 1809. Perhaps this is because his was a most ignominious tenure. As a brilliant orator and clever politician, his services were in frequent demand by the Prince, whose "dirty linen" Sheridan was always willing to wash. With the hope of a Cabinet post, George's political "right hand" devoted less and
less attention to the difficult business of making his theatre pay, and more and more to serving his future sovereign. Not only did he mismanage financial affairs to a large degree, he initiated the scheme which was to contribute to the deplorable financial burden under which the patent theatres were forced to operate in the nineteenth century. In order to recoup the high losses Drury Lane had suffered under his guidance, he conceived the idea of building a new Drury Lane twice the proportions of its predecessor. He also managed to generate the financial support for its completion in 1794. The new house seated nearly 4,000. As this example was followed at Covent Garden, with well-documented deleterious effects on the performances of legitimate drama, Sheridan may justly be blamed for contributing to the difficulty of making legitimate drama pay in the two patents for the next sixty years.103

Another sometime theatre manager, George Colman "the younger," (to distinguish him from his playwright father), was reckless, extravagant and constantly involved in lawsuits. Although this might have been enough to qualify him for a place at the Prince's table, he also had a reputation for writing scurrilous plays and poems on occasion.104 These attributes combined with audacious push won the day. In 1812, his boon companion the Duke of York introduced him to the Carlton House coterie. Perhaps the Prince saw in Colman a lesser copy of his own reckless life; for he rewarded the young rake with a post—Examiner of Plays. As Richard Findlater observes in his book on censorship, "Rake followed bigot." Colman succeeded John Larpent, whose Methodist convictions led him to arbitrary and exceedingly
strict "purity" in the dramas he allowed. Yet, though Colman had, by his own admission been a "careless and immoral author," censorship under his twelve year tyranny became stricter than under the hated Larpent.105

The future King's indirect influence on the theatre was felt through these two men, who bent their best efforts toward pleasing him. Under Sheridan, who deserted the theatre for royal politicking, and Colman, whose tastes earned him the post of Examiner of Plays, the drama was hopelessly engulfed in oversized houses, while at the same time helplessly straight-jacketed by the volte face puritanism of its chief censor.

Looking over the whole of Prince George's vigorous pursuit of the High Life, with its frequent contact with theatre people, Charles II seems a kindred spirit. The leading actress of Drury Lane was his well publicized "Perdita," Sheridan was an intimate as was Colman, J. P. Kemble was an occasional dinner guest, as was the "Infant Roscius," Master Betty. Elizabeth Farren received enough Princely patronage to contend for a short time with Siddons as a box office attraction.106 Yet neither his biographers nor theatre historians found his influence on the theatre worth mentioning.

By the time his long wait for the Crown was over, the First Gentleman of Europe was bankrupt spiritually, emotionally and physically. When he was proclaimed King in 1820, George IV had long since lost any sense of pleasure in attending the theatres. Percy Fitzgerald quotes the King as stating that he never went to the patent theatres because they were too large and they made him feel uncomfortable.107 But perhaps there was a more salient reason for the King's
reluctance to attend the patent theatres. The two national theatres were to become, at least in the King's mind, a final proof of his utter unpopularity with his people. Long before he was crowned, he had lost the love and support of his subjects. His record of notorious seductions, anti-royal politics and wasted fortunes had earned him a certain adulation, to be sure, but when he secretly married a commoner, Marie Fitzherbert and then deserted her to marry royalty, the public was outraged.

After disgusting himself by marrying Princess Caroline of Brunswick, he gained the public's disgust and hatred by his subsequent treatment of his Queen. Just before his Coronation, George IV demanded that Parliament grant him a divorce from his hated wife. After eighty days, the long, painful and indecent trial ended in a stalemate. The House of Lords had found her guilty of adultery, a crime carrying a possible death sentence for a queen, but withdrew the bill of charge in order to avoid a probable acquittal in the Commons. Though Caroline was a half-mad, grotesque figure whose bizarre and scandalous self-exile in Europe cast shame on all English nobility, the common people were solidly behind their queen. Her release was considered by the masses as proof of her innocence. Victoria celebrations were held in London and major cities as far north as Edinburgh. Chagrined at his defeat, the King sat helplessly by as Caroline gathered support from the swelling mobs. At Drury Lane she was cheered long and noisily by the crowded house.

Three months after the trial, the King decided to put his popularity to the test of a State visit at both patent theatres. The
visit to Drury Lane was fraught with anxiety. Although the royal party arrived well before curtain, King George delayed entering the royal box so long that he greatly embarrassed his large suite. When finally they ventured into public view, a man in the gallery called out, "Where's your wife, Georgy?" This so shook Lord Hertford, whose wife was the King's current mistress that he dropped the candle with which he was lighting the King to his seat. The King swore. However, there was enough cheering at Covent Garden the next night to persuade him to go ahead with his Coronation plans. Caroline's attempt to attend the Coronation was thwarted by guards whose orders were to bar her especially from entering. She began once again to curry favor by frequent public appearances. Her attendance once again at Drury Lane was to be a sensational ending to her sad and perverse existence.

Some sources state that she had been for some time taking drugs without a doctor's advice. Others report a more dramatic ending which the mobs were eager to believe; after taking liquid refreshment, lemonade, perhaps, Caroline returned to her box. Several moments later, she arose, screamed "I've been poisoned!" and was rushed out by attendants. She died within a few days. Rumors began to circulate that Court physicians had given her strong emetics not to cure her but to kill her. Though George IV was on his way to Ireland when news of the Queen's death reached him, he had given orders that she be buried in secret. However, frenzied mobs tore iron pickets from fences and attacked the armed guards of the funeral cortège. Queen Caroline was demonstrably mourned for days in the capital city.
The King's second attempt to confirm public support by a visit to Drury Lane proved to be his last. During the last years of his life, King George was uncomfortable in the public theatres, but not only because of the size of the houses. He had been popular once, but only by avoiding his subjects could he persuade himself that he was popular still. On the evening of his visit, enormous crowds gathered in and about the theatre. The excitement and noise occasioned by the King's visit was attributed, mistakenly by His Majesty, to his personal unpopularity. On becoming aware of the King's agitation, the Lord Chamberlain sent his deputy down to the stage in an attempt to get help in quieting the house. On encountering the manager, the deputy exclaimed: "Mr. Elliston, this is disgraceful. You should have prevented this excess. The King is vexed and will never again return to Drury Lane." 111

Somewhat ironically, perhaps, Drury Lane, the scene of his first scandalous adventure as "Prince Florizel" became, in his own mind at least, the scene of the public's final condemnation for his full life of pleasure-seeking. He never patronized the patent theatres again. For the last eight years of his reign, little was seen of the King. He remained a gouty semi-invalid in seclusion with one agreeable companion or another at his Pavilion at Brighton or his hunting lodge at Windsor. 112 His death in June of 1830 brought his younger brother William out of the semi-seclusion which had been his unwilling lot for all of his sixty-five years.

King William IV: 1830-1837

George III's younger son, the Duke of Clarence, later King
William IV, is known in theatre annals only for his long and fruitful liaison with the famous comedy actress, Mrs. Dorothy Jordan. In contrast to George IV, who had consistently allied himself with his father's enemies, William was always a devoted subject and supported with his small influence his brother's policies. Like his brother, the Duke had attended Drury Lane, was smitten with love and had subsequently taken an actress for his mistress. Unlike Mary Anderson's short-lived royal liaison, Dorothy Jordan lived for many years with William and bore him ten children. In addition, she supported him by her earnings in the theatre. Though William dutifully followed George in capitulating to the demands of royal succession by deserting his faithful mistress for a royal marriage, the future king never forgot the debt of faith and devotion he owed Mrs. Jordan. In addition to a pension for her on her retirement, he was eventually able to ennable all ten of their children. Also, most unlike his flamboyant brother, William remained throughout the remainder of his life faithful and extremely devoted to his young Princess Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen. One unkind eye-witness diarist characterized the Duke's first sixty-five years as follows:

His life has been passed hitherto in obscurity and neglect, in miserable poverty, surrounded by a numerous progeny of bastards, without consideration or friends and he was ridiculous from his grotesque ways and little meddling curiosity. Nobody ever invited him into their house, or thought it necessary to honor him with any mark of attention or respect.

By the time his turn came to rule England, he had so reconciled himself to the obscure and simple life of a country gentleman that he determined not to change. Plain food, middle class servants, casual, friendly strolls about the town and a merchant's seriousness about the
business of being king marked his short reign.116 His father, "Farmer George III," also liked the country rather than fashionable Court life, but unlike George, William's avowed objective was to be a constitutional, not an absolute monarch. His support of Parliamentary Reform, and his middle class ways made him a popular king with the great majority of his subjects.117

Partially as a consequence of their Majesties' preference for the privacy of Brighton and Windsor as opposed to the "High Life" of London society and because the fashionable world derided King William as a foolish eccentric, royal theatre patronage was almost nonexistent. A state visit to Covent Garden five months after William and Adelaide came to the throne and an occasional royal appearance on the instance of a special benefit mark the extent of William's theatregoing.118

His younger Consort exhibited somewhat more interest in the theatre. In 1835, Queen Adelaide and the Duchess of Kent (Victoria's mother), each paid 500 guineas for private boxes at Drury Lane. Six days later, the Queen honored Macready's performance of Macbeth, accompanied by a large suite.119 William, however, much preferred his country estates to London. Besides, he was old, crippled with arthritis and bent on using his remaining strength on behalf of good government.

By no means could King William be considered a stimulating theatre patron, but when he died in 1837, his Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne said of him:

I am deprived of a most gracious master and the world of a man--I would say one of the best of men--a monarch of the strictest integrity that it has ever pleased Divine Providence to place
Graciousness and integrity—straightforward honesty and a sensitivity to the needs of his subjects are qualities which contrast markedly to the character of his Georgian predecessors. His reign marked the beginning of a new bourgeois, democratic tone in royal governing. It set valuable precedents for his young niece Victoria; for it was her sensitiveness to the needs of the theatrical profession in the first decade of her reign that gave her theatrical patronage its special and unique aspect.

During the century of Georgian rule, the theatre became increasingly estranged from the personal influence of sovereignty. The reign of the Hanoverians saw the theatre become a weapon of growing political clout until in 1737, Robert Walpole effectively silenced all political postures other than outright obeisance. From the infamous Licensing Act of 1737 to well beyond the Georgian era, the theatre was helpless to reflect the moods and attitudes of the public it served, except as it flattered and catered to that audience's self-image.

The public, comprised more and more of newly affluent tradesmen, became the touchstone by which the theatre guided its every endeavor. It was the swelling middle classes who paid the bills, not the sovereign, and, consequently, each succeeding George had a diminished opportunity to affect either the plays or their performances. Only one George, the third, faintly suggested the very real potential for positive influence a sovereign could have on the drama. George III went more frequently to see plays than any other monarch since Charles II. The one beneficial result was a brief, fashionable craze for playgoing
which crowded the houses and paid the bills. Unfortunately, the struggling companies were very little aided by this demonstrated potential, because only George III had a genuine taste for theatre, lowbrow as it was, and his patronage was short-lived because of his frequent bouts with insanity.

Professor E. B. Watson briefly, and generally summarizes the state of theatrical patronage by royalty during the century before Victoria came to the throne:

Of the nation's political life almost nothing is traceable in the drama. The theatres existed solely by the grace of the king and his chamberlain; therefore nothing but the most slavish deference was tolerated on the stage. A perfunctory yearly visit by royalty to each major theatre, and a few historical and regal pageants, given especially on the occasion of coronations, were about the only interchange of courtesy...

Conclusions

This survey of royal patronage of the theatre, embracing both dramatic literature and production has attempted to consider the observable manifestations of the continuing relationship between the British theatre and each succeeding monarch from Elizabeth I to the accession of Victoria in 1837. Authoritative secondary sources have been surveyed in order to trace this relationship. From this survey the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Several factors, varying from monarch to monarch, were influential in determining the frequency of royal patronage and its effects, among which were a) the experience and background which formed the personality and tastes of each sovereign, b) the age, political, social and economic, in which the sovereign reigned, and c) the relationship each sovereign enjoyed with his subjects.
2. While avid royal interest produced notable results on occasion, it is not possible to generalize on the potential strength of royal influence in all ages or reigns. The two notable examples of enthusiastic, literate theatre patronage, Elizabeth I and Charles II, contributed to two of England's outstanding and unique achievements in dramatic literature—Shakespeare's dramaturgy and Restoration Comedy. The two notable examples of enthusiastic patronage of extravagant visual theatre, James I and Charles I, encouraged the rapid English evolution of English staging practices. It would seem therefore, that early monarchs ruling with absolute authority over a comparatively small England were more easily able to influence their theatre activity personally and directly. However, as population expanded and constitutional monarchy evolved, no succeeding ruler exhibited enough active, sustained interest in theatre to allow significant conclusions to be drawn regarding royal theatre patronage.

3. The major value of this survey will be in its contribution of an historical perspective from which to judge the purported uniqueness of Victoria's theatre patronage.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER I


3Chambers, I, 5.


5Chambers, I, 106-108.


7Fleay, pp. 121-216.

8Chambers, I, 204-206.

9Chambers, I, 204-206.

10Chambers, I, 3.

11Fleay, pp. 166-168.


13Fleay, p. 168.

14Thaler, p. 162.

15Thaler, p. 160.

16Thaler, p. 159.

17Chambers, I, 313-14.

18Thaler, p. 168.

19Fleay, pp. 255-257.

20Chambers, I, 325.


24 Bevan, p. 60.

25 Fleay, p. 168.


27 Bevan, p. 75.


30 Bentley, III, 196.

31 Fleay, pp. 313-314.

32 Fleay, pp. 313-314.


36 Wilson, pp. 1-2.


42 Thaler, p. 165.

43 Bevan, pp. 87-88.

44 Thaler, p. 170.


46 Nicoll, A History . . . . , I, 137.


49 Nicoll, A History . . . . , I, 5-6.

50 Wilson, Restoration Drama, pp. 33-34.

51 Nicoll, A History . . . . , I, 8.

52 Wilson, Restoration Drama, pp. 31-32.

53 Wilson, Restoration Drama, pp. 33-34.

54 Wilson, Restoration Drama, p. 3.

55 Wilson, Restoration Drama, p. 41.

56 Wilson, Nell Gwyn, p. 57.


59 Van Lennep, p. 341.

60 Bevan, p. 113.

61 Fitzgerald, II, 192-93.

62 Krutch, p. 160.


64 Nicoll, A History . . . . , II, 8.
66 Steele's writing significantly influenced the development of sentimental comedy.

67 Krutch, p. 28.


71 Loftis, pp. 61-63.


73 Loftis, pp. 63-64.

74 Loftis, pp. 64-68.


76 Loftis, p. 65.

77 Loftis, p. 72.

78 Van Lennep, p. clxi.


80 Redman, pp. 61-64.


82 Bevan, p. 124.

83 Redman, pp. 60-62.

84 Redman, p. 62.

85 Loftis, pp. 94-103.
87 Redman, pp. 73-74.
88 Loftis, pp. 94-95.
91 Redman, p. 88.
92 Bevan, p. 125.
93 Redman, pp. 90, 93.
94 Bevan, pp. 122-123.
95 Redman, pp. 93-108.
98 Bevan, p. 131.
99 Redman, p. 127.
106 Richardson, pp. 53-55.
108 Richardson, pp. 195-228.


110 Fulford, p. 185.

111 Fitzgerald, History of . . . . , II, 414.


114 Allen, pp. 64-65.


116 Redman, p. 287.


118 A survey of the Index to the London Times from 1830 to 1837 cites the King's theatregoing.

119 The Times (London), October 7, 1835, and October 13, 1835.

120 Redman, p. 314.

121 The Times (London), August 25, 1838.

CHAPTER II

QUEEN VICTORIA'S THEATRE PATRONAGE
THE FIRST DECADE
1837-1847

Formative Influences

Education

There are several significant parallels between King Charles II and Queen Victoria. As children both were subjected to ruthless maternal domination. Both developed, perhaps as a consequence, notable independence of spirit, and for British monarchs, both were exceptional in their love for the theatre. Victoria's German mother, widowed twice, had developed great strength of character and tenacity of purpose during a life of considerable hardship.1 When it became evident that Victoria was the probable heir to the throne, the Duchess of Kent became possessed with the self-imposed responsibility of preparing her daughter to wear the crown. The Duchess's good, plain, thrifty German mind recoiled at the shameless behavior of the royal coterie at Carlton House. Consequently, she worked hard to instill qualities of simplicity, regularity, propriety and devotion in her offspring. In later life the Queen would describe her childhood as "melancholy". It was certainly strict and secluded.2 She was never without the close supervision of some adult. This fact bears on her life-long aversion to public display.
Idolized by her nurses, spoiled by her teachers and guarded as if she were an invaluable piece of china, the little girl was not long in realizing her own importance. She developed a passionate self-will, almost a vein of iron within her which made her intractable when once she made up her mind. To make Victoria's education more entertaining, the steady drilling in constitutional history and other suitable subjects utilized the "picture-book" device. A mixture of quiet amusement with instruction was offered by albums, annuals and other appropriate iconographic sources. This method was developed as a way of learning a variety of subjects and was continued by the Queen later as a family recreation affording real pleasure.

Since German was the official language of the royal household from the time of George I, it was the young heir's first language. She next learned English and French. Her unbounded delight in opera encouraged her gift for language. She learned Italian under the strong stimulus. The pages of her journal were spattered with operatic exclamations—especially in moments of rage.

Although a good linguist, Victoria showed no marked aptitude or inclination for literary subjects. This lack may have been a fault of the age and the uninspired tutoring she received as much as it may have been a shortcoming in the pupil. Her days were filled with tasks designed by mentors whose aim was to train a queen so correct in her behavior as to commend her to the most respectable of her subjects. She was given little encouragement to develop an aesthetic sense. Though interested in poetry, the sentimental, pious rhymes offered
girls her age did little to mature her taste. With few exceptions, she was not allowed to read novels. Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* she found "very interesting and very horrible." Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor* and Irving's *Conquest of Granada* appealed to her hungry imagination: "But these are all Phantom Castles which I love to form," she added in her carefully kept journal.\(^7\) Surrounded constantly by female adults who bombarded her with facts, responsibility, deportment, religion and more facts, Victoria's imagination would probably have turned sickly had she not been encouraged at an early age to take advantage of one great escape, the theatre. Victoria saw the world of art and poetry almost exclusively through theatre, particularly opera. Morning or matinee performances were permitted until she was twelve. Then she was allowed to go to evening performances starting at half past six. She saw, for instance, Charles Young's farewell performance of *Hamlet* at age twelve and described it as "unforgettable." Her diary began to reveal a capacity for sharp critical evaluations based on criteria of naturalness and physical attractiveness. Of George Bennett, a member of Charles Kemble's company, she wrote:

> Bennett, whom I have seen act really extremely well . . . was extremely disagreeable yesterday; he twisted his arms, hands, legs, back, even his eyes in all directions, and drawled his words in speaking most disagreeably.\(^8\)

Of Helen Faucit, who was to become a good actress and a close friend of the Queen's, she wrote:

> Miss Faucit is plain and thin, and her voice is much against her . . . she rants and screams too much . . . but as she is very young, they say she may become a good actress.\(^9\)
Fig. 1.—Pencil drawing by Queen Victoria, the royal children performing Racine's Athalie. Courtesy Ian Bevan, Royal Performance. Hutchinson, 1954.
Though Victoria enjoyed all forms of theatrical entertainment, it was Italian opera and its glamorous stars which completely dominated her artistic life. Her favorite sixteenth birthday present was a concert at which lovely Giuletta Grisi and the Italian company performed. Her acute visual memory was stimulated by such events and her sketchbooks are filled with drawings of artists and scenes from the theatre. * (See figure 1)

Victoria's frequent exposure to theatrical entertainment was not sufficient stimulus to lead her to a mature taste in literature and pictorial art. Most biographers insist that her great gift of common sense and her retentive memory were as outstanding as her corresponding lack of imagination. * Certainly in pictorial art, she demanded surface likeness and nothing more. In this she reflected the ordinary educated ideas of her time. However, her love of opera's baroque richness and her fascination with exotic melodrama must be accorded equal prominence in her personality with her insistence on simple surface reality in art.

Political Influences

Like her taste for opera, Victoria's political attitudes were formed early. Her uncle, King William IV, was her political benefactor in several important ways. First of all, he had, by sheer effort of will, held on to life long enough to thwart his enemy the Duchess of Kent's dream of reigning as Regent. He lived just long enough to assure his niece's direct succession. William's second legacy to the young Queen was a monarchy firmly identified with the new age of reform politics and middle class power. The Great Reform Act of 1832 caused
a shift in public feelings towards the Duchess and her little daughter. They became popular symbols of the middle-classes and the new liberalism. 12

Another Whiggish political influence in the life of Princess Victoria was her opportunistic uncle, Leopold, King of the Belgians. He was the first in a succession of father-figures on whom Victoria relied. Although it was King Leopold who contributed immeasurably to her happiness by selecting and preparing Prince Albert to be her consort, Victoria's ambitious uncle was replaced almost overnight by fifty-eight-year-old William Lamb, Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister of England. By birth and belief he was aristocratic and conservative. He had risen to power through the party of reform, although he himself was opposed to the Reform Bill and all it stood for. As a confirmed opportunist, he had little difficulty adjusting to his paradoxical position. The premiership had begun to bore him, but then eighteen-year-old Victoria ascended the throne. He found a flattering new role to play. As her Prime Minister and as her private secretary, he was almost her only adviser on politics, government, social life, art and almost anything else which could properly be discussed between a handsome, sophisticated older man and a fascinated, romantic young ruler. If King Leopold had been her second father, Melbourne was her third. He gave her self-confidence, sophistication and enthusiasm for her work by making her duties seem delightful. However, his cynicism and his profound distrust of social change blunted her social conscience. Melbourne gave her the idea that all discontent was due to a few rabid, irresponsible agitators and that every rebellious
Irishman was unspeakably lower class. Furthermore, as a politician, Melbourne was the head of a weak Whig government holding Tory views himself and feeling no sympathy for the Radicals among his followers. Queen Victoria, therefore, became an ardent Whig with little or no comprehension of what Liberalism represented.¹³

State of the Realm: 1837-1848

Abroad

In 1837, when young Alexandrina Victoria exchanged the title "Princess" for "Her Majesty," her realm was still basking in the relative peace established by Wellington's defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. Her empire covered over eight million square miles. Although England had at that time no well considered colonial policy, by the end of Victoria's first year, the Canadian rebellion had forced the government to evolve a policy of self-government which was to help assure many years of colonial stability.

At Home

Lord Melbourne's total influence over the Queen's social and political attitudes kept from her the significance of the social and economic forces at work in her realm. Radical changes had been occurring since the last quarter of the eighteenth century, changes which put Victoria's realm on the brink of the "hungry forties." At the close of the eighteenth century, most Englishmen were country-born. Fifty years later, England was a nation of crowded, dirty towns where men were subservient to landlords and factory bosses and machines. Parliamentary reform, the anticipated panacea for the working classes,
was a bitter disappointment. A property-minded Whig majority had narrowly passed the Reform Bill of 1832 as a measure necessary to assure that the newly propertied industrial class sided with the upper classes and not the impoverished workers in future policy making. At least, a sizable portion of the upper-middle class was given a voice in the government.

Another Whig reform which increased the anguish of the poor was the Poor Law Amendment Act. Middle and upper classes alike shared the belief that there was a connection between indigence and laziness, that the needy were suffering for their sins, that the cure lay, moreover, in hard work and clean living. This attitude brought about the hated workhouses of which Dickens wrote so convincingly. Though the concept of workhouses seemed fair, in practice, they were a source of humiliation, cruelty and loss of self-respect—a travesty of justice.

Out of working class misery and discontent arose Chartism as if to give working people renewed hope for the future. This political movement was based on ultimate control of a transformed Parliament as a means of reshaping society. Chartism grew in strength as social conditions worsened, and, by 1848, it had taken on the character of a full-fledged revolution. The realm suffered all the growing pains of a new industrial nation during the forties, yet, the cries of the lower classes were never really heard by the Queen for what they were. Like her political mentor Lord Melbourne, Victoria recognized only three classes: the monarchy, the upper or landed classes and the newly powerful middle class with whom she was allied from the first by circumstance, temperament and choice. She remained comfortably
Victoria and Opera

The nature and extent of the Queen's entertainments during the first year of her reign can be attributed primarily to two causes: (1), the new sense of freedom and power Victoria experienced, and, (2) the urbane, indulgent influence of her chief adviser, Lord Melbourne. The famous diarist of the period, Charles Greville, who was also Secretary to the Queen's Privy Council, captured the nature of her new life:

She is upon terms of the greatest cordiality with Lord Melbourne, and very naturally. Everything is new and delightful to her. She is surrounded with the most exciting and interesting enjoyments; her occupations, her pleasures, her business, her Court, all present an unceasing round of gratifications. With all her prudence and discretion she has great animal spirits and enters into the magnificent novelties of her position with the zest and curiosity of a child.15

Victoria rushed into the swirl of the London social season as soon as the official mourning period for the late King permitted. On July 18, less than a month after she was proclaimed queen, she went privately to hear her beloved Grisi at His Majesty's Theatre. This significant first visit as Queen revealed much about her future patronage. She chose, none too surprisingly, Italian opera as her fare. More important, she insisted on playing down the fact of her royal presence. "The Royal party went quite private, the servants in grey or undress liveries," read the Court Circular in the Times for July 19, 1837.16 The Queen commanded Monsieur Laporte, the manager,
"not to notice her presence in any way whatsoever and not to wait for her arrival to begin and not to have 'God Save The Queen' sung," as is customary in the presence of Royalty. However, as the Times reviewer observed, the audience could hardly avoid guessing the significance of the occasion with the orchestra gathered at their posts well ahead of schedule and the conductor nervously glancing toward the royal box. Nevertheless, the royal visitors managed to slip in so discreetly after the performance had begun that she was not noticed until almost time for the second act to begin. The house immediately burst into cheering and applause. Laporte responded to the continuous uproar by begging permission, in spite of instructions to the contrary, to allow the anthem to be sung by the company assembled in readiness behind the curtain. The young monarch said "no," and the audience was surprised into settling down upon hearing the orchestra playing the traditional tribute without vocal accompaniment—another "first" for Victoria.17

How should this royal wish to avoid ostentation be interpreted? No doubt her discomfort at being the object of her subjects' eager curiosity played a part.18 From the point of view of her experience as a seasoned theatregoer with exacting standards of performance, the Queen probably knew how best to enjoy an evening in the theatre. She knew, no doubt, that state visits were deleterious to performance. On such occasions the pleasures have long been anticipated so that the entertainment was anti-climactic. The audience was there to be seen; when the curtain rose, they were concerned with royalty's reactions, not performance. This attention on the royal box, always
prominently visible from all parts of the house, robbed the performers of the warm and interested response which makes theatre possible. It would take many private visits to the theatre before Queen Victoria could modify the traditional etiquette which dictated that an audience must respond only as led by royal response. Perhaps that is why her Majesty took such pains to establish a new precedent on her first visit as Queen.

The next day manager Laporte was amply rewarded for his moment of anxiety. He was able to announce that by command of the Queen his theatre was to be known as Her Majesty's Theatre, signifying by that title her direct royal patronage.

Victoria and the Leadership of the Legitimate Stage

With such interest as Victoria indicated by seven additional private visits to the opera, the legitimate theatre began to make special efforts to attract the new Sovereign's patronage. The London stage was about to become the arena wherein two combatants would struggle for leadership. Neither of them was considered in that day to be in the very top ranks of the acting profession, but both were strong and ambitious personalities, both were sons of actors, and both were determined to be the first in the Queen's interest. The younger and, perhaps, the less talented of the two was Charles Kean, son of the great Edmund. The older, by eighteen years, was William Charles Macready. Since he was at the very peak of his career in 1837, Macready had good reason to think of himself as the natural leader of the profession and to hope the Queen would also think of him in that way. At the time of William IV's death, Macready was negotiating to take over
the management of Covent Garden Theatre. His timing was in no small
dictated by the prospects of decisive royal patronage. He began
by rounding up a company. On July 22, a brief correspondence initiated
by the new lessee displayed all the cautious diplomacy of two gladiators
stalking each other before combat. Macready hoped to "spike the guns"
of his increasingly prominent rival, Charles Kean, by inveigling him to
join his noble effort at the Garden:

The newspapers may, perhaps have informed you that I have taken
Covent Garden Theatre . . . Your celebrity has, of course, reached
me: in the most frank and cordial spirit, I invite you to a par-
ticipation in the struggle I am about to make. I understand your
expectations are high; let me know your terms, and if it be pos-
sible, I will most gladly meet them, and do all in my power to
secure your assistance, and give the completest scope to the full
development of your talents.

I will not further allude to the cause for which I am making
this effort, than to express my belief and confidence that your
own disposition will so far suggest to you its professional
importance, as to insure us against any apprehension of your
becoming an antagonist, should you decline (as I sincerely trust
you will not) enrolling yourself as a co-operator.20

Bitter experience taught Phelps and Anderson that the "eminent
tragedian" had no intention of allowing Kean "the completest scope
to the full development of his talents." But Macready's ambitious
rival, fully intending to be first on the boards himself, caught the
note of ferocity in this too tactful invitation and replied guardedly
that he could not accept because he had a long-standing commitment to
Alfred Bunn at Drury Lane if he should return to London--a circumstance
he did not soon anticipate.21 Macready understood that he had tipped
his hand and replied begging that his observations might not be con-
sidered in the light of a desire to limit Kean in any way. He had
failed to win that skirmish, but he had secured the services of Samuel
Phelps and James R. Anderson to strengthen his company. He also
attempted to consolidate his position by petitioning the Queen "for her special patronage, and the liberty to assume the title of Her Majesty's Company of Performers." Her Majesty took her time in replying. She continued her opera visits and concerts; the season rapidly drew to a close. She also found time four days after Macready's request to grant her direct royal patronage to Her Majesty's Royal Vauxhall Gardens. On the day of her departure for Windsor Castle, Macready received her reply from the Lord Chamberlain. Victoria wrote that she was much interested in Covent Garden, that she had great respect for Mr. Macready and his talent, but the precise object of his request needed further consideration. "If it should be deemed impracticable to concede," the reply added, "the Queen trusts other means might be found of rendering assistance to Mr. Macready's undertaking." No one could mistake this for anything but a polite "No." There can be little doubt, too, of Lord Melbourne's influence in this decision. Though fiercely Whig in her party allegiance, as she understood it, Victoria's convictions were as arch-conservative and anti-republican as her Prime Minister's, and Macready was well known for his strong Liberal and Republican sentiments. Though he greatly desired the Queen's patronage as a box office attraction to Society, the institution and the person of royalty prompted many angry sentences in the pages of his diaries.

Perplexed and anxious at this and other set-backs he had experienced in launching his first London management, Macready continued through September preparing for that most valuable of all patronage--public favor. On September 24, he was irritated by a
message from the Queen, who expressed the wish that the price of her box be reduced from 400 to 350 pounds. Was she deliberately trying to irritate him?

During her two month sojourn at Windsor and Brighton, the Queen busily planned for her own grand opening--her Coronation. Her return was to be a state visit to the City, a triumphal procession reminiscent of the royal entries made by Renaissance rulers. Over the ensuing months until her Coronation, there were to be three state balls, two levees, a drawing room and a state visit to each of the national theatres. She seems to have forgotten King Leopold's advice. Fully aware of the steadily decreasing power of the Crown, her uncle had admonished her always to be very national, to flatter constantly her subjects' national pride for the success of her reign.

Eight visits to the Italian opera in the first few weeks of her reign had been duly noted by the chauvinist English press and public, but now, at least, as part of the traditional Coronation festivities Royalty would attend the "nationals." Slighting Macready, as she would always do during his tenure as a performer, Victoria first visited the tragedian's hated rival Alfred Bunn's house, Drury Lane. Her Majesty commanded an opera, The Siege of Rochelle, a slight curtsy to English national feeling, since its composer was an Englishman. A second living English writer, Lord Byron, was honored when her Majesty commanded his Werner from Macready's repertory. She also commanded Tyrone Power in his farce, The Irish Ambassador, another blow to Macready's pride and pocketbook, since Power was then playing at the Adelphi Theatre. The indignant lessee protested the
"injury and injustice of foisting Mr. Power" upon him. Though subsequent royal patronage would show that it had cost him dearly, Macready won his point. The Queen substituted a farce from his own Repertory. Since it was still improper for the Queen to attend the minor theatres, Victoria had hoped to see Power, London's leading comedian, as part of the Macready bill she had commanded.

Her Majesty soon substantiated Macready's gloomy forecast that "English opera will become an essential part of the amusements of a metropolitan audience." On the evening Macready dressed to play Werner and pondered "the folly and impiety of thus pampering and spoiling the mind of one human being, and in the same act debasing those of millions," the Times reported that a royal box was being fitted up at the Lyceum for the Queen's intended patronage. With the Queen heading the list of subscribers, Michael Balfe had decided to take over the Lyceum and run it as an English opera house. Prior to her departure for the holidays at Windsor, Victoria patronized Balfe's opera eight times and the two nationals each once—to see operas. All visits were private, including a surprise return visit to Macready's Macbeth, but, as the lessee complained, so little advance notice was given that no box office advantage was realized.

Just as Prince George and Regency Society had made the King's Theatre sparkle as an internationally brilliant resort, Victoria and early Victorian Society were to make Drury Lane socially brilliant, if only for a brief moment. The new year was to see a flourish of intense fashionable patronage in which the Queen figured prominently. Pretender Charles Kean had entered a challenge to Macready's leadership
in the acting profession. Macready had guessed that the "upstart" was getting too "bold and brassy" as a result of his provincial success. However, crowded, fashionable houses had not always been the younger Kean's lot. His career had begun early and disastrously. Trading on his father's great name as a young, untrained actor, he had earned only hostility and indifference from the public. Later, public support came through hard work on and off the stage in the provinces and in America. That Kean eventually learned to act, and proved it, is one factor, certainly, in his rise to fame. Another, one not sufficiently credited, was his fortunate, but well-earned Society connections. Though many in the theatre detested him, new acquaintances, especially among the aristocracy, found him charming. Painfully aware of his father's uncertain birth and life of debauchery, Charles Kean, nevertheless had his Eton education and connections, a graceful manner and extreme virtuousness to recommend him to Victoria and her generation as a gentleman.

Trading on friendships with the most prominent aristocracy in Dublin and Edinburgh, where he won his first success, socially and professionally, young Kean was recommended to an increasingly large circle of noble patrons extending to London Society and the Court. After failing as a provincial actor in Dublin, James Anderson observed acidly:

... But to make money as an actor you must become a "lion," the pet of some city party, and be continually acting off the stage as well as on. That's how it is done; you must breakfast, dine, sup and sometimes sleep with your patrons, if you wish to become a wooden god and be worshipped. Charles Kean did it for years!

After ten years of constant effort, Charles Kean had succeeded in drawing
well in every major city in the British Isles but the crucial one. London success was the keystone to his ambition. He signed with Alfred Bunn of Drury Lane for a twenty night engagement at fifty pounds per night. "It was presumptuous," growled Macready. "For years they made me starve on melodramatic villains." Who was this conceited Charles Kean that he did not suffer in the same way? The challenger, facing more courage than he felt, dropped in casually at Covent Garden to see the boxkeeper. He asked if the Garden did not wish him to go to the devil. To be sure, it did. However, the devil seemed to have thrown his lot in with the challenger, for Kean positively carried the town from his first night as Hamlet on January 8, 1838.30 During this first engagement his success carried him from a twenty to a forty-three night run and an average box office of three hundred and nine pounds.31

Following the fashionable world's lead, the Queen added to Macready's sense of defeat by making clear her preference for Shakespeare as Charles Kean played it. On the evening of her return from Windsor, her Majesty honored the Lyceum accompanied by a large suite which included an Eton school-mate of Kean's, Colonel Charles Grey.32 The night Macready's King Lear was to premiere at Covent Garden, the evening papers carried news which would mean box office receipts of 464 pounds, "a choaker of a house" chortled jubilant Alfred Bunn.

"Her Majesty has expressed her intention of honouring Drury Lane with her presence tomorrow evening to witness Mr. Charles Kean's personation of Hamlet," read the bills. Having improved on his successful opening by practice and patronage, Kean was at his best for the Queen and she responded accordingly:
Fig. 2.—Engraving, romanticized study of Charles Kean as Hamlet, c. 1838. Courtesy H. R. Forrest Collection, Shakespeare Library, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, England.
It was Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet, and we came in at the beginning of it. Mr. Charles Kean (son of old Kean) acted the part of Hamlet, and I must say beautifully. His conception of this very difficult, and I may almost say incomprehensible character is admirable; his delivery of all the fine long speeches quite beautiful; he is excessively graceful and all his actions and attitudes are good, though not at all good-looking in face. I came away just as Hamlet was over.  

The Queen's patronage of Kean's Hamlet instead of Macready's premiere of King Lear further divided the two artists' camps. Yet, the Sovereign's choice of entertainment could not yet be considered blatant favoritism. Though once for opera, Macready had been honored by three royal visits, one of them in state. However, when the Garden's Lear was challenged by the Lane's Richard III and her Majesty presided on opening night at Drury Lane, Macready was laid low:

Heard the accounts in the newspapers of Mr. C. Kean's performance, which records it as a triumph; and, coupled with the Queen's presence, will no doubt make it fashionable for many nights to come. It is not possible for me to receive with placidity a blow like this, which, giving power to empiricism and ignorant puffery, prostrates all my hopes of making a permanent asylum in Covent Garden for the drama.

By this time Macready should have been resigned to his Sovereign's partiality for his rival. He noted the advantageous pre-visit publicity given the Queen's visits to the Lane and the venomous treatment such anti-Macready papers as the Times gave his every effort, but he continued to fight to keep his theatre solvent. He prepared to challenge Kean's popularity with a brand new piece by his close friend Lord Edward Bulwer Lytton. Having been savaged by the press for strong republican sentiments in two earlier plays, Bulwer-Lytton had decided and Macready agreed that until his Lady of Lyons had succeeded on its own merits, the author would remain anonymous. Set in post-revolutionary France, the play was loaded with speeches about the worth of
the individual, the worthlessness of class and the call to liberty—sentiments Macready could put his heart and mind to. Perhaps because her Majesty caught a hint of the "republican clap-traps" inherent in the new piece, Macready's formal request for her patronage was flatly refused, a blow he hailed sarcastically as "great news!" Yet, he wrote Bulwer-Lytton ten days later, "If we could but get the Queen to the theatre, I think it would determine our success."35

Predictably, though a rousing success in the theatre, the anti-Macready and Tory newspapers lashed out at the play, accusing its author of outright disaffection to the Crown.36 Following its fourth performance, Macready came before the curtain to counteract the hostile press by assuring his auditors that they had heard no political allusions not directly germane to the fabric of the play. Further, he alluded to his acquaintance with the author as an honorable gentleman who would never stoop to tossing off inflammatory speeches for the applause of the pit. Shortly, he publicized the author's identity in the bills, hoping that his noble friend's identity would secure Victoria's visit. Instead, Victoria went a second time to Kean's Richard III. This smacked of favoritism. Perhaps as a gesture to impartiality, more probably as a token of her esteem for Lord Bulwer-Lytton, the Queen made known her intentions to visit Covent Garden two days after her visit to the Lane. In order to capitalize on the impending visit, Macready, Bulwer-Lytton and their supporter Lord Conyngham, the Lord Chamberlain, began to plot. Bulwer-Lytton knew that it was understood in the "upper circles" that the Queen was coming. Conyngham suggested that by placing the one act farce The
Omnibus first in the ads and placing Lady of Lyons second, then pre-facing the bill of plays with the phrase "By Particular Desire," there would be a strong hint that her Majesty had requested not only the farce but the controversial main piece as well. Just as Macready was about to effect the plan, an order came from the Queen blocking any change in the order of the plays. Apparently Victoria had her intelligence network as well. After insisting on a copy of the script so she could read the play, she came. Macready noted: "The Queen came to see the play--no notice was taken of her." From the newspaper accounts, apparently everybody but Macready noticed her. With great relish it was reported how, when there was a reference in the play to the possibility of the heroine's marrying a foreign prince, the whole audience took it as applicable to Victoria's own impending marriage prospects, and when the character Damas cried out "Foreign Prince! Foreign Fiddlesticks!" the house broke into cheers and laughter. Victoria smiled good naturedly though the fun was at her expense. After having studied the play, probably with Lord Melbourne, she came to enjoy it as harmless romantic melodrama. Afterward, she sent messages of praise to Lord Bulwer-Lytton and to Macready. She had been, according to the actor, delighted with his acting in the third and fifth acts, though not with Miss Faucit's. True to the extreme candor which her governess had recognized in Victoria as a child, the Queen was generous with praise where praise could be honestly given.

The battle for leadership of the legitimate stage ceased in late March, when contender Kean left the field loaded with honors. A
gala testimonial dinner at Drury Lane honored him for having "elevated the drama" by his exertions. Macready, still in possession of the field, snorted his contempt, but he was clearly relieved to see his rival depart for the northern provinces. Charles Kean had achieved the major London success he had wanted, and, in the process, had won the royal favor of his Sovereign, a factor Macready was to miss greatly on more than one occasion during the next ten years.

Royal Entertainments: 1839-1847

Foreign Amusements Predominate: 1839

Though Kean later returned for a second engagement at the Lane, the battle for leadership shrunk to insignificance as the true leader of the London theatre world began to make itself felt. From April to August London Society—and the Queen—turned eagerly to the Italian opera for their divertissement. Victoria's exclusive patronage of the Italians ran to an average of three nights per week. She was also very busy with state balls, concerts and other festivities leading to her Coronation in late June. Neither Kean nor Macready played many crowded houses in the face of such competition.

The glorious drama of the Coronation, where Victoria's sense of theatre helped to compensate for the clumsiness of those officiating, marked the end of her first year on the throne. As Britain's most active ruling theatregoer since Charles II, she had begun to set a pattern of patronage which would not be appreciably altered for at least a decade. Parliament resumed each year in early February, and this brought Victoria back from Windsor to open the new session.
Though the opera season did not reach its peak until after the Easter holidays, Her Majesty's Theatre opened soon after the government re-convened so as to capitalize on the presence of the Queen, her Court and Society. In August, the aristocracy deserted the City for the country, and Her Majesty's closed its doors. It soon became apparent to the theatre profession that late January to April were the best if not the only period to secure fashionable London's patronage—and fashionable patronage was necessary to draw the reluctant middle classes into the theatres.

In late August of 1838, public sentiment against the Queen's "unpatriotic" and unpopular patronage of foreign opera broke into print. The Times, among several newspapers, ran a series of irate letters which insisted on the powerful influence of royal patronage and condemned Victoria for not exercising this power in favor of English performances. Her attackers quoted the Parliamentary inquiry of 1832, which stated that "the most prominent reason for the decline of theatrical taste is the absence of Royal encouragement." Her major defender, the editor of the Times pleaded her youth, her shyness and her positive dislike of the invariable disruption caused by cheering, boisterous mobs demonstrating their loyalty rather than attending to the performance. Though these facts did not constitute an excuse, the resumption of Victoria's theatre-going in early January, 1839, seemed initially to bow to her subjects' demands. The two national theatres enjoyed a total of eight royal visits, including two state visits, during the first thirty days in London. Consistent with her bias, the Queen went first and most often to Macready's competitor,
Alfred Bunn, for entertainment. There Van Amburgh and his lion-taming act fascinated her. On her third visit the animals were deliberately starved for thirty-six hours beforehand. After the show she went backstage to see them fed. She was much impressed. Her interest made it fashionable to go backstage to watch the beasts being fed. By way of compensation, Victoria saw an opera at the Lane and commanded Lady of Lyons. Later, she sat through King Lear, during which republican Macready "pointed at her" the speech upon the "poor naked wretches" with their "houseless heads and unfed sides." Finally, during this brief flurry of royal visits, Victoria and a large suite visited the Haymarket Theatre on the occasion of manager Benjamin Webster's end-of-season benefit night. She came especially to see Power in The Irish Ambassador. Though previously denied that pleasure by Macready, her Majesty made the little theatre in the Haymarket a good deal more respectable by enjoying English farce at a minor playhouse.

Unfortunately, royal support of English performances lasted little more than a month. Certainly, the new opera season was a factor, but even her opera patronage was less frequent. The year 1839 marked the beginning of the Queen's disenchantment with herself and her high station. A number of politically complicated crises and a Court scandal of tragic proportions rapidly decreased her popularity and undercut her confidence. Her romantic-paternal relationship with Melbourne had antagonized almost everyone. She was even derisively referred to as "Mrs. Melbourne" in the press. In July, she had acted unconstitutionally to defeat Sir Robert Peel's attempts to form a
Tory government. She successfully brought Melbourne back into power against the expressed will of the government. Her great popularity had so changed that she was publicly hissed and stones were thrown at her carriage. Her early departure for the privacy of Windsor Castle was understandable. During her sojourn away from the capital, King Leopold executed his plan for leading Victoria into marriage. He set the stage for the entrance of his protege, Prince Albert, by sending a series of eligible Coburg cousins to visit the Queen. This move prepared her for the sudden and complete romantic attachment she formed for Albert from the moment he arrived in October. The following month, she made a rare visit to London to announce her wedding plans for February. In December, she attended Covent Garden for a new play appropriately titled Love.

During her absence, the professional theatre had not fared well. After a noble effort to do justice to Shakespeare and native drama during a financially difficult second season, Macready gave up his management. His acknowledged leadership in the profession had not been sufficient guarantee against the financial loss he suffered. In the fall of 1839 and periodically through 1841, the eminent tragedian took engagements at the "dog-hole of a theatre--dirt, slovenliness and puffery make up the sum of its character,"--the Haymarket. Madame Vestris and Charles Mathews struggled to make Covent Garden attractive by their own special theatrical touch but slowly fell into increasing debt.

From the young Queen's romantic perspective, the marriage realized the highest ideal of which matrimony is capable. Victoria's
deep love for her husband was without reserve. Prince Albert was, on his part, prepared to make her happiness the main object of his life. He had a great deal to give to his adopted country. He had shown since his youth a silent, meditative temperament, great will power and self-restraint. A diligent scholar, his main interests were art, museums, philosophy and learned subjects. His logical mind and sense of order were a proper foil to Victoria's emotionally charged, spontaneous reactions to events. Significantly, both were passionately devoted to music. Both, also, possessed a sense of theatre. The Prince was a talented mimic and had participated in amateur theatricals during his schooling.

The English people, however, distrusted Prince Albert as a young inexperienced foreigner. There was a strong current of fear that his private influence with the Queen and his "foreign prejudices" might affect her action to the nation's injury. He was, necessarily, excluded from all Victoria's official actions involving her ministers for the first several years. Though he never completely overcame the public's suspicion and dislike, his patient wisdom and perseverance gradually won him a measure of respect and devotion. Most important, from his point of view, he gradually assumed a voice in the governing of the nation. His major biographers agree that by 1843, Prince Albert's position gave him as good a right as the Queen to be regarded as the ruler of the British realm.

Prince Albert's Influence on Patronage: 1840

Not surprisingly, considering the facts of Albert's personality and position at marriage, royal theatre patronage changed
somewhat in favor of English performances. Hoping to gain from the influx of nobility into the City for the royal nuptials, manager Laporte opened the Italian opera season a month early. However, the royal couple did not begin their joint patronage by visiting Her Majesty's Theatre. Their first visit was in state to Drury Lane. Two nights later, they went in state to Covent Garden for Sheridan Knowles's Love. Book in hand, Victoria periodically called attention to particular incidents to aid Albert, whose newly acquired English was faulty. On March 4, the Italians premiered Torquato Tasso. In the past this had almost invariably signalled a visit from the Queen. Instead of a new opera, Victoria and Albert visited the Garden production of Legend of Florence with Anderson and pretty Ellen Tree. Seven days later, Anderson and Tree played Legend of Florence again for the royal newly-weds. Only after four visits to English performances did they allow themselves the pleasure of a single visit to Her Majesty's. On March 18 they paid a visit to the Haymarket. Though Macready was playing three nights per week, they chose English comedy and farce. The Queen's incognito visit gave rise to renewed talk of her avowed shyness; she sat behind a screen. Albert, on the other hand, was quite conspicuous in a sombre black suit seated in the front of the box, book in hand, seeming to appeal periodically to the screen for elucidation of the text. Though her behavior probably attracted more attention than if she had been seated with her husband, her subjects certainly got the idea that Albert was earnestly engaged in learning to appreciate the kind of comedy any true Englishman would enjoy.
Again acting conspicuously on behalf of English performers, the royal couple commanded four special nights with overflowing houses in order to give retiring actor Charles Kemble an opportunity to act his best roles. Over the next several months, Victoria continued their generous patronage to English drama but they also began attending Italian opera more frequently. They patronized the newly opened German opera at the Prince's Theatre and enjoyed a spectacular display of horsemanship at Astley's Amphitheatre. As further proof of their desire to change the emphasis of their patronage, the royal couple restricted themselves to Italian opera only once per week, usually Saturday evening.

There are two plausible and related explanations for this shift in the nature and frequency of royal theatre patronage. First, Albert was anxious to restore the Crown's lost power and prestige. He had been fully informed of the royal actions contributing to Victoria's low ebb of popularity. One of his initial goals as consort was:

... that her Majesty should by degrees regain possession of the privileges which through youth and inexperience she had been induced to yield up ... 49

Writer and theatre promotional man Ian Bevan, who had access to the daily correspondence Albert and Victoria maintained on almost every subject stated that:

Prince Albert disapproved of the Queen's casual visits to public theatres and argued that a sovereign should either go to the theatre in State, or command plays to be performed at Court.46

This shift in patronage seems also to have been part of an effort to overcome the nation's hostility to the German Prince. Judicious visits to English performances would tend to ameliorate the public's feelings.
Albert was learning to enjoy English plays in the one place where royalty and subjects could mutually share and appreciate the same entertainments in relative intimacy. In fairness to Albert, a third motive must be considered. The Prince's aesthetic views were much broader than Lord Melbourne's, and he began to open the Queen's eyes and ears almost immediately. Not only in dramatic art, but in painting, music, architecture and political and social realities he began to broaden her limited perspectives.

**Foreign Amusements Dominate Again: 1841-1847**

This initially encouraging change in favor of English theatre was not, unfortunately, sustained beyond the first year of Albert's marriage. Since unforeseen circumstances worked to enhance the Crown's prestige, frequent English theatre patronage was no longer a political necessity. A rapid succession of royal children and several assassination attempts, plus the royal couple's marked domestic happiness, fully revived public allegiance to the Throne. The record of royal patronage in support of the English drama during the period from 1841 to 1847 is dismally consistent: three or four visits to the most successful plays in each new season compared to an average of three visits per week to foreign opera. Beginning in 1842 French plays with French companies appearing at the St. James Theatre claimed eight to twelve visits from royalty and London Society during each new pre-opera season. Also, during most of the period, either one or the other of the national theatres was dark or given over to operatic entertainments. The Haymarket was the only theatre consistently playing English bills.

Victoria, it seemed, continued to take every opportunity to
slight Macready whenever possible. When he managed Drury Lane in 1842 and 1843, she went first and most frequently to Covent Garden. In his first season, Macready requested a state visit. His reaction to the Queen's answer summarized prevailing feeling in the theatre profession: "I see the Queen will not command. She has no feeling for the theatre." Another request in his second season brought an invitation to discuss it at the palace. Macready wrote that he couldn't make the appointment but suggested *Much Ado About Nothing*. The Queen, predictably, chose another play, *As You Like It*. This choice, Macready complained, destroyed all benefit he might have enjoyed from the visit. Further, the actor was called for after his performance but refused to come forward, even after the Queen sent to order him to appear for a call in her presence.

Though an early note of hope followed the Theatres Act of 1843, in Samuel Phelps's management of Sadler's Wells, royalty never got to Islington. In 1845 and 1846, Phelps's experiment with Shakespeare in the suburbs was flourishing, however, they were the bleakest years of England's "hungry forties" and the state of the national drama in London reflected the depressed and hungry state of the realm.

In 1846 and 1847 two incidents of royal patronage probably served as precedents for the inauguration of the Windsor Theatricals in 1848. First, retired favorite Charles Kemble was commanded to read Sophocles *Antigone* before her Majesty and the Court. The old actor appeared with choral and musical accompaniment on a specially constructed stage in the Picture Gallery of Buckingham Palace. The
following December, William Charles Macready received a similar command to read *Antigone* before her Majesty and guests at Windsor Castle. Macready found himself too busy to comply unless the Queen absolutely insisted. Victoria decided she could do without him.48

There was another artist in London earlier, during the opera season, whom Victoria could not do without, nor, seemingly, could anyone else in London. With all the rapt attention and open adoration paid to young Victoria at her Coronation in Westminster Abbey, England paid homage to the "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind. To English performers, Miss Lind was but one more crippling blow to their livelihood.

The Year of Revolutions: 1848

Social and Political Pressures on the Throne

An event-filled year for Europe in general and for European royalty in particular, 1848 proved as well to be an event-filled year for England and the English stage. The revolutionary upheaval in Germany caused Victoria and her German consort great anxiety.49 Italy, too, was in the throes of revolution, but it was across the channel from Victoria's throne, in nearby France, that revolution's terrors were most indelibly impressed on England's consciousness.

From early March through the summer months, *The Times* columns were filled with daily eye-witness accounts of every aspect of the rebel's victories. Nobles lost their titles, ministers their places, the monarch a crown and the costly seat of royal power went up in flames.

At home, the Crown faced rebellion, too. That rebellion in
Ireland was inevitable should have surprised no one. Too high a proportion of the Irish population depended on the potato for their staple food; when crops failed successively in 1845 and 1846, famine and death swept the land. At the same time poor grain harvests in England resulted in grain being exported from Ireland to feed hungry Englishmen, while the Irish starved to death. For years after the twin blight of 1845 and 1846, Ireland suffered starvation, pestilence, crime and growing outrage. In 1848, Smith O'Brian, angered by the sufferings of the people and weary of the ineptitude of the government, led the Young Irishmen in revolt. While the rebellion was easily put down, the Irish revolt contributed, during the summer of 1848, to the general fear for life and property manifested by the widespread cry of revolution.

It was, however, the Chartists rebellion that gave Victoria and her government most cause for alarm. At a time when revolution was toppling empires all over the world, crazy Irish Fergus O'Connor's working-class movement seemed a genuine threat to the British throne. Its "People's Charter" of six points (including universal male suffrage, secret ballot and other democratic reforms) became in the minds of the poor and in the windy rhetoric of its leaders a panacea, a means of creating a working-man's paradise. In 1839, Irish rabble-rouser O'Connor organized a National Convention in London to present Parliament with a "monster" petition claiming a million signatures. The effort was to little avail and by the mid-forties, an antagonistic Commons had jailed the important Chartist leaders.
This pattern of marching on Parliament with ever larger followings and larger petitions climaxed in April of 1848. Over six million signatures were claimed for this largest petition and a great rally was planned for April tenth on Kennington Common for the purpose of presenting the workers' demand for a transformed society to Parliament and the English nation. With letters to the editor and articles daily on the preparations for the demonstrators (a soldier advised on the use of mortar, for instance, as the best offensive weapon to use against rebellious subjects who might try to barricade streets), it is no surprise that her Majesty was most upset. Having just given birth to the infant Princess the previous month, the news received on April third at the palace that an English version of the revolutions sweeping the continent was about to occur caused a considerable emotional upheaval. The Prince initiated immediate plans to flee the city with his family. On April sixth, The Times carried a notice that her Majesty would re-visit Osborne on the Isle of Wight and that a special train had been ordered to take her out of the city two days before the rally was scheduled. London was in a turmoil. Speeches were made in Parliament. A bill was passed redefining treason more strictly in order to deal with the impending Irish threat and the momentary invasion of determined poor people. The "Iron Duke," Wellington was called in to prepare the city's defenses; the metropolitan police mustered four thousand reserves and one hundred mounted horsemen with a back-up of thousands of special citizen constables. On the first sign of violence, it was widely promulgated that Fergus O'Connor was to be shot.
Pressure From The Theatrical Profession

Meanwhile, theatrical people, as part of the London populace, were having their eyes opened to the efficacy of concerted group action on behalf of a just cause--on the continent, and at home. They watched angrily as one of the two national homes of the drama, Drury Lane, was converted to a kind of French Astley's with a circular arena and circus acts to come. Then, on March sixth, the first night audience for the Cirque Nationale de Paris seemed to indicate by their bellicose treatment of the French musicians (forcing them to play 'God Save the Queen' several times) that English patriots were getting most impatient with foreign entertainments which kept fellow English professionals from earning a decent living. A bold and sharply critical article appeared on the eve of the Chartist's rally condemning the aristocracy and the royal family for patronizing foreign entertainments at Drury Lane and elsewhere. In its critical denunciation, the Theatrical Times seconded the Sunday Times in deploiring the pre-announced presence of the Prince of Wales and the other royal children at a morning performance of the detested French circus company. Noting the recent benefit her Majesty had commanded in aid of the English workmen recently thrown out of France by the triumphant rebels, the article concluded on a bold note: "In France they drive out all the industrious English workmen—in England we cherish and support every French gang that comes over here. How long will this state of things last?"

Like the abortive Irish rebellion to follow, the great Chartist demonstration on April tenth was a miserable failure.
O'Connor flinched from a showdown with the authorities. Then it was discovered that the petition was padded with fictitious names as improbable as Victoria Regina, Duke of Wellington, Mr. Punch and Sir Robert Peel. The newspapers were filled for days with the jubilant descriptions of the ease with which police had dispersed the 'revolutionists' without bloodshed, without difficulty.\textsuperscript{57}

It took the May fourth debut of the re-appearance in London of Jenny Lind to bring the Queen back from the haven of her island retreat. She did on April 29 however, make a small decisive gesture toward the working classes whose economic plight was unchanged and whose spirits were blasted by the recent and humiliating defeat of their hopes. In the 'Court Circular' the following appeared for England to note:

The Lord Chamberlain has been commanded to announce to the ladies who shall attend the drawing rooms, and shall be honoured with invitations to Buckingham Palace, that Her Majesty the Queen, ever desirous of giving encouragement to the trade and industries of the United Kingdom, and particularly so at this time of commercial depression, would wish to see them in dresses of British manufacture.\textsuperscript{58}

Heartened by the Queen's apparent willingness to act to help her long-suffering subjects, the \textit{Theatrical Times} attempted to rally the profession to purposeful action on behalf of their grievous cause. Taking a slightly militant tone, the article claimed the Queen's action on behalf of the clothing industry as an earnest of royal and aristocratic support for the future. After haranguing the profession for not uniting in protest against the negligence of royal and noble patrons in the past, a plan of action was proposed:

Let a general meeting of the members of the theatrical body be convened for the purpose of petitioning the Queen to give immediate, direct and permanent encouragement to native
talent... Let the course we have recommended be tried by the profession organizing themselves, and working together for one common purpose—casting aside all petty distinctions of rank, circumstance and place, under the guidance of any one individual in whom the body corporate have perfect confidence, and we are not without sanguine anticipations to the results.59

This sabre-rattling proposal, so effective in galvanizing nationwide attention for the Chartists, was taken up by none other than Benjamin Webster, lessee of the Haymarket Theatre. Believing, perhaps, that as the leader of the only theatre still performing the national drama with regularity, he must lead, and, emboldened by the possibility of financially bolstering his own enterprise, Webster petitioned Parliament to limit the number of foreign theatres allowed in London.60

In a very wise and considered letter to the editor of the Theatrical Times, John Oxenford, the drama critic for The Times attempted to dissuade against a militant stand. In a brief historical survey of royal patronage, Oxenford demonstrated that royal visits may be a good stimulus to public taste, but a bad diet, leading eventually to false taste. He proposed that efforts be made to capture the patronage of the middle classes by cleaning up the playhouses and by producing better plays.61 However, it was most difficult to grasp the sagacity of this observation, when false taste or not, the two opera houses seemed to be getting rich! Almost daily during the month of May, royalty was reported occupying the royal box at Her Majesty's or Covent Garden. The Court's presence assured houses crowded by the aristocratic families of the realm and by all those who wished to see and be seen in this august company.

It seemed that all the foreign companies were getting rich on English pounds. The Cirque Nationale de Paris had apparently
considered their engagement at Drury Lane a smashing success, for their departure was followed by classified advertisements announcing the imminent appearance of the Theatre Historique, directly from Paris. Unable to maintain silence in the face of still another French company intending to capitalize on the "free trade" principle, the prestigious Theatrical Journal spoke out. This weekly paper began in the year of Victoria's accession. It numbered among its subscribers the Queen and her consort, who, the editor declared, had the Journal laid regularly on their coffee table. This periodical burst into print at what was to be the final outrage. The editor demanded: With the Swedish Nightingale at Her Majesty's, the greatest concentration of Italian talent ever known at Covent Garden and an excellent company of French players at the St. James, surely the aristocracy would not patronize imported melodrama replete with all the hair-breadth escapes seen for years at the minor theatres! The nobility and the upper classes, the Journal stated, had shown their disdain for the national drama of their native land, but surely they would not stoop to dramatic fare in all respects inferior to the English equivalent and this of questionable morality to boot.

Perhaps the ringing conclusion to this protest was intended as a request that the public refrain from buying seats, but it was interpreted very probably, as a clarion call to battle:

We call upon the public singly and collectively to set their faces against this new attempt to un-anglicize our public amusements, to give the entertainments such a reception as will convince these foreigners that what we have to give shall only be bestowed on those who merit our approbation, that a period when British industry is drooping for want of encouragement is not the time, nor the hour, for the Gaelic flag to be unfurled on the boards of Old Drury.
At a time when the *Times* columns were still filled daily with news of the French revolutions' latest turn under such blazing headlines as "The New Insurrection in Paris," (in which there was an eye-witness account of workmen being killed and wounded while defending their barricades), a companion article in the same *Theatrical Journal* begins: "When the invaders make their appearance it is high time for those who hold the fortress to be on the alert. Each manager of each department should be up and stirring. Now is the time or never." In the article, ostensibly written to stir actors and managers to improve the drama in order to capture the patronage they so desperately needed, the writing is riddled with such revolutionary phrases as "Surely, the only certain method must strike them--for each and all to strain their powers to the utmost; with a determination to conquer, the battle is half won." In this way, the leading theatrical journal of the day called forth, perhaps unwittingly, a reaction of the kind most natural to a people with a long and colorful history of rowdiness in the theatre.

Instigated by Ben Webster and Charles Mathews, the June twelfth performance of *Monte Cristo* by the *Theatre Historique* at Drury Lane occasioned "the greatest theatrical uproar known in London since the days of the 'O.P.'" Judging from the preparations and from the ultimate victory won by the defenders, it would seem that a sizable army had been mustered for the "Battle for Old Drury." Metropolitan London was deluged by monster posters calling upon British authors and British actors to resist the foreign invasion with which they were threatened. To strengthen the force of the appeal,
observations were made on the immorality of the pieces to be performed. Sufficient pressure was maintained to stir the Lord Chamberlain, who refused to license one play on the grounds of morality and another on the basis of its dangerous political implications, thus slowing the momentum of the "invasion" by several days. Dumas's *Monte Cristo* was eventually cleared for performances on June twelfth. Coincidentally, the twelfth was also expected to prove a day of renewed Chartist outbreak, a circumstance which may help to explain another trip by the Queen to Osborne.

Long before the curtain, on the night of the twelfth, hostile noises and derisive epithets were fired from the pit at the parties entering the press boxes. Abetted by counter-demonstrations of noise and applause of pro-Gallic and Free Trade advocates, the uproar grew to deafening proportions on the rising of the curtain. Whistles and shouts continued more or less unabated for the five tedious acts of dumbshow. Neither side was willing to retreat. At the conclusion, the protesters sang "God Save the Queen" and promised to return to repeat their performance when next the Frenchmen tried to play. In the aftermath, the principle rioters were fined for being outside the law in their pre-meditated disapprobation and the majority of newspapers were strongly against the entire "disgraceful" episode. The *Times* called their behavior childish, illiberal, irrational, degrading and --un-English! London's eminent tragedian W. C. Macready attempted to discourage a second effort by circulating a letter expressing his and the profession's apologies and describing his own courteous reception in Paris. But the spirit of protest was undaunted. The second anti-Gallic battle was every bit as vocal and somewhat more physical.
Several benches were overthrown, a garland was broken from one of the box panels and inflammatory banners were paraded in the pit. Later, when the French company manager accepted an offer from the St. James Theatre to play two "farewell" nights there rather than face another confrontation across "Old Drury's" footlights, the British theatrical profession could justly claim a victory.64

The swift succession of acts of royal patronage which followed the "Battle for Old Drury," lends probability to the thesis that the Drury Lane riots were "the straw that broke the back" of royal indifference to the plight of the British national drama. On June 19th, Webster attempted to apply additional pressure for royal aid by posting the town and the classified sections of the newspapers with the following: "Theatre Royal, Haymarket: In consequence of the unprecedented number of Foreign Amusements, and the Patronage bestowed upon them, the lessee is compelled to announce the Last Three Weeks of the Season . . ." Further down in the listings, Webster announced that the Keans would take their benefit on July third. Although the Theatrical Journal called Webster's bluff by pointing out that the close was really a necessary consequence of an overextended season, the wily manager was very pleased to announce on the 26th that Her Majesty had signified her intention of being present on the occasion of Kean's benefit with Prince Albert and had selected the plays she wished to see performed. This profit making news was placed discreetly at the bottom of the same page on which it was boldly proclaimed that Her Majesty had commanded Mr. Macready to take a benefit prior to his departure for America.
The Throne Responds

Two command performances on 3 and 10 July respectively, less than one month after the unprecedented stand against foreign theatricals, were only a preamble to the crowning act of Victoria's patronage to the British state—the Windsor Castle theatricals. The date of the Queen's decision to "revive and elevate the English drama" by inaugurating the private performances at Windsor was never made a matter of public record. Bits and pieces of information about the Queen's grand scheme for aiding the drama began to appear in the press in September of 1848. In order to substantiate the thesis that political pressure led to the Windsor plays, it was necessary to find proof of an early date of conception. If, for instance, the Throne's decision to aid the drama by private theatricals came immediately following the Drury Lane uproar, a firm conclusion could be drawn. A cause and effect relationship could be established between the revolutionary pressures of 1848 (leading to the Drury Lane riots), and the inauguration of the Windsor Castle theatricals. The most conclusive of several available proofs is a letter in possession of the Folger Library, written by a triumphant son, Charles Kean, to his aged mother, just ten days after his benefit performance before royalty:

"Liverpool 13 July 1848

'My dearest Mother,

'I have scarcely had time to think, much less to write . . . I have received the most flattering acknowledgements from the Court relative to our Benefit. The Prince told Lord Morley, that the Queen & himself were delighted & were much more pleased with my Don Felix, than with Charles Kemble.

'I have received instructions to give English performances once a week at Windsor Castle, commencing after Christmas--for six weeks--
"This is a grand business & will be of the utmost service to me--I shall probably detour one day passing through London on purpose to see Col. Phipps about it at Buckingham Palace, & therefore you may expect me on Monday 24th July.

"Affectionate Love

"Charles.65

Only after bowing to strong protests from subjects determined to be heard could Victoria pause on January 6, 1849 and boast a bit in her letter to royal relative, King Ernest of Prussia:

Chevalier Bunsen has been helping us in an attempt to revive and elevate the English drama which has greatly deteriorated through lack of support by Society. We are having a number of performances of classical plays in a small specially constructed theatre in the Castle, and are collecting what still remains of the older art.66

England's throne had endured the revolutions of 1848. Victoria's realm was so calm, in fact, that she and her family could spend a quiet Christmas season at Windsor watching performances of the best plays performed by the finest actors in the land--just as Elizabeth had done many reigns ago.

Conclusions

The background or formative influences which shaped Queen Victoria's theatre tastes and habits have been identified. In addition, the Queen's theatregoing for the entire period has been traced in connection with the efforts of the English theatrical profession to secure royal and aristocratic patronage. Special emphasis has been given to the competition between Macready and Kean, since royal patronage was a valued prize which both rival tragedians sought. From this examination the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. During the first decade of her reign, Victoria's patronage of
The legitimate stage was neither significantly more frequent, nor more influential than several of her royal predecessors.

2. Victoria's strictly regulated childhood, conventional education and genuine love of music were factors which help to explain the great frequency of her opera attendance.

3. Several conclusions may be drawn concerning the Macready-Kean rivalry which relate to the factor of royal patronage. First, Charles Kean possessed several distinct advantages over his rival, none of which had to do with native talent. Although Macready was considered a greater actor by many discerning critics and particularly by the literary intelligentsia of the day, the older actor had neither the Eton education, nor the influential social connections enjoyed by his politic rival. Second, anti-Royalist Macready's repeated efforts to obtain Victoria's support has revealed the value placed upon royal patronage by the theatrical profession. Finally, in the competition for leadership of the London stage, the Queen's significant patronage of Charles Kean had the effect of deciding the battle in favor of the younger actor.

4. Lord Melbourne's strong formative influence on Victoria's political and social attitudes has been identified as a factor not only in republican Macready's failure to win significant royal support, but also in the Throne's ignorance of the social and economic inequities which led to Chartism and the threat of revolution in 1848.

5. Political motives were among the probable causes for two brief increases in patronage of English performances prior to 1848. Generally, the pattern of royal theatregoing suggests that the Throne remained
unconcerned about the depressed state of the English stage.

6. When national and international political events conspired to make the Crown insecure, bold protests by a portion of the theatrical profession had the effect of securing the Crown's genuine support, specifically, in the inauguration of the royal Windsor Castle theatricals.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II


3 Benson, pp. 52-54.


6 Strachey, p. 22.

7 Victoria's Journal, November 3, 1836, cited in Longford, p. 44.

8 Bevan, p. 145.

9 Bevan, p. 145.

10 Longford, p. 45 and Bevan, p. 143.

11 Benson is most representative in his insistence on this assessment of Victoria's personality.

12 Strachey, p. 20 and Redford, pp. 302-03.

13 This harsh assessment of Melbourne is confirmed by many writers on the period. See Strachey, pp. 54-55 and John W. Derry, A Short History of 19th Century England: 1793-1868, (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 120.


The Court Circular was the official report of the Queen and her immediate Court circle's daily movements. This bulletin, published daily in the Times will be extensively relied upon as a primary source of information concerning the Queen's theatre-going. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, statements on the Queen's movements will be from this source.

This information came from a Letter to the Editor, written by Laporte in protest against the criticism he received in the Times review, Times, July 20, 1837.

Eventually, Queen Victoria commanded that the anthem which had greeted her every entrance into the royal box (whether the performance was in progress or not), be played only at the beginning and ending of each new season (Bevan, p. 10).

On the day of William IV's death, Macready noted in his diary that now was the time for him to stand alone in the acting profession. See William Toynbee, (ed.), The Diaries of William Charles Macready, (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1912), I, 400.


Diaries, I, 404.

Advertisement in the Times, August 1, 1837.

Bevan, p. 149.

Diaries, I, 411.

Michael Balfe was the English composer-singer, whose opera Siege of Rochelle was first produced by Bunn at Drury Lane in 1835. Its immediate success swept Macready's acclaimed performance of Othello off the boards according to Alan S. Downer, The Eminent Tragedian William Charles Macready, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 142-43.

Trewin, p. 135.
T. P. Grinstead, "Gallery of Theatrical Portraits, VIII, Charles Kean", bound as an article with no other identification in Folger Shakespeare Library, Corroboration of Kean's influential social connections is found in Cole's biased biography of Kean. Though writing under Kean's supervision, sixteen letters from members of Dublin, Edinburgh and London nobility appear in the text. In addition, numerous personal letters from Kean to various members of the aristocracy are found in the Kean Correspondence Collection in the Folger Library.


The Times, the Morning Post and the Globe were among the leading papers which gave him glowing reviews.

Grinstead, p. 216 and Alfred Bunn, The Stage: Both Before and Behind the Curtain, (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840), I, 111.

In a letter to Kean, dated June 12, 1838, quoted in Cole, an Edinburgh friend of Kean's and Grey's mentions having talked to Grey about Kean's London success and that Grey had risen to a position of constant attendance on the Queen.


Diaries, I, 443.


Bulwer and Macready, pp. 75-79.

Articles in the Morning Herald, the Morning Post and The Observer for March 7, 8, 1838.

Diaries, I, 446.

Diaries, I, 496.


Strachey, p. 88 and Benson, pp. 40-41.
43 Lee, p. 122.

44 A review in the Times, February 28, 1840, describes this.

45 Eyck, p. 24.

46 Bevan, p. 157.

47 Diaries, II, 166.

48 Diaries, II, 381.


51 Woodward, p. 345.


54 The Times, daily April 6 to 14, 1848.

55 The Times, March 8, 1848.


57 The Times, April 10, 11, 12, 1848.

58 The Times, April 29, 1848.


60 "A Word of Advice to the Profession," Theatrical Journal, June 8, 1848, p. 185.


62 "Is This The Time To Call Upon The English Nation To Support A French Company?" Theatrical Journal, June 8, 1848, p. 177.

64 Extracted from the *Times*, June 6 to 22, 1848 and from "Uproar at Drury Lane," *New Monthly Magazine*, July, 1848, pp. 393-96.

65 "Kean Correspondence Collection," letter Y.c.393 (130), Folger Shakespeare Library.

CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL WINDSOR THEATRICALS: 1848

The Throne's Objectives

When Queen Victoria wrote her royal relative the King of Prussia of the Crown's decision to "revive and elevate the English drama which had greatly deteriorated through lack of support by Society," she answered, in large measure, the question: "Why private theatricals to aid the British drama?" Clearly, in Victoria and Albert's opinion, such private performances were a convenient and workable means of reestablishing Society's support for the drama while at the same time suiting their personal wishes. (If one trait stood out most clearly in the Queen's patronage of the theatre, it was that her strong sense of duty did not often extend to seeing a play unless she thought she would enjoy it.) The Christmas holidays at their Windsor home had, for years, been a time for the domestic pleasure associated with family life. The royal couple took time to enjoy their children and to entertain hosts of royal German relatives. High quality English performances to entertain their family and friends would be a source of pride and enjoyment. If they considered the less complicated expedient of half a dozen visits in state to the theatres, they quickly rejected the idea. Their experience had shown them time and again that Command performances accomplished no lasting good.
Society came to see and be seen. The "rank and fashion" who came assumed that the royal visit was duty, not pleasure, merely a gracious gesture to some retiring actor or to aid some failing management. However, though Society may have correctly guessed her past attitude toward native drama and its performance, that opinion could be changed. As the Times noted:

When the highest personage in the land considers that an English dramatic performance is such an entertainment as to merit the construction of a stage in her own drawing-room, with all the appurtenances of a regular theatre, the opinion that the native drama is unfashionable receives an authoritative rebuke...1

Besides creating a fashion which would, in turn, be copied by those less fashionable followers, the distinct approbation given the English drama by the act of bringing plays into the center of the royal domestic circle would help to convince the reluctant middle classes of the theatre's new respectability. Also, from her own schooling in the history of British sovereignty or from some knowledgeable court official, Victoria must have been aware that Queen Anne set just such a precedent during her reign. In supporting the growing middle class demand for "purified" plays, Queen Anne commanded four innocuous comedies at her Court, then permitted them to be repeated at the public theatres with the advertisement: "As Performed Before Her Majesty at Court", thus, she placed her sanction on the plays as being fit for public consumption.2 Finally, private theatricals would probably hold special appeal for Victoria; she would not be the object of her subjects' curious gaze, as in the public theatres.

In this new departure, at least three defensible royal motives are evident: by initiating a decisive change in royal patronage,
the Crown hoped to create a fashion; by following an historic precedent, the Crown hoped to lead the middle classes to a revised opinion of the stage; and, finally, the royal couple wished to create a holiday entertainment for the private amusement of family and friends.

Charles Kean: Master of the Revels

Envious fellow actors responded to the Crown's choice of directors for the royal theatricals by asking: "Why Charles Kean?"

The appointment as the Queen's Master of the Revels represented a far greater honor than had ever been accorded an actor in the history of British royal patronage of the stage. Essentially the same answer must be given in 1848 that was given in 1838: Charles Kean was fashionable. He had been Society's pet actor during his initial London triumph in 1838, and he had in 1848 managed to direct interest, especially upper class interest, his way. That he was not acceptable as a first-rate actor to the Macready faction of literary notables like Charles Dickens, John Forster of the Examiner, Mark Lemon of Punch and Lord Bulwer-Lytton only enhanced Kean's reputation in the upper Social circles. A most amusing proof of this can be found in a Society novel of 1839. Written by Lady Rosina Bulwer-Lytton, the book closely followed the prescription for popular society novels of that day. It was a saccharine romantic concoction of unrequited love, liberally sprinkled with French phrases, diatribes against the double standard, topical references to real places and real people and a thinly disguised satiric characterization of the literary coterie to which her husband belonged. This coterie was responsible for the considerable abuse Charles Kean suffered in the press. Reflecting the opinion of Society, especially
the ladies for whom she wrote, Lady Bulwer Lytton more than compensated for the abuse Kean had suffered. She devoted almost a chapter to a fictionalized series of visits by her hero, Cheveley, to see Charles Kean play Shakespeare. These visits were climaxed by a backstage introduction to the actor in his dressing room. There, Cheveley, the "man of honour" was enormously impressed with Kean's charm, noble manner, personal attractiveness and vast wit and intelligence--this, after being ecstatic over his acting. This thinly disguised idolatry was aimed at increasing the book's market value by playing directly on the voguish romantic infatuation induced by Kean's recent London success.3

Under the influence of Regency aristocracy, young Victoria, too, had rhapsodized over tragedian Charles Kean, just as other fashionable young ladies had done in 1838. By 1848, however, Victoria had, with Albert's help become something of a trend-setter in her own right. During the first eight years of their married life, the Queen and her serious and high-minded consort had been influencing the nation to assume that high moral tone of bourgeois respectability which came to be known as Victorianism. Consequently, the proper conduct for anyone wishing to be considered a gentleman was quite circumscribed.

The early nineteenth-century English theatre environment had some distance to go before it could be characterized as having a high moral tone. Articles, editorials and letters of complaint had been appearing in the periodical literature with increasing frequency during the late 1840's. They railed against the rampant prostitution in the theatres, the unscrupulous managerial practices and the reprehensible
audience behavior. One letter to the editor of the *Theatrical Times*, June 12, 1847 was a bitter complaint against one of the more reputable London managers, Benjamin Webster. The editor's sympathetic response echoed a conviction which must surely have been held by the court and the nobility:

... But what can be expected from the generality of lessees? There is hardly a gentleman among them, and they only care for their pockets.

The Crown, therefore, had very limited possibilities when it attempted to choose a proper director for the court theatricals.

Until 1848, Charles Kean had never had more to do with theatre management than what brief engagements as a leading actor entailed. Yet, he possessed one qualification for management for which he had worked all his life. He was, as Society could testify, graced with the education and manners of a proper Victorian gentleman, certainly a high recommendation in the Crown's view.

His advantageous marriage in 1842 to respectable Ellen Tree and the birth of their daughter in 1843 completed the middle class ideal of male Victorian virtuousness. By 1842, Ellen Tree had been for years an established favorite on the stages of England and America. Professor W. G. B. Carson, who became acquainted with the Keans through a study of their voluminous correspondence, states unequivocally that Charles Kean's marriage to Ellen Tree was the most fortunate event of his life.4 Certainly, her guiding influence can be discerned in every major decision affecting their careers. She was greatly involved in the day-to-day business of rehearsal and management at the Princess's Theatre, and, as I will show, she was deeply involved in the effort to
raise her husband to the honor of knighthood. Undoubtedly, Victoria and Albert were pleased, in 1848, that at least one leading actor and actress displayed by their conduct on and off the stage, that high moral tone so cherished by later Victorians.

Admittedly, William C. Macready's model domestic and public life gave him cause for claiming a gentleman's standing in Society. However, unlike Kean, who had enjoyed the Queen's favor from the first, Macready's republicanism and his irascibility in dealing with the Queen had alienated her. Besides, in 1848, Macready was old. He was fifty-seven and talking of retirement after his farewell tour of America. He had outworn his popularity on the London stage by too continuous exposure over many years. Also, at a time when the profession was being told almost daily in the press of the superior effects to be attained by ensemble playing and subtle, sustained acting, Macready represented to some extent the older style disparagingly referred to as the "stars and sticks" system. No more succinct definition of this practice could be found than the following passage from the memoirs of actor Fred Belton:

Here I first met Macready. I was cast for Francoise, in Richelieu, in consequence of my youthful appearance. Macready was by nature pompous, mysterious, and very impulsive. He said, on my commencement, "keep your eye on me, sir." My speeches he interlarded with "great heaven", "ha," "ha, ha," "well, well," and a host of other interjections not indicated in my part. In the effort to retain the words during this interruption—he glaring and gesticulating all the time—my memory wandered. "Keep your eye on me, sir." The more I worked it up to "crescendo," the more he yelled—"Keep your eye on me, sir." At last, driven to desperation, and losing all patience, I blurted out, "Mr. Macready, it is quite enough to mind my words, not your eyes."

In contrast to Macready's situation, 1848 found Charles and
Ellen Kean newly arrived from a highly successful venture in America. Having avoided the London stage for over two years, they were now ready to fill the vacancy left by the departing Macready. Beyond the interest excited by the return of these popular artists, public expectation had been growing for months at the prospect of seeing the play which had acquired a transatlantic reputation as the Keans' primary acting vehicle during their tour. London crowded the little theatre in the Haymarket for many nights to see the Keans in Lovell's The Wife's Secret. Having long ago discovered the heightened effect of repose on stage, Charles Kean and his wife acted in a new quiet style and managed to invest this and other less well-written melodramas with qualities of something close to tragedy. Crowded, fashionable audiences, including a visit by Victoria and Albert, necessitated extending the first thirty-six night engagement to sixty nights.

On the advice of friends who had assessed the theatrical politics of 1848, the Keans wisely refrained from playing their Shakespearean roles. It was the politic, and, at the same time the gentlemanly thing to do. By avoiding a renewal of the antagonism Kean experienced every time he attempted Shakespeare on the London stage, the hostile Macready coterie kept relatively quiet during the season of 1848. Thus, in the fall, the Crown could act in favor of the Keans without seeming to fly in the face of the literary intelligentsia. Also, by declining to challenge his old rival at Shakespeare, where Macready claimed supremacy, Charles Kean seemed much more gentlemanly than in fact he was. The champion's drawing power had been for some time on the wane. On July 10, 1848, the Crown came to his aid by
consenting to command, a gesture for which the fading actor was so un republican as to thank God.8

Moving deliberately to avoid hostile outcries from Macready supporters, the Throne discreetly kept the appointment of Kean to the post of director of the court theatricals out of the press until Macready had left London for America.9 Thus, to the question, "Why Charles Kean?", the theatre profession cried: "Politics!", "Favoritism!", "Connections!" and they were right. Nevertheless, considered in light of the Throne's objectives, social attitudes and predispositions, the choice was judicious. In time, all but the most embittered anti-Keanites would come to this point of view.

The First Series of Performances

Choosing the Players

Directly following their royally patronized benefit at the Haymarket on July 6, 1848, the Keans departed for a tour of the provinces. The royal letter of appointment must have come within two days of their departure at most, because Kean wrote Webster of his good fortune before July 12th. Not knowing the Crown's intentions, Kean and Webster had apparently agreed that if possible, Haymarket actors would fill all the roles. On July 12th, Kean wrote to Webster from Liverpool, where he and his wife had been playing to "excellent houses in spite of the Races and the glorious weather."10 He discussed several new comedies which had been proposed by Webster, then he informed the Haymarket manager of the latest developments concerning the coming theatricals:

... I had another and more explicit letter from Colonel Phipps.
They seem bent most determinedly on having actors from the Lyceum as well as Haymarket. The performances to commence after Xmas next once a week for six weeks.

I should like to see you on the subject again as we pass through Town on Saturday week if you can make it convenient so to do. It certainly will not do to let the matter fall to the ground. Let me hear from you.  

Though no record was found of their conversation in London on 18 July, it was undoubtedly concluded at that time that the Keans would move to capitalize on their fortuitous new position. They made an unprecedented move by joining a theatrical company. In addition to family considerations such as the declining health of Kean's mother as a reason for staying in London, the affiliation of the two stars with Webster's Haymarket company was to be mutually beneficial. The new director of her Majesty's private theatricals needed the resources of the best London company, if he were to succeed in his formidable task. By becoming an integral part of the Haymarket acting company instead of a guest star, the esprit de corps necessary to ensemble acting would be possible. Since three of the five productions were, eventually, supported almost entirely by Haymarket talent, rehearsal would be facilitated as well. Rehearsals could take place on the Haymarket stage, just as they would later take place on the Princess's stage.  

Kean was also able to draw freely on the Haymarket wardrobe for the careful costuming with which he dressed each production.  

These advantages proved to be more than offset, however, by the difficult diplomatic venture into "enemy territory" to fill the non-Haymarket roles. Among other things, antagonistic fellow actors were sure that Kean had personally chosen the court plays in order to monopolize all the best starring roles. In fact, the five bills of plays
were selected by her Majesty and Prince Albert first, then consultation with their director took place. They chose to see (1) The Merchant of Venice, starring Kean as Shylock and Mrs. Kean as Portia; (2) a double bill, Used Up, starring Charles Mathews of the Lyceum Theatre, and Box and Cox, starring retired comedian J. B. Buckstone; (3) Hamlet, starring Kean with Mrs. Kean as Ophelia; (4) the German melodrama by Kotzebue The Stranger, with the Keans and concluding with a farce Twice Killed; and (5) another double comedy bill, The Housekeeper, with the Keans and Sweethearts and Wives employing Adelphi Theatre talent. With the exception of Kotzebue, all were written by English playwrights.  

That three and one half of the five performances starred the Keans should have come as a surprise to no one, especially the theatre profession, since they would be fully cognizant of the royal patronage Kean had enjoyed since Victoria's accession. Even the most casual glance at the guest list for the court performances (published in the Times's Court Circular), would have revealed that the best English Society and an impressive number of foreign royal families were in attendance. Victoria and Albert would have wished to assemble the very best talent in England for such an occasion. In the Crown's estimation, Charles Kean was the best tragedian in the realm. Consequently, it was a matter of choosing plays which, first, Victoria and Albert wished to see; second, plays which would allow Charles Kean to do his very best work as an actor; and third, dramatic works which would provide a variety of entertainment with a heavy emphasis on native playwrights. As would be the case in the succeeding years, Kean traveled to Osborne
in October to meet with Prince Albert and discover what plays her Majesty wished especially to see. Among the initial selections made by the Crown was King Lear. Letter correspondence reveals that after Kean had begun to experience difficulties filling the major roles, the Prince authorized a change from King Lear to The Merchant of Venice.

In the diplomatic matter of engaging players, Kean was, understandably, confronted by a number of private controversies arising from rival players who considered themselves either unjustly excluded or disadvantageously placed. A representative sample of Kean's difficulties reveals the antagonism confronting him and the cool diplomacy he used to deal with it. James R. Anderson, it should be recalled, was a loyal Macready supporter.

"Garrick Club
"King Street
"Covent Garden
"London August 30, 1848

"Dear Sir,

"I have reflected upon the subject of our late conversation, namely; the proposed private theatricals at Windsor Castle, and beg to inform you, that I must decline lending my service on the occasion.

"I have arrived at this conclusion, from a conviction that the proposed plan is, in no way calculated to accomplish good to the profession in general, - on the contrary, will materially injure its interests, more especially by causing the Royal attention to be withdrawn from the Public theatre, (the Actors' proper sphere of action, and only hope of livelihood) to be directed to the cold, and formal efforts of a private exhibition - and afford no other benefit to the stage, than slightly flattering the amour-propre of an individual member of it.

"I cannot conclude without remarking that, I conceive it must be a source of general regret that, those who have been honored by being consulted with respect to this affair, should have been the means of causing Her Gracious Majesty's most generous intentions
to be so woefully misapplied.

"I have the honor to remain
"Dear Sir,
"Your obedient Servant
"J. R. Anderson

to Charles Kean, Esq. 15

Kean's icy reply must be quoted in full to be appreciated:

"To J. R. Anderson, Esq.
"Garrick Club
"September 1, 1848

"Dear Sir,

"I have to acknowledge the receipt this day of your letter, dated yesterday, informing me that you refuse to lend your professional services at the private theatricals at Windsor Castle next Xmas. I must regret, that under the circumstances, there should be any impediment, however slight, to the general arrangements, and that your objections should be couched in a tone that may not be considered altogether courteous. It is not for one to trouble you with a lengthened reply to your gratuitous criticisms upon the intentions of Royalty, but I may be permitted to observe that you are under an erroneous impression in supposing that these exhibitions will have the effect of "withdrawing the Royal attention from the Public theatre" as they are to take place at a season of the year, when the Court, as you well know, is always absent from London - a fact which renders it impossible that such representations can in any way interfere with whatever Patronage may be extended to the regular Drama! It affords me much pleasure to give you this opportunity of removing such fears when in your favor.

"I am happy to add that I have been led to believe the present intention is only the forerunner of greater benefit to the profession at large and may lead to most desirable results. It will be admitted I presume that her Majesty's right to enjoy private theatricals during her absence from the Metropolis is indisputable and cannot in any way injure the cause, but on the contrary, give it an impetus and fashion we all have at heart although it may occur that the amour-propre of some individual performers may well "be flattered" - I was sorry, as I told you, at the time we met, that it was not in my power then to offer you some other character besides Edmund in King Lear, and as it happens, that an alteration has already been made in the selection of plays, I might have had the satisfaction of proposing to you some more agreeable personation, but your objections as urged in your letter arising from no selfish motives, but upon
principle, I, of course, am unfortunately precluded from further negotiation with you on the subject.

"In reply to your concluding remarks, allow me to assure you that I have every reason to believe the idea of these performances emanated exclusively from her Majesty and Prince Albert, and that my influence directly or indirectly in regard to them has been in the nature of any interested party and therefore, there is no ground whatever for your imputation that the intentions of Royalty of which you can hardly be supposed to be very cognizant will as you impeccably express it, be "misapplied."

"I have the honor to be, Sir
"Yours obediently,
"Charles Kean"

"Keydell
"Horndean Hants 16"

According to Cole, Kean was to select actors indiscriminately according to their abilities and without reference to any particular theatre or individual interest. There is ample evidence in the correspondence held by the several museums that Kean was not free to choose the major talent like Anderson, although he exercised a relatively free hand in choosing actors to fill the minor roles. In answer to pressure from an influential nobleman, Kean insisted:

Mr. and Mrs. Wigan are attached to the Haymarket company and I have great respect for them both, but I have little power to offer to any one, as the pieces are selected and all the chief characters cast by his Royal Highness Prince Albert. 18

Further proof that royal wishes prevailed is found in three letters from comedian Buckstone. Her Majesty had seen him in Box and Cox and The Housekeeper on her first visit to the Lyceum, and she wished to see him repeat those roles at Windsor. His letters protested that they were beneath his dignity, but eventually capitulated to the royal request. 19

Kean labored against heavy odds during the fall of 1848, to fulfill his royal instructions which were, as he stated more than once in letters to his fellow actors on the subject:
... to avoid on this occasion, what His Royal Highness observed to be the usual drawback to the perfect representation of the British Drama, namely the filling of the minor characters by incompetent performers.  

Though he was later to be publicly labeled "the wet-nurse" to the British Drama, Kean fully shared the Crown's conviction that in addition to making English drama fashionable, English performers must be encouraged to achieve ensemble playing if they were to hold the public's lasting interest. In this belief, Victoria and Albert were of the same mind as many theatrical critics and journalists who had been pleading with the profession to abandon their fierce jealousies and work together. John Oxenford, writing in the Theatrical Times of December, 1847, affords a glimpse of the kind of performance the Crown was attempting to correct:

No single actor, how great soever he may be, can act single-handed. A good recitation (and such performances can amount to nothing else) is all very well in its way, but can it realize a single iota of the true dramatic spirit? While King Henry swaggerers through his palace like a "gent" born three centuries too soon, what avails it, if Cardinal Wolsey acts like a spiritual Prince? While Othello harrows the feelings of an audience, should Iago set them laughing? We humbly think not.

Royalty also had the pleasant experience of the smooth ensemble playing of the visiting French companies, a sharp contrast to the English "stars and sticks." During 1847 and 1848, the French plays had been competing successfully with Italian opera for royal and aristocratic patronage. Little did Victoria and Albert know, in 1848, that shortly Charles Kean's ensemble productions at the Princess's Theatre would be successfully competing with Italian opera and the French plays for royal favor and the rank and fashion of London.
Rehearsals

During the late fall of 1848, while the controversy raged over the Windsor theatricals, Ellen Kean played a succession of starring roles at the Haymarket in order to allow Charles to complete the preparations for their December 28 opening at the Castle. One of the most judicious actions Kean took after joining the Haymarket company was to hire George Ellis as his assistant director for the theatricals. Ellis had been an assistant prompter and minor actor under Macready's second regime at the patents. He had already proved to be a valued Kean employee in another capacity. When Kean went to America in 1845, he apparently intended to stage at the Park Theatre in New York, a whole series of recent Macready successes. He had commissioned Ellis to provide him the duplicates of Macready's promptbooks. Kean used a number of these promptbooks for Windsor productions, such as: *Merchant of Venice* (1848), *Julius Caesar* (1850), and *As You Like It* (1851). Though this surreptitious acquisition of another artist's material seems unscrupulous, it was a common practice. For example, John P. Kemble's original production of *The Winter's Tale* in 1802 was recorded in a promptbook which Kemble gave to his brother Charles for use in 1828. This same promptbook was obtained by Macready for his 1837 revival.

Moving from promptbook copyist to assistant director gave Ellis invaluable experience and relieved Kean of much of the practical business of managing the theatricals. In addition to such minutiae as hand-correcting typographical errors in the Queen's programs, he was the official keeper of the account books. Ellis also began
gaining experience as a director. Kean delegated to him the task of superintending rehearsals of the Windsor plays once they had been set by Kean. It was also his diplomatic mission to go to the other theatres to supervise rehearsals of plays not performed by Kean's company. In addition, Ellis was in charge of those productions performed by combination companies comprised of actors from many theatres. Thus, Charles Kean had not only his stage-wise wife to assist him, he had a third director in Ellis. That Ellis performed well is proved by Kean's making him solely responsible in later years for the lucrative Christmas pantomimes at the Princess's Theatre.

**Physical Staging**

The special staging of the Windsor Castle plays has, as I suggested above, (see page 98), a precedent in the 1846 choral reading performance of Charles Kemble. He performed before the Queen and Court on a specially constructed stage in the Picture Gallery of Buckingham Palace. By piecing together a number of sources, a rather complete picture of the specially constructed stage in the Rubens Picture Gallery of Windsor Castle can be developed. Thomas Grieve, whose work in the nineteenth-century London theatre is well known, was, in 1848, employed at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, as a scenic artist. He was commissioned by Kean, with royal approval, to superintend the entire scenic effects ensemble for the theatricals. In mid-October, after gaining Kean's approval of his complete scale model, Grieve submitted it to Prince Albert at Windsor Castle. While there, he also arranged for the dressing rooms to be used by the performers. Upon the Prince's approval, Grieve proposed the following
Fig. 3.—Engraving, Kotzebue's *The Stranger*, as performed for Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the royal children and guests, Ruben's Room, Windsor Castle, 1849. From Chapman's *The Court Theatre and Royal Dramatic Record*, 1849.
"October 18, 1848

"Estimate of the proposed Theatre for Windsor Castle

"Timber for Stage & Frame
work to suspend Scenery £ 50.14.0

"Labour in constructing
the above 75. 0.0

"Nails, Screws, Etc.
5. 0.0

"Frames & Canvas for
Proscenium & Stage doors 15. 0.0

"Decorating the above 25. 0.0

"Painting & designing 8
Scenes (as per list) 120. 0.0

"Rollers, Battens, Canvas,
Rope & Pullies for the above 50. 0.0

"Painting 16 Wings 20. 0.0

"Canvas & Frames for above 16. 0.0

£ 376.14.027

Mr. D. Sloman, machinist for Her Majesty’s Theatre, was employed to construct the full scale stage and scenery. In the paint room of Her Majesty’s on November 7, Sloman began working on the special stage. It was built entirely of timber so designed and mortised that it could be assembled and struck easily. More importantly, it could be erected in place in the Rubens Room without a single nail being required to fasten any part, either to the flooring or to the walls of the beautifully ornate chamber.28 Having no wing space available for shutter and groove changes, the scenic drops were wound on rollers hung above the stage. They were turned by windlasses fixed in the flies. Two nests of wings provided three entrances on each side of
Fig. 4.—Engraving, Charles Kean as Hamlet, George Vandenhoff as the Ghost, as viewed from the Queen's dais, Ruben's Room, Windsor Castle, 1849. From Chapman's *The Court Theatre and Royal Dramatic Record*, 1849.
the stage, plus the two downstage doors in the proscenium frame. The curtain, of silk velvet, was drawn up in the same manner as were the drops. The stage occupied nearly half the room. It was twenty-four feet wide by thirty-four feet deep and three feet high. The footlights were oil lamps shaded to cast their illumination upstage. The wings and flies were also lighted with oil lamps.29

There was even a recent and significant precedent for the construction and arrangement of the seating for Victoria, Albert and their guests. For the command performance of The Huguenots in late July, 1848, the management of the Royal Italian Opera had seen fit to construct a special royal box in the continental style. For the first time, the royal box was placed at the center of the dress circle instead of the traditional English position at the side of the house. Placed in the Duke's seat of Italian Renaissance fame, the royal guests were given the best seats they had ever had for a full view of the stage and the best position for hearing the music.30 Thomas Grieve, who had, with Telbin, painted the scenery for The Huguenots designed a similar continental seating arrangement for the Windsor plays. There was no orchestra to obstruct the view. Her Majesty's private band was stationed in the vaulted chamber on the right of the audience, while on the opposite side the State Antechamber was the area selected by Grieve for the reception of the performers. Two of the adjoining apartments were fitted up as dressing rooms. In the audience portion of the Rubens Room, as illustrated in figure , a dais approached by three steps was placed at the very center. Here, surrounded by their guests, sat Queen Victoria, her Royal Consort, her mother, the Duchess of Kent and
Fig. 5.--Engraving, the Keans in Kotzebue's *The Stranger*, Ruben's Room, Windsor Castle, 1849. From Chapman's *The Court Theatre and Royal Dramatic Record*, 1849.
special guests, with the royal children seated on the steps at their feet. 31

**Performance Activities**

In forming a complete description of the total performance activities, old actor Fred Belton's recollection of his several trips to Windsor is colorful and succinct:

... The arrangements were complete; a first-class ticket was placed in your hand for Windsor by train, and, on arrival, private carriages were waiting to take you to the palace. On entering the castle you presented your ticket, and were passed on to where servants in livery were ready to offer you all kinds of refreshments, intoxicating liquors alone excepted; you then proceeded to your dressing-room, duly arranged for your reception. 32

As the hour of eight approached, the actors took their positions in the wings, and the honored guests took their places for the ceremony of the Queen's entrance:

Three chairs were placed on the dais, her Majesty's a little in advance. All stood until the Queen was seated, who, after sitting, turned to her mother and husband and motioned them to advance their chairs to a level with hers. The beautiful Duchess of Sutherland and other ladies-in-waiting stood during the performance. The invited guests ranged on each side... 33

Punctually the curtain rose at eight o'clock and the play proceeded. The *Times* reported: "The courtly assembly seems to have laid aside that frigidity which is usually the characteristic of private theatricals, and to have applauded with the zeal of a money-paying public..." In his Royal Dramatic Record, Chapman insists that the players enjoyed warm, spontaneous applause, but actor James Anderson stated that when he played Windsor in 1850, "the applause was trifling, and only permitted to be indulged in when royalty let it." 34 Perhaps Anderson's bitterness at feeling obliged to play against his wishes hurt his performance. If so, the Queen may have led a little polite
applause out of kindness to the actor. At any rate, Belton's pre-performance activity is well corroborated by nine years of Ellis's carefully kept record of expenses. His memory of post-performance festivities is corroborated by letters from both Charles and Ellen Kean to friends and relatives. After the performance terminated, and the actors had dressed, Belton recalled: "... you were ushered into the supper-room, where every luxury awaited you; wine flowed plentifully, and mirth, wisely chastened, abounded."

Actor Belton had occasion, at Windsor Castle, to play the most important role of his entire career, short-lived though it turned out to be:

On one occasion, after playing Tom Hayday in the Prisoner of War, I had dressed quickly, and wanted to look about. I ascended the stage from my dressing-room, and found no one about. A sudden impulse seize me. The dais on which her Majesty, Prince Albert, and the Duchess of Kent sat was before me; in a moment I jumped over the orchestra, ran lightly up the steps of the dais, seating myself in her Majesty's chair, and throwing my legs out thoroughly at my ease, exclaimed in a loud voice, "Now I am King of England!" Suddenly a side door opened, and the then Colonel Phipps, with horror depicted on his countenance, exclaimed, "Do you know, sir, where you are?" "Very well," I said; "in her Majesty's seat." "Come down, sir, come down; you ought to be ashamed of yourself." "What for?" I said. "No one, sir, is ever permitted to sit on any chair her Majesty has once sat upon." I descended, somewhat crestfallen at the enormity of my sin, reflecting what a vast quantity of useless chairs there must be in the palace if her Majesty was not particular where she sat.35

This fairly detailed picture of the staging and performance accommodations for audience and players did not vary appreciably during the entire period of Windsor Castle Theatricals from 1848 to 1861.36

Financing

Impulsive, "disrespectful" behavior like Belton's tended to reinforce the aristocracy's opinion that players were, after all,
little more than the itinerant beggars and vagabonds they were in ancient times. When it came to the question of paying the players, Victoria's officials spent time, no doubt, going through the ancient, dusty records of the Revels Office in search of a royal precedent to guide them. No doubt they discovered that King Charles I had respected the players and had concerned himself about their welfare. He doubled their fee when court performance denied them the opportunity to play in their own theatre. Following this old and just precedent, Victoria's Keeper of the Privy Purse, Colonel Charles Phipps, duly allotted any manager whose theatre was closed for the purpose of playing at Windsor the sum of 120 pounds out of which the manager was to pay each player double his nightly salary. The remainder went into the manager's purse for expenses. On those occasions when actors from several companies formed the cast for a particular performance, leading players were given a standard fee of ten pounds, supporting players, five pounds and minor roles were filled for a proportionately smaller fee. Mr. Kean as director received ten pounds and Ellis five pounds for his assistance. When either of the Keans acted, they received the standard leading actor fee. Though the Court chose to follow an ancient and judicious precedent, their solution to the problem of paying blanket sums to companies and of paying flat fees for the services of individual players allowed for injustices which would become glaringly apparent in 1857, when just such a disparity led to Kean's downfall as director of the Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals.
Immediate Benefits to the Profession

Now that the Queen's theatricals have been described in specific detail, the beneficial results of this royal effort to aid the British drama must be examined. At this point, only those short-range effects occurring during the theatre season of 1849 will be considered.

The plays acted in the Rubens Room afforded a fertile topic of conversation, if the periodical press is any indication, both to those who followed Court life and to those who followed the life of the drama. The prophets of gloom predicted that royal patronage thus bestowed on private theatricals must lead to a desertion of the theatres, and, a separation in matters of amusement, of the people from the aristocracy. There was, after all, an historic precedent for just such an occurrence. In the last decade of the eighteenth century the great stars of the patent theatres were deserted by the aristocracy for the pleasure of watching noble amateurs perform at various noble estates. They were extolled by their peers and the press as outshining the professionals. If it happened once, it could happen again.

At the opposite extreme, the theatrical optimists saw in the revival of court theatricals with a Master of the Revels in service to a drama-minded Queen, a new Elizabethan age. The unique patronage would stimulate new and powerful British playwrights to contend vigorously for the honor of being performed at Court, just as in the lusty days of the Tudors. After all, Charles Kean had been led to believe that this first series of theatricals was just the beginning.
Though ultimate beneficial results must be examined only after a survey of the entire period of royal theatricals, decidedly improved fortunes for a few individuals can be identified after the first series of plays. The largest benefactor, Charles Kean, was heaped with honors. In addition to the spread of prestigious publicity and complimentary messages from her Majesty following each performance, on the occasion of his Hamlet, a special note of approbation occurred. The Queen had chosen this night to invite the rank and fashion of Dublin and Edinburgh to enjoy their favorite actor do his best role. Chapman reports that the audience was much more numerous than on former occasions and the assembled aristocracy "marked by their cheering approval the finest parts and passages." His noble friends, including Lord Morley and Lord Carlile told him afterward that the Queen said she had always heard that Hamlet was Kean's best character and she had never seen him act so well. Following the final performance in the series, Victoria presented through Colonel Phipps a handsome diamond ring, and, later in the evening, expressed her approval of his efforts in person. In a jubilant letter to his mother, Kean told of receiving the ring and that he had received word of his reappointment to the post of director of the theatricals.

After the news of the diamond and his reappointment, a revealing change of attitude became evident in several of the theatrical journals. For the entire year of 1848, periodic assessments of Kean had been harshly negative, rating him at best a second-rate actor. The day following the news of the diamond ring the *Theatrical Times* ran an article praising Kean as "our chief tragedian."
The writer even went so far as to plead for knighthood as a fitting honor to one whose efforts have benefitted native drama.\textsuperscript{41} The same kind of \textit{volte face} occurred in June when the caustic \textit{Stage Manager} began to find all the great acting qualities in C. Kean which the paper had formerly denied. Finally, in addition to royal and aristocratic patronage of the Keans' Haymarket performance during the season of 1849, the actor and manager was awarded still another token of high achievement. He was made chairman of the Annual General Theatrical Fund Dinner held in March.

Mr. Benjamin Webster was the second largest single benefactor from the Windsor theatricals. Though the Crown insisted on Lyceum and Adelphi talent too, Webster's company nevertheless filled well over two-thirds of the total roles available. No manager in London was more adept at taking full advantage of his opportunity. Using the prerogative initiated by the players of Queen Anne's day, Webster revived \textit{Merchant of Venice} three days after its court performance with the original cast. Though the Adelphi Theatre improved its box office by reviving \textit{Sweethearts and Wives} and the Lyceum Theatre played \textit{Used Up} to crowded houses after their Windsor productions, their monetary and prestige gains did not approach those of Webster's Theatre where \textit{Hamlet}, \textit{The Stranger} and \textit{Twice Killed} and even \textit{The Housekeeper} were revived with great success. Anyone walking down London streets, though but a casual observer, would have seen in the placards and newspaper headlines such announcements as "Theatricals at Windsor," "Mr. Charles Kean as Hamlet," "Crowded with Rank and Fashion --Series of Royal Entertainments," "The Same Casts as Performed at
Windsor Castle," all of which constituted free advertising for Webster. If, perhaps, he was one who followed the day to day activities of the Court, columns twelve to eighteen inches long describing each court theatrical would have pushed the new prominence of native drama into his consciousness. The Illustrated London News would have given him visual impressions from woodcuts purporting to be eye-witness delineations of the royal entertainments. Had he walked by the Haymarket Theatre doors, his eyes would have been drawn to flaming red playbills with royal arms and containing the name of some play "As Performed Before HER MAJESTY the QUEEN, His Royal Highness Prince Albert, The Royal Family and The Court at Windsor Castle." His curiosity aroused, by merely stepping around the corner to the nearest booksellers, our casual visitor could purchase a handsomely bound volume entitled: "The Royal Dramatic Performances at Windsor Castle, 1848-9," edited by Benjamin Webster. This collection of scripts as cut and acted at court included complete cast and guest lists printed on doilies, just as they were at Windsor. Manager Benjamin Webster was enjoying a most successful season of management.

Of special significance to Webster, Kean and the entire theatrical profession, her Majesty, Prince Albert and a royal suite visited the Lyceum Theatre for the very first time on their return to London. Days later, they patronized the revived Merchant of Venice at the Haymarket. These royal visits served to reinforce the idea that the plays acted at Court were the same that may be seen at the Lyceum and the Haymarket on any evening. The actors who played in the Rubens Room were the same English players who appeared nightly on the public
boards. The entertainment which ranked so highly at Windsor lost none of that honor when it was offered in the public theatre. The Queen was demonstrating publicly that the drama is respectable to anyone who was hesitant.

The newspapers dealing with theatrical matters all noted that the crowded state of the principal theatres seemed to indicate an awakened interest in native drama. Optimism concerning the drama's future ran high in the publishing business, too. No less than five new theatrical periodicals began publication between February 1849 and March 1850. All in all, the surge of interest and activity in the British theatre suggests that the Crown's efforts had been initially successful. Yet this flourishing condition was perhaps no more than what a succession of state visits to the principal English theatres would have accomplished. It is doubtful, however, that Charles Kean would, in the instance of state visits, have risen as he did. As the star of one or even a series of command performances, he would not have been thrust into the demanding managerial role in which the post of Director of her Majesty's Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals had placed him. In a very short time, Charles Kean was to consolidate his unique gains by entering into his significant commercial management at the Royal Princess's Theatre, Oxford Street.

Conclusions

This descriptive account of the inaugural series of royal Windsor Castle theatricals details more concrete information than has previously been offered in any single source. Using original materials such as relevant letter correspondence and the Ellis account records,
plus contemporary press articles and both written and iconographic evidence, I have examined British royalty's significant attempt to change the opinion of the middle and upper classes in regard to the national drama. From this analysis the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Though initially motivated more by political than aesthetic factors, the British Throne's effort to revive and elevate the national drama centered in a sincere and carefully planned series of private theatricals. In addition to being scheduled at a time in the year when they would be least likely to compete with public performances, the Windsor plays represented a distinctive new direction in royal theatre patronage. Society could not readily interpret this royal action as disinterested duty, such as state visits to the public theatres seem to imply.

The ensemble acting encouraged was intended to assure future aristocratic patronage after fashionable interest had exhausted itself. Besides creating a fashion for English dramatic performances, the conservative middle classes would be led by this mark of royal approbation to a new estimation of the theatre's respectability.

When the royal family visited London's playhouses to see for a second time the plays they had enjoyed in the privacy of their drawing-room, royalty's approbation was doubly clear.

2. Republican W. C. Macready was deliberately passed over just as he had been in 1837 when he requested a special mark of royal favor. However, Charles Kean's appointment as director of the royal theatricals represented more royal favor than had ever been accorded any British actor for theatrical achievement. The estimation in which the Crown
held Kean resulted in his playing a majority of the leading roles in the first season of plays. Though accused by unhappy rivals and critics of using his privileged position solely for self-aggrandizement, the evidence brought forward here tends to exonerate Kean and to substantiate Professor Watson's conclusion that such accusations were probably unfair.

3. No reliable evidence was found to ascertain completely the quality of the Windsor performances. However, the limited scenic possibilities, the enforced intimacy between audience and players, and the emphasis on ensemble acting may well have encouraged quieter, more realistically detailed performances than were typical on the public stages of the day.

4. At the major London theatres a flush of optimism and improved box office receipts were immediate results of the royal efforts to revive the drama. In terms of recognition and prestige, Charles Kean was by far the largest single benefactor, although monetarily, his manager, Benjamin Webster was the largest single benefactor.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III

1The Times, (London), January 26, 1849.

2See p. 40.


6Theatrical Times, January 22, 1848.


8W. C. Macready, Diaries, II, 395-96.

9Word had leaked to the press by August 24 that there were to be private theatricals at Windsor, and later, that a stage was being built, but nothing about Kean's appointment appeared until after Macready's September 9 departure for America.

10Letter from C. Kean to his mother, July 13, 1848, Kean Correspondence, Folger Library, Y.c. 393 (130).

11Letter from C. Kean to B. Webster, July 12, 1848, Kean Correspondence, Folger Library, Y.c. 393 (202).


14Benjamin Webster, (ed.), The Royal Dramatic Performances at Windsor Castle, (London: Mitchell's Royal Library, 1849), The Times Court Circular bulletin and Chapman's published record all listed the plays, the players and the guest lists.
15Letter from J. R. Anderson to C. Kean in Court Theatricals Box, Enthoven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.

16Letter from C. Kean to J. R. Anderson, Court Theatricals Box, Enthoven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.

17Cole, I, 347.

18Letter from C. Kean to un-named recipient, Kean Correspondence, Folger Library, Y.c. 393 (146).

19Three letters dated 17, 21 and 23 October, 1848, Court Theatricals Box, Enthoven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.

20Letter from C. Kean to Emmeline Montague in response to her refusal to perform at Windsor Castle, Kean Correspondence, Folger Library, Y.c. 393 (102).

21Theatrical Times, December 16, 1847.


23See Charles Shattuck, "Macready Promptbooks," Theatre Notebook, Vol. 16, 1961-62, pp. 7-10, and Ellis account records. As a preliminary study on Charles Kean I examined the Macready and Kean listings in Shattuck's The Shakespeare Promptbooks, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1965). I then made facsimile promptbooks of Kean's Tempest to compare it with Macready's promptbook of the play. Kean's staging was clearly a more dramatically imaginative elaboration of the staging which Macready had used.

24See this promptbook with identifying markings for all three producers in the Maslin Collection, Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford, England.

25There are two extant duplicate account records. One of them, now in the Kean Collection, Folger Library records every performance date, play title, cast and company (down to prompter, call boy and dressers), the wages paid to each, and all the incidental expenses from December 28, 1848 to February 5, 1857. Attached to the inside back cover of this record is an itemized list of the monetary losses Kean sustained during his nine years as director of the theatricals. A second account record is an exact copy of the first, but carries the record forward through the two seasons of Ellis's own direction.

26The Times, July 21, 1848, review of premiere of The Huguenots.

27Letter from T. Grieve to C. Kean, October 18, 1848, Court Theatricals Box, Enthoven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.
28 Chapman, p. 38.

29 The Observer, December 16, 1848.

30 The Times, July 21, 1848.

31 Chapman, p. 40.

32 Belton, p. 156.

33 Belton, p. 158.

34 Anderson, p. 132.

35 Belton, pp. 160-61.

36 The Ellis record, a Macready Diary account of his single visit to play at Windsor in 1850, plus scattered bits of information found in various Kean letters indicate the consistency of the entire experience of playing at Windsor Castle.

37 See p. 23.

38 Nicoll, Late Eighteenth Century, pp. 19-22.

39 Chapman, p. 67.

40 Letter from Mrs. Ellen Kean to C. Kean's mother, January 12, 1849, Kean Correspondence, Folger Library, Y.c. 402 (16).

41 Theatrical Times, February 3, 1849.
CHAPTER IV

BRITISH ROYAL PATRONAGE:

THE SECOND DECADE: 1849-1859

The Royal Princess's Theatre

In March of 1853, at the time the bankrupt condition of Her Majesty's Theatre forced the auctioning of the theatre's properties, costumes and equipment, Charles Kean boasted:

"My dear Shirley

"A Box for Wednesday!! Why you could not get one for Wednesday week! We are crammed every night of Macbeth and last evening I am told by those in office, not less than a thousand people were turned from the doors. The Queen comes again to see it tomorrow and brings the Royal Children. She has also commanded King John for Tuesday next 8th and we are to give a juvenile night on Thursday 10th for the little Princes and Princesses, when the Pantomime is to begin at 8 o'clock.

"So you see we are the Royal Theatre, although you did omit that title in your direction to me . . ."

The triumphant manager was justified in boasting of the royal favor his theatre enjoyed. During the nine years of his tenure, Victoria, Albert and their children occupied the royal box at the Princess's Theatre more often than they patronized any other theatre, including the Royal Italian Opera at Covent Garden. (See table p. 161)

This final chapter will trace the relationship between Kean's pre-eminence on the London stage and royal patronage from 1849 to 1859. Kean's modern directorial techniques, ensemble playing, aesthetically pleasing pictorial groupings, attention to detail and thorough
rehearsal are well-known factors which contributed to his success. His long-run practice as a means of financing his lavish productions is well established by Threlkeld in his study of Kean's managerial practice. Two somewhat neglected factors, however, are Kean's antiquarianism and his theatre's respectability as they bear on his efforts to sustain middle and upper class patronage. These two factors will now be considered as part of the examination of royal patronage initiated by this study.

The Initial Promise of Success

In 1848, her Majesty had indicated to her Master of the Revels that the Windsor Castle plays would be only the forerunner of greater benefit to the profession. During the next two seasons, in addition to continuing the castle performances, Kean saw that the Queen deliberately extended her patronage to include for the first time, English performances in a minor theatre other than the Haymarket. It must have occurred to Kean and others that if the Vestris-Mathews regime could enjoy royal favor at the Lyceum, how much better might he fare in a theatre of his own. Also, in two seasons of plays at Windsor, Kean had realized how advantageous Webster's position as a theatre manager could be.

Inquiring in advance, no doubt, of the Queen's attitude through aristocratic acquaintances at Court, the Keans arranged with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Keeley to quit Webster's company and become co-lessee's of a rival theatre. Needless to say, a bitter coldness between Webster and his four leading players took place upon their becoming the new managers of the old Princess's Theatre in Oxford
One more antagonistic rival could not dampen the enthusiasm with which the two couples plotted their path to success, however. It was now in their hands to win the battle so tenaciously fought in 1848 by the theatre profession against royal and aristocratic patronage of foreign amusements. Not only were the Keans courted by the upper social circles, the new managers could count on aristocratic patronage stemming from the Keeley's social standing. According to theatre historian Errol Sherson, "The Keeleys were greatly respected in every class of society from the Queen to the humblest galleryite." Several leading newspapers contributed to the desired image of respectability in the new undertaking by such printed statements as the following:

The opening of this theatre under the joint administration of Mr. Kean and Mr. Keeley is an event of some mark in our theatre annals. They are eminent and favorite actors in widely different branches of the drama; they are men of intelligence and experience in affairs of the stage, of substantial character, and of unimpeachable honour and integrity. More ample qualifications for the duties they have undertaken could not be desired...

Well situated on the edge of a large, upper-middle-class neighborhood, the moderate sized but run-down and disreputable theatre they sub-leased from former manager J. M. Maddox for 3,500 pounds per year held unrealized potential. Unlike the Lyceum Theatre which had been fitted up with a royal box in 1837, when Balfe decided to try English opera (see 83), the heavy, dirty interior of the Princess's had never been graced with royalty's presence. The Princess's had never been fashionable in spite of the fact that almost all of the best players of the era had performed there at one time or another.

On the promise of Victoria and Albert's patronage, Kean and
Keeley made elaborate preparations for the future accommodations of the royal family and their suite. At that time rival manager James Anderson had taken Drury Lane and was complaining that "All the London theatres now were playing to as bad business as Drury Lane, only their expenses were nothing so heavy." He went on to exclaim that in the face of nightly losses at the Haymarket, the Adelphi and the other houses, Kean and Keeley had taken a lease at the Princess's. Though Anderson was sceptical, the co-lessees knew what they were doing. Along with cleaning and refurbishing the house to make it light and airy, they sacrificed a considerable amount of valuable floor space to a royal entrance off Castle Street, a royal staircase leading to a spacious antechamber or retiring room with adjacent rest rooms and cloakroom as a fitting accompaniment to the main attraction of their newly decorated house--the royal box. (see figure 6) When in January of 1850 James Anderson gratefully received word that a private box would be retained by the Queen for his first Drury Lane management, he faced a refurbishing task comparable to that of building royal accommodations in the run-down Princess's Theatre. He described the losing investment as follows:

her Majesty would retain her former box, which was on the second tier and in the most dilapidated condition . . . I sent for Mr. Howard and made a contract with him to cleanse and re-paper the box with the handsomest materials, supply two regal armchairs and six others, sofas, footstools, satin curtains, turkey carpets, mirrors, candelabra, wax lights, and every necessary adjunct; also to furnish the retiring rooms with equal splendour, at a cost of 250 pounds . . . The rent for the box was to be 210 pounds for the year. 9

Unlike poor Anderson, whose efforts proved futile (though patronized by the Crown on three occasions, he lost his accumulated investment of 5,500 pounds in a short season of four months), the Princess's royal
Fig. 6. -- Ground plan of Dress Circle, Princess's Theatre, 1883, showing royal box, related space for royal accommodations. Courtesy Records Office, Greater London Council, Westminster Bridge Building, London, England.*

*Though plan post dates Kean's tenure, examination of three additional sets of plans showing major renovations all utilized same space for royal accommodations.
box provided immediate and most valuable publicity. The Standard, The Sun, and The Observer, among the daily papers took particular note of the Queen's accommodations on reviewing the opening production of Twelfth Night on September 28, 1850. Echoing praise of the co-lessee's respectability, The Sun noted the significance of the new box:

... It opened under the most favorable auspices; the names of Mr. Charles Kean and Mr. Keeley as managers afford a sufficient guarantee that nothing will be permitted either before or behind the curtain, which can be in the least offensive, either to public morals or to good taste, and Her Majesty has in this instance come forward as the especial patroness of the legitimate drama by taking a box for the season; the royal box is situated at the extreme end of the dress circle, and has been fitted up with great taste and elegance.¹⁰

Expressing the hopes of the managers, The Standard added: "The patronage of Royalty cannot fail to add a fashionable prestige to the efforts of the new management, and contribute to their reward."¹¹

To point up the inestimable value to theatre managers of royal patronage at this time, an incident involving Benjamin Webster may be useful. At about the same time (between April and July, 1850) that Kean and Keeley were sparing little expense to make their royal accommodations attractive, her Majesty decided that the royal box at the Haymarket was inconvenient. It was situated on the second tier and could only be reached by ascending sixteen steps. Furthermore, it afforded "only a birds-eye view of the performers' heads." She requested certain alterations to which Webster objected. They were too costly. Victoria replied by making good her threat to relinquish her box altogether. This brought the repentant manager to his knees. He offered to devote the two best boxes in his theatre to
the purpose of a new royal box so constructed and situated that the Queen could arrive and remain incognito while seeing the whole stage and sit so that her face was exactly level with those of the performers. In addition, he offered to construct a new anteroom and royal passage in the most exquisite style. Her Majesty accepted. The Observer, from which this information was mainly derived, noted that the new royal box was the only novelty at the Haymarket worthy of note.12

Thus, both the Haymarket and the new Royal Princess's Theatre enticed the upper and middle classes with elegant visual testimonies to royalty's intended patronage. However, with the most outstanding company assembled in London in many years and with the added novelty of a new and highly respectable management, the Princess's began reaping the harvest of its decided advantages. Even before the Queen's return from Scotland, the press began to acknowledge the accomplishment of an important goal:

The house opened for the season on Saturday evening, and within five minutes after the doors were opened it was crowded in every part by one of the most respectable, most orderly, and most attentive audiences ever congregated together. All the notabilities of the literary or of the fashionable world at present in London were gathered together to celebrate the inauguration of the new "Royal Princess's Theatre".13

Lloyd's Weekly voiced essentially the same observation concerning the presence of London's aristocracy at the premiere of the new management.

The Successful First Season

The first season at the Princess's was long and lucrative. Commencing September 28, 1850, the Kean-Keeley company played continuously until October 17, 1851 and netted a profit of 7,000 pounds.
That London season was memorable for many people. To the world at large, it was the year of the first great international trade fair. To England, Prince Albert's triumph, the Great Exhibition, symbolized the unification of a torn and disrupted country. The wave of patriotism and camaraderie was so great that Englishmen were actually seen shaking hands with strangers and weeping openly. To Victoria, who attended daily for months, the Great Exhibition represented the final vindication of her German Prince after years of unveiled hostility from many of her subjects. Her joy and the nation's were reflected in the most brilliant social season since her accession. State balls, drawing rooms, concerts and theatre visits, with foreign royalty everywhere bedazzled onlookers and filled the coffers of the tradesmen. It was on the basis of such expectations that Anderson had taken Drury Lane, but he failed miserably. He summed up his narrative of his two seasons at the Lane as follows: "... so, putting all things together, my calculation is that the foolish idea that the Great Exhibition would turn out an El Dorado for Drury Lane and myself cost me over 20,000 pounds." Sadly, for Anderson and his company, their resources and knowledge were unequal to meeting the newly developing taste for authenticity in costume, decor and acting—the new move toward greater realism on the stage. The Court Journal made quite plain a major cause for the Lane's failure: "While referring to this theatre, we really feel called upon to point attention to the utter disregard to taste which prevails ..." The writer then points to the total incongruity in use of color, furniture styles and overall decor. He takes the leading lady to task for the inappropriateness of her single ball gown for scenes taking place at different hours of the day and night,
indoors and out. Finally, he points to the utter lack of verisimilitude in the costumes of Mssrs. Anderson and Cooper. "Their faults arise from a want of knowledge of a gentleman's usual appearance." He ends on this angry note: "Why in heaven will not men who are placed upon the stage to give us a representation of life as it is look around them, and take a lesson in the school of nature from living, real folks, who walk and live around them?"16

At the Princess's, where authentic dress and decor had been a concern of Charles Kean's for many years, the company enjoyed being as much a part of that gala 1851 London social season as did the Italian Opera or the French players. Her Majesty honored the Kean-Keeley establishment on six occasions. This figure exceeded the royal patronage given any English company in a single season since Victoria came to the throne.

Royal Patronage: The Public Theatres

The inaugural season was representative, in terms of royal visits, of the whole tenure of Kean's management at the Princess's Theatre. The table shown on page 161, representing the Crown's theatre-going between February and July of each year from 1848 to 1859 indicates the regularity with which her Majesty and her family visited the Oxford Street theatre. The task of discovering the Crown's exact movements was made easier because of the brevity of the royal family's stay in London each year. Somewhat paradoxically, in 1848, when England's theatrical profession was winning the attention of royalty to their cause by revolutionary tactics, the revolutions at home and abroad drove the exhausted Prince and England's queen northward to
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Scotland where they discovered Balmoral. They returned thereafter for longer periods of time each year, thus limiting the possibility for theatre patronage of the London stage. Biographer Lee estimated that Victoria spent almost seven years all told in Scotland. As a consequence of their love for Balmoral, Osborne on the Isle of Wight and Windsor Castle, royal theatre visits occurred only during the few months of their London residence.

Although consideration of the social and political events of the "hungry forties" had proven to be valuable in understanding the Queen's patronage in 1848, an examination of the social and political events occurring in England between 1849 and 1859 revealed few important correlations between royal theatregoing and national events. Those few national events which did effect royal patronage will be considered next.

A significant factor favorably affecting royalty's patronage of the legitimate stage, undoubtedly, was the decline of opera in England. Her Majesty's Theatre, the international showplace of the aristocracy since Regency days was forced to close its doors in 1852. Italian opera at Covent Garden, begun in 1847, had sole possession of the field until the Garden burned in 1856. At that time the company struggled to maintain itself by shifting to the Lyceum Theatre. However, the opera was in constant financial difficulties. The abrupt increase in royal patronage of Covent Garden in 1855 suggests a royal gesture to a failing management. The surge of royal visits to the St. James Theatre in 1853 was a consequence of an experiment in German drama which interested the royal family. Partially as a consequence of
Alfred Wigan's company's successful performance at Windsor, his Olympic Theatre began to enjoy royal visits. Wigan's involvement in the "Poor Box Scandal" of 1857 cost him the Queen's patronage. The drop in patronage at the Princess's Theatre during Kean's last two years seems also to have been a result of the scandal and will be examined subsequently in some detail. Finally, in 1855 and 1856, during the black Crimean War, the royal family sought light entertainment more frequently than ever before, as a source of relief from the depressing duty of visiting the sick and wounded.

Several factors not shown in the table suggest the genuine interest Kean's productions held for royalty. First, Victoria, Albert and some portion of their family attended the thrilling melodrama of The Corsican Brothers on seven different occasions. Second, the Queen, the Prince and some or all of their nine children attended each of Kean's major revivals at least three and often four or more times. Five of these revivals had been previously viewed by the entire royal family at Windsor Castle only weeks prior to their Princess's opening. Actor Fred Belton's recollections afford a glimpse into the Princess's Theatre immediately following a successful production. Mrs. Belton, seated in the crowded house, was moved to tears by the sight of Prince Albert enthusiastically leaning out of the royal box to lead the applause for her husband. 18

As indicated by the facts of royalty's patronage of his theatre from 1852 to 1859, Kean could with pride call the Princess's Theatre "the Royal Theatre."
Royal Patronage: The Private Theatricals

In addition to the Crown's public patronage at the Oxford Street theatre, a second major source of royal encouragement to Kean and his ambitions was his continuing appointment as director of the Windsor plays during all but the last two years of his managerial reign. One of the major impulses for this study was the desire to test the conclusion drawn by Professor Watson concerning Kean's management of the theatricals. He concludes:

A man of Kean's personal unpopularity with critics and ambitious dramatists was of course maligned and misrepresented. The Queen had stipulated especially that in his work as Master of the Revels at Windsor, he was to stage the plays chosen with careful regard for the appropriateness of characters, and, to this end, was to draw upon all the London companies. Although bitter jealousies were thus stirred, and although Kean was repeatedly blamed for binging himself and his wife, and his company, unduly before his royal patrons, I have discovered nothing to confirm the truth of these charges. Although there might often be differences of opinion as to his choice, it does not appear that he deliberately betrayed his high trust, either before the court, or before the more interested auditory, his public.19

Based on ample evidence contained in letters between Kean and rival performers concerning the first series of castle performances, I concluded (see page 130) that Kean had little personal choice in either the selection of plays or in the choice of leading players. However, as the years passed and royal interest turned to more pressing affairs, Kean was given greater responsibility for selecting both plays and players. In 1851, Kean wrote to his ward, Patty Chapman. Among other personal bits of news, he discussed the guiding preoccupation of his life, the theatre.

... The Houses at the Princess's continue excellent ... Mrs. Keeley is as unamiable as ever and Keeley as small.
Col. Phipps was in the Queen's box last night (12th Night) and sent for me during the Performance. The Queen goes to Scotland almost immediately and on her return the Windsor theatricals will be settled. Each year they become more difficult to arrange and I scarcely know what to propose this time.  

This statement might be discounted as the boasting of an older man to an attractive young lady if it were not corroborated by correspondence between Kean and Phipps, the Queen's Keeper of the Privy Purse. An example from one of three letters concerning Kean's responsibility for choosing the playbill dated 10 September 1856 reads:

> With regard to Plays at Windsor, I am afraid each year renders the selection more difficult and I find it almost impossible to think of pieces which might be suggested for the purpose. However, I will do my best and communicate further with you at your convenience.  

Kean's suggestions were, of course, subject to royal approval. Yet, the fact that twenty of the thirty-five performances which took place during Kean's tenure as director were performed by the Princess's company suggests that he took full advantage of his privileged position.  

It must remain a matter of subjective opinion whether Kean "betrayed his high trust" by bringing himself, his wife, and his company before royalty over fifty percent of the time. The Crown had charged him with staging careful ensemble productions at Windsor with the aim of stimulating improved English performances generally and with the aim of assuring the finest possible productions for their royal guests. At first, this goal seemed best pursued by drawing together outstanding actors from all of London's theatres. When, however, in the fall of 1850, Kean put together a stronger company than had been
seen for many years, and, when the Princess's company demonstrated the ensemble production polish at which the Windsor plays had been aimed, the Crown was satisfied to entertain their holiday guests from that time forward with Kean's plays whenever he had new ones to offer.

As the Ellis records show, combination companies were used less and less. When the Princess's company did not perform, the Lyceum, the Adelphi or the Olympic company usually assumed total responsibility for an evening of plays. This suggests that other companies had begun to achieve a degree of ensemble acting satisfactory to their royal hosts. This possibility is substantiated by the evidence of royal visits to these theatres shown in the table, p.161.

Whether or not this evolution toward a more realistic, integrated style began at this time, English performers certainly felt that they were as worthy of playing before their Queen as Kean's company. To them, to many who looked to the good of the profession as a whole, and to Kean's outright enemies, London's leading actor-manager was definitely exploiting his privileged position by playing so often at Windsor.

The freedom with which Kean could offer his own or another company's productions at Windsor was a decided advantage to his management. If the timing of his latest revival coincided with the upcoming Windsor performance calendar, he could mention this fact advantageously to Prince Albert at their annual fall planning meeting. If Kean were entirely too busy to bother with the castle plays, as was the case in the winter of 1853-54, when he was preparing Richard III, he turned the series entirely over to rival managers and gave George
Ellis the task of superintending. Phelps at Sadler's Wells, Vestris and Mathews at the Lyceum and Wigan at the Olympic enjoyed their first entirely non-Princess's season at Windsor.

Public Patronage and Respectability

In addition to royal theatre visits and the Windsor directorship, there was another less discernible factor in Kean's long successful effort at the Princess's: the national preoccupation with respectability. Almost from the day of her marriage to Prince Albert, Victoria's biographers credit the Crown with ever growing ties with the middle classes.

Respectability in the Theatre

The Throne needed and actively courted middle-class support, and so did Charles Kean. To the angry correspondent in the Theatrical Times who demanded:

What avails it that a father take his son to listen to the moral sentiments of Shakespeare if the youth's eyes are to be diverted from the stage by the meretricious deportment of shameless impudence? Besides the trampling to and fro distract attention, and oftentimes render what is spoken on the stage inaudible.23

Kean would most confidently have replied: "Come to the Princess's Theatre, where no such odious distractions will keep you from witnessing Shakespeare's great moral truths embodied in the most historically accurate illustrations ever afforded the eye of man." Opposition of the clergy is often listed as one of the causes for dramatic failure in the nineteenth century. Kean's success in overcoming such objections is shown in a reply he gave a lady who had objected to a speech in Midsummer Night's Dream which she took to be a parody of a scriptural
passage. He thanked her graciously for drawing his attention to the offending speech and went on to say:

It has ever been my object to avoid giving the slightest offense to any party on subjects of religious feeling...

In consideration of your objection I gave immediate instructions that for the future the words should be omitted although I have not heard it urged by anyone else, including the numerous body of Clergymen who frequent the Princess's Theatre...

In regard to the several distractions objected to by the angry father, there is evidence to suggest that with both the modern director's concern for creating the right mood and with the managerial concern for making his house a model of propriety, Kean attempted to keep tight control of all factors which might adversely affect his audience. He undergirded the propriety of his theatre with a set of rules which made it costly for any employee to jeopardize either rehearsals or performance. A contract between Kean and his first violinist, Alfred Reynolds, dated August 22, 1854 found in the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford, England lists in addition to the usual contractual obligations, the rules to be observed by the members of the band belonging to the Princess's. Three statements will serve to illustrate Kean's general attitude and the conduct he expected of his employee:

Any member presenting himself in the orchestra in a state of intoxication or otherwise unfit for the proper execution of his duty will be liable to immediate dismissal, or forfeit a week's salary at the discretion of the manager. The same rule applies to impropriety of conduct in theatre, negligence, inattention or unbecoming language and demeanor to any person in authority.

Kean's concern for full audience attention on the play is shown in the list of general regulations:

4. No member of the band is to leave or enter the orchestra during the performance or in any way to interrupt the scene by
noise. Every member is at liberty to quit the orchestra (if not required to play during the act), the instant the curtain or act drop rises and to return to it as soon as it descends but at no other time.

5. If any music is to be played during the performance those engaged must not quit the orchestra while the act is in progress in which the said music is required without the special permission of the manager which must be previously obtained. He alone must judge if such a movement can take place without detriment to the scene.

A second contract between Kean and an actress dated August 21, 1857 found in the Folger Shakespeare Library includes an annexed set of rules in every way as strict for the acting company as for the musicians. Absence, tardiness, unpreparedness, smoking, intoxication and all of the vices players are prone to were subject to fine and often dismissal. Several of the rules afford a glimpse of the performance atmosphere Kean demanded:

Any person introducing any matter in their part or parts more than the language of the Author, without permission of the manager ........................................ 5s.

Any person Talking; Laughing, or in any way Interrupting the Business of the Stage .............................. 10s. 6d.

Any person Addressing the Audience, or replying to any of their observations, to forfeit ......................... 10s. 6d.

Any person engaged by the said Charles Kean, in any capacity whatever, using Obscene or Vulgar Language, or indulging in Unseemly or Low Conduct in the Theatre ................... 10s. 6d.

One half of a week's salary for swearing or a fine of one pound for appearing in costume at the front of the house were financial threats which could speak loudly to any underpaid player of that time.

Respectability and Antiquarianism

A well-known fact, often condescendingly noted is that Kean's archeologically correct revivals were given something of the dignity
Fig. 7.—Scene Design, Byron's Sardanapulus, "An Historical Illustration Based on Layard's Excavations on the Site of Ancient Nineveh," Princess's Theatre, 1853. Courtesy Mr. George Nash, Enthoven Collection, Prints and Documents Room, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.
(and stuffiness) of the British Museum. However, he is not usually credited with using this pedantic antiquarian approach as a means of winning to his theatre a large portion of the public formerly reluctant to enter a theatre for moral and religious reasons. Threlkeld echoes the predominant conclusion that Kean lured the "jaded London public" into his theatre by giving them bigger and better spectacle more carefully mounted than they had ever seen before. Kean also successfully judged the middle class need to rationalize their pursuit of pleasure by seeking educationally uplifting entertainment at "safe" or respectable theatres. Kean made his Princess's Theatre and his productions meet such contemporary middle class requirements.

Trevelyan, G. M. Young and other social historians of the period have made clear the fact that there was in England at mid-century a demand for knowledge stemming from the growth of national education and from the growing need for leadership in an expanding British Empire. This spirit of inquiry, creating in 1849 a greater demand for books on history and geography than for fiction, led to what has been called Applied Literature and Art. Both had to embody a moral or an educational purpose to be approved. Prince Albert's grand scheme for the Great Exhibition of 1851 epitomized his and the nation's zeal for educational usefulness. The periodical press of the time amply illustrated that modern art and science had extended itself for the edification and delight of the middle and upper-middle class English family by their frequent articles on the educational amusements available in the metropolis. After discussing Society's pursuit of
pleasure at the opera, the clubs, the gambling and sporting houses, the cider cellars and other upper class delights, John W. Dodds in his *Age of Paradox* asks: "Was there nothing instructive as well as amusing in London, to which a man might take his wife and daughters? A great deal."²⁶ Dodds goes on to list such clearly educational offerings as the Zoological Gardens, the Polytechnic Institute in Regent Street and the Egyptian Saloon in the British Museum, all of which were patronized by the royal family and the Court from time to time.²⁷ Though middle and upper-middle class family entertainment included an occasional trip to the opera, a concert or an art exhibit²⁸ most popular of all the middle class amusements were the cycloramas, panoramas, cosmoramas and dioramas daily trumpeted in the press. This class of amusements entertainingly instructed by acquainting the untravelled with historic events and distant places and the untutored with vividly illustrated current events. Patrons could, while being uplifted and delighted by "these beautiful specimens of the fine arts" have opportunity to meet "the elite of our nobility, and a host of company celebrated in the arts, in science, and in literature." (The preceding was extracted from several issues of the *Theatrical Journal*, a publication not given to "puffery"). In addition, during the forties, many reviews of the latest panoramic exhibit ended in the same manner that reviews of Italian opera ended, with a long list of notables in attendance. This added stamp of respectability served to lure those middle class "respectables" with upper class pretensions.

With a mixture of both personal and public motives in his antiquarian revivals, Charles Kean appealed not only to the aristocracy,
but also to this eager new public comprised of conservative middle
class families so willing to spend their money and their time at
edifying public amusements. Though he candidly admitted to his
friend Charles Phipps his fundamental motivation as being highly
personal, it is clear that he thought serving the cause of national
education would be the best means of achieving his personal goal:

I have a much higher object in view than the mere profit which
generally propels the managerial mind, for I cannot act in a
commercial spirit - I seek reputation - I look for fame - I
trust to establish a name, not as the mere reflection of a
parent's genius, but as emanating from myself, as having
achieved something by perseverance, zeal, and energy, towards
the elevation of an art of which I am proud - and which I believe
can, ought, and will be made a most valuable agent in national
instruction . . .

Of the many proofs that his revivals were intended to instruct
entertainingly, perhaps the best is his own farewell speech at the
conclusion of his management in 1859:

I have always entertained the conviction that when illustrating
the great plays of the greatest poet who ever wrote for the
advantage of man, historical accuracy might be so blended with
pictorial effect that instruction and amusement would go hand
in hand, and that more valuable and impressive would be the
lesson conveyed. In fact, I was anxious to make the theatre a
school as well as a recreation.

The middle classes were a new audience and they filled the
seats of the Princess's for many of the same reasons that they flocked
to the Crystal Palace or to Albert Smith's "Mont Blanc" lecture, they
would broaden their cultural education entertainingly and do so in a
theatre which was entirely respectable. Their Queen and her entire
family were often seen in the royal box. Their host, Charles Kean was
a gentleman of the highest morals, who would not tolerate improprieties
in his theatre. He was as meticulous in seeing to the proper conduct
of his employees as he was to the details of each new antique
masterpiece he mounted.

The "Poor Box Scandal" and the Plea for Knighthood

In considering the influence of royal patronage on the theatrical success of Charles Kean, I will conclude by examining only his aspirations toward that crowning glory of royal favor, knighthood, and the circumstances which led to his disappointment in that high hope.

Long after the notorious financial scandal which probably cost Kean his knighthood, he wrote to his daughter, Mary Kean warning her against the Wigans, a couple who had taken light comedy roles under his management in 1850:

... Don't believe in Mr. and Mrs. Wigan! They are snakes in the grass and have done your Father all the injury in their power--"Trust not." Bad people, very very bad.31

Wigan and his wife had been a frequent source of annoyance to Kean since his difficulties with them over the first series of Windsor plays.32 Later, as manager of a rival London company, Alfred Wigan was in a position to do Kean serious harm. In 1854, following their first appearance at Windsor, Wigan's company began to enjoy royal patronage. The Wigans were hosts to the royal family on twelve occasions during the Crimean War years of 1855 and 1856. During the Windsor series of 1855-56, Kean made the mistake which later gave his enemies their opportunity for revenge.

Irritated already by rumors that Kean was to be knighted, his rivals were further antagonized when the prominent manager arranged four of the five Windsor plays for his own company with nothing more than a royally requested guest appearance for ambitious Alfred Wigan.
Foolishly, Kean also indulged in a bit of sharp practice, duly noticed by Wigan. Following the established precedent, Kean billed the royal treasury one hundred and twenty pounds for each of two performances on evenings for which he had closed the Princess's. However, he had held morning performances on each of those two dates. If we consider that one hundred and twenty pounds did not begin to match the profit loss from closing Kean's expensive management for one night, this practice seems justified. When, however, in the following winter, Wigan exercised the same prerogative, Kean disallowed it. Though he later claimed it was a mistake, and paid Wigan for closing, asserting that he thought the morning performance constituted the Olympic Theatre's business for that day, angry reaction swept through the Olympic company and, quite probably through the entire theatrical profession.33

Whether led by his manager and Kean's enemies directly, or developed as the product of some emotion-charged drinking bout with his fellow utility actors, young Olympic Theatre actor Jimmy Rogers's subsequent action effectively disgraced Kean, the acting profession and even the Queen. Immediately after Kean's declining to pay Wigan for closing, an angry correspondence began between Phipps, the Court official in charge of payments, Kean and Wigan. In the midst of this battle of words, replete with charges and counter-charges, Rogers acted. In his memoirs, actor-manager John Coleman relates the incident of the "Poor Box Scandal" in his colorful way. Having played at Windsor in a slight farce called, appropriately enough, Hush Money for which he was payed thirteen shillings, four pence, Rogers presented himself next morning at the Lambeth Police Court:
"Please your Worship, with your permission, I wish to offer a small contribution to the poor-box.

"The Magistrate: Very good of you, I'm sure, Mr. Rogers. Kindly hand it over to the Clerk. The smallest contribution will be thankfully received. What's the amount?

"Rogers: Thirteen shillings and fourpence, your Worship.

"The Magistrate: Dear Me! That's a remarkable sum.

"Rogers: Still more remarkable how I came by it. That Californian sum, your Worship, is the amount which I received for acting before Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Prince Consort, and the rest of the Royal Family at Windsor last night. As I should not like to take too much advantage of Her Majesty's munificence, kindly put it down as the joint contribution of Her Majesty and her loyal subject, Jimmy Rogers.34

Admittedly, Rogers had personal cause to be angry. As a result of the payment regulations described in Chapter III, Rogers, as part of a company had been paid double his nightly salary, while a utility player from another company received the standard fee of three pounds for filling a role in a combination cast. Considering that this somewhat injudicious manner of payment had been in existence since the Windsor theatrical began, charges that Wigan was an accomplice to Rogers's deed seem reasonable.

Kean's enemies blew up the scandal to embarrassing proportions and in so doing, cast aspersions not only at Kean, but also at Charles Phipps, the Court official directly responsible, and, indirectly, at Victoria herself for allowing what appeared to be unscrupulous and corrupt use of funds from her own Privy Purse. Caught in the crossfire between Kean and Wigan which ran to a correspondence of more than twenty-two letters in less than a month and pained at the gleeful muckraking in which the press was indulging, Phipps exclaimed:

What a mess of Calumny and filth has been piled up on the false
found this man Rogers has chosen--God knows with what object--to lay! 35

The ultimate effects of the scandal were to become evident during the next twelve months. The Keans had been flattered in 1856 by rumors of knighthood and by her Majesty's request that they be photographed in costume for the royal archives. They were relieved during the 1857 season to note that although the Queen continued at least half her accustomed patronage of their theatre, she ceased to visit the Olympic altogether. Charles had been writing to his aristocratic friends regularly for the last several years reminding them of his contributions to art and education in England by his theatrical achievements. He hardly ever failed to complain of the injustice inherent in successful brewers, obscure foreign musicians, popular painters and unappreciative bridgebuilders being knighted while he languished "unspurred." All was to no avail.

In June of 1857, at the time Kean was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries for his historical research, Mrs. Kean took matters into her own hands. The Keans had heard that the rumored knighthood was to be deferred until after Kean retired from management. Using her aristocratic connections, Ellen Kean managed to get a long, inelegant letter pleading Kean's knighthood into the hands of Prime Minister Palmerston. She also wrote his wife Lady Palmerston, who granted the actress a personal interview. Fearing the interview had not been effective, Mrs. Kean wrote again. Royalty remained enigmatically silent for a time, then word came that all the rumors had been false. In desperation, Ellen Kean wrote a personal letter to Queen Victoria. After first begging forgiveness for her boldness, she began
Fig. 9.--Photograph, Charles and Ellen Kean in Costume for Much Ado About Nothing, 1859. Courtesy H. R. Forrest Collection, Shakespeare Library, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, England.
a long impassioned plea which ran to over six hundred words. Her excuse for writing was the alarming state of ill-health her husband was suffering. After entertaining hopes of knighthood, the news that all the reports had been false threw him into a state of deep depression, she claimed. Using her husband's favorite argument, she maintained:

While Statesmen and Philanthropists are striving incessantly to improve the education of the Masses, Mr. Kean has made the stage one of the first Scholastic teachers of the time. In this point of view, history cannot find a parallel to what he has accomplished.

She concluded by reminding Queen Victoria that knighthood could revive his spirits: "Your Majesty alone has the power of inspiring him with new energy, and of reviving in all its original fervor, his fading ambition." 

Little evidence has been found upon which to base a judgement regarding the Queen's attitude toward the "Poor Box Scandal" and the importuning request for knighthood. The change in Victoria's patronage of the Olympic has been noted. Scholars of this period, apparently unaware of Ellen Kean's urgent letters to the most influential personages in the kingdom, have concluded that the "Poor Box Scandal" was the motive behind the Crown's treatment of Kean in 1858.37

The facts concerning the Royal Princess's marriage and the blow Kean received at the Crown's arrangements for theatrical entertainments are well known. The royal choice of book-seller and sometime theatrical entrepreneur John Mitchell to manage the series of plays featured in the marriage festivities was a source of intense mortification to Charles Kean. Mitchell had taken the post as a
purely speculative enterprise, with no royal stipulations, other than that there was to be an English tragedy, an English farce, and English opera and an Italian opera as the bill of fare. When the Crown's manager offered Kean an engagement, the actor quite naturally refused to serve where he had previously reigned, though he made it quite clear that he was ready to act at the slightest sign that his services were desired by his Sovereign. Cole's eye-witness testimony, supported by letter correspondence between Mitchell and Kean verify that both Kean and the Crown's agent attempted to obtain some token indication that London's leading tragedian's presence was desired at the royal wedding festivities. Mitchell had two unsuccessful interviews with a high Court official and Kean began a correspondence with someone at Court (presumably Charles Phipps), but the results were so negative that Kean refused to allow Cole access to it. Considering Kean's several attempts to gain some indication that he was still in royal favor, there is little doubt that the Crown's decision was a deliberate slight rather than an unfortunate oversight.

A great popular outcry of protest sounded in the press against the Crown for allowing Mitchell to settle for Samuel Phelps as the representative of English tragic acting in that internationally attended celebration. On the night Phelps appeared as Macbeth at Her Majesty's Theatre, Kean appeared as Hamlet at the Princess's and a formidable demonstration occurred in token sympathy with him. No public acclaim could compensate, however, for the loss he felt. He was too ill to play for weeks afterward.

Following his retirement from management in 1859, Kean received an invitation to resume the direction of the Windsor plays,
Fig. 10.—Engraving, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry being presented to Queen Victoria after performing Becket at Windsor Castle, 1893. The Illustrated London News, 1893.
but pride and the knowledge that his secret hopes for knighthood had been frustrated prompted him to decline.\textsuperscript{40} To avoid the embarrassment of singling out another director from the profession, Victoria appointed William Bodham Donne, her official Examiner of Plays to serve as director. Donne, who knew nothing about theatrical administration called upon George Ellis to do the work for him.\textsuperscript{41} However, Prince Albert's death in 1861 brought all royal theatrical patronage to a sudden ending.

Perhaps it was fortunate that Kean's death in 1868 prevented him from ever seeing the tall, spare son of a Somerset grocer become the first actor to be honored with knighthood. Among the ironic parallels between Henry Irving and Charles Kean was the revival of the royal theatricals in 1889 with Irving and Ellen Terry playing \textit{The Merchant of Venice} before Queen Victoria, just as the Keans had done with such high hopes for the future in 1848.

Conclusions

Chapter IV has traced the relationship between Kean's leadership of the London stage and the factor of royal patronage as it affected his accomplishments. From this analysis the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. At the time Kean contemplated management, he enjoyed a distinct advantage over his rivals: noble and royal patronage. The incentive afforded by realizing that managers, not actors could gain more from the private theatricals and from increased royal patronage of their public theatres helped Kean decide on his own career in theatre management. In addition, the Queen's Master of the Revels probably obtained
his Sovereign's promise of support well in advance of his actual leasing of the Princess's Theatre. Considering the advantage he enjoyed and the steps Kean took to assure the patronage of the upper and middle classes, the inauguration of the Princess's Theatre management held more promise of success than any legitimate theatre venture at least since the abolition of the patent monopoly in 1843, perhaps earlier.

2. After the first series of Windsor plays, Victoria and Albert had indicated their intention to bestow further benefit upon the English stage. Although the decline of foreign opera and the emergence of Kean's distinctive theatre contributed to the decided shift in royal patronage from foreign to English performances, the Crown must also be given credit for sustaining their efforts to revive the stage during the period from 1849 to 1859.

3. During the nine years of Kean's management, the royal family occupied the royal box on fifty-eight occasions, more than they patronized any other theatre. Furthermore, in all but the first two years, the Princess's enjoyed more royal patronage per season than any other theatre. A follow-up visit to the Princess's after first seeing a particular play at Windsor could be interpreted either as part of the Crown's plan to revive the stage or as a desire to see the full scenic splendor which could only be suggested on the confining stage at Windsor. However, successive visits to a single production prove royalty's genuine interest in Kean's productions.

4. Kean's "illustrated history lessons" were, undoubtedly, enjoyed as a beautifully elaborate extension of the "picture-book" education Victoria had enjoyed as a child. Since the Queen chose to continue
this same educational technique with her own family, taking her children to the Princess's served this purpose very well. In addition, the well publicized presence of the royal children at Kean's productions was significant proof of his theatre's respectability.

5. The Crown's treatment of Kean upon the occasion of the Royal Princess's marriage in 1858 suggests that royalty was reacting strongly to some real or imagined insult. Though the "Poor Box Scandal" has always been identified as the single cause of the public insult to London's leading actor-manager, perhaps Mrs. Kean's little known efforts to secure knighthood for her husband also played a part. At any rate, the Crown's appointment of bookseller John Mitchell to supersede Kean in 1858 clearly indicated that Charles Kean would climb no higher in royal favor. His cherished dream of knighthood had been shattered.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER IV

1 Letter from C. Kean to "Shirley," March 1, 1853, Kean Correspondence, Folger, Y.c. 393 (186).

2 See Ohio State University dissertations by Wilson (1957), Threlkeld (1955), and Spanabel (1969) for recent verification of conclusions shared by Nicoll, Watson and others.

3 See page 129.


6 Daily News, September 30, 1850.

7 Musical Transcript, August 5, 1854 describes an attempt to auction the Princess's Theatre and gives financial particulars.


9 Anderson, p. 175.

10 The Sun, September 30, 1850.

11 The Standard, September 30, 1850.

12 The Observer, October 21, 1850.

13 The Sun, September 30, 1850.


15 Anderson, p. 177.

16 Court Journal, February 1, 1851.

17 Lee, p. 547.

18 Belton, p. 103.

20 Letter from C. Kean to Patty Chapman, August 4, 1851, Kean Correspondence, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

21 Letter from C. Kean to Charles Phipps, September 10, 1856, Kean Correspondence, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

22 Ellis's account records show twenty occasions between 1851 and 1858 on which Kean was paid 120 pounds, the standard fee for closing, plus ten pounds for directing and usually ten pounds each for him and his wife as leading actors.

23 *Theatrical Times*, March 20, 1850.

24 Letter from C. Kean to "Madam" October 25, 1856, Kean Correspondence, Folger, Y.C. 393 (249).


27 The Court Circular section of the Times faithfully listed every movement in and out of the palace, from daily carriage "airings" to patronage of all galleries, exhibits and entertainments for all members of the royal family, plus Court notables.


29 Letter from C. Kean to C. Phipps September 10, 1856, Kean Correspondence, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

30 The Times, August 30, 1859.


32 See page 130.

33 The first play of the 1856-1857 Windsor play series had been School for Scandal with an all-star cast comprised of the most prominent of Kean's enemies.

35 Letter from C. Phipps to A. Wigan February 15, 1857, one of twenty-two concerning the financial scandal, Enteloven Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.

36 Letter from Ellen Kean to Queen Victoria June 28, 1857, Kean Collection, Folger, Y.c. 402 (49).

37 Watson, Nicoll and Odeill, among others fail to mention the Kean's undercover campaign for knighthood, and like contemporary writers, Coleman, Sherson, C. Scott and others, they see the financial scandal as the cause for the appointment of John Mitchell in 1858.

38 Cole, II, 256-262.

39 Cole, II, 264.

40 Letter from C. Kean to C. Phipps November 8, 1859, Kean Correspondence, Folger, Y.c. 393 (173).

41 Letters from Donne to Kean, Kean Correspondence, Folger, Y.c. 788 (1-3).
CONCLUSIONS

British monarchs have been inextricably associated with the evolution of the theatre—for good or ill—since commercial theatre began in England. The two most enthusiastic, literate and influential royal theatregoers were Elizabeth I and Charles II. They contributed directly to two of England's outstanding accomplishments in theatre history: Shakespeare's dramaturgy and Restoration Comedy. Also, James I and Charles I helped to bring English staging from primitive to modern practice in a relative brief time. These achievements suggest that early monarchs ruling with almost absolute authority over a comparatively small populace could more easily influence English theatrical activity personally and directly. As the population grew and constitutional monarchy evolved, as theatrical activity expanded beyond the Court and the confines of London to the provinces, rulers had less and less direct effect on the evolution of the British stage.

When Victoria ascended the Throne in 1837, the realm was too large and complex and her Georgian relatives had been too little interested in the stage for the young Queen to have been able to exercise a strong, personal influence over dramatic affairs. Moreover, she was not equipped either by the age in which she lived, or the education which she received to stimulate a neo-Elizabethan renaissance of dramatic writing as predicted by theatre optimists in 1848.
Therefore, Victoria's ability was all the more notable since she was able to make as outstanding a contribution to the theatre as that of her most theatregoing royal predecessors. She was as enthusiastic a theatregoer as Elizabeth I and Charles II had been. Although during the first decade of her reign, her patronage of the legitimate theatre was no more distinctive than that of her grandfather, George III, her devotion to operatic theatre undoubtedly set a record for theatre attendance unexcelled before or since her reign. During the "hungry forties," while British subjects suffered great social and economic privation, royalty and the Court led the aristocracy to Her Majesty's with such frequency that the period is known as the most brilliant in the history of opera in England.

Examination of the conditions which led to the inauguration of the Windsor theatricals has revealed that national and international political events had conspired to make Victoria's throne less secure than it had ever been. At this time, 1848, bold protest by a portion of the theatrical profession ultimately secured the Throne's genuine interest and support. As in two earlier instances where political motives influenced an increase in patronage of the British stage, Victoria bowed to the justice of the protest that royalty unpatriotically patronized foreign amusements at the great expense of the British theatrical profession. Her Majesty responded by initiating private theatricals at her Windsor home and by commencing to favor British drama over foreign entertainments. Three major objectives for the private theatricals were: 1) to create a fashion for native drama by a distinctive new direction in royal theatregoing; 2) to encourage British players to adopt ensemble acting in order to assure
continued aristocratic patronage after fashionable interest had exhausted itself; and 3) to convince the reluctant middle classes of the theatre's respectability. In addition, Victoria and Albert intended to create a pleasurable winter holiday entertainment for their noble guests and relatives.

Popular and gentlemanly Charles Kean received a greater honor than had ever been accorded an actor in the history of British royal patronage of the stage by being appointed Director of her Majesty's Royal Windsor Castle Theatricals. The Crown's choice involved considerations dating back to Victoria's first year as queen and beyond. Kean's Eton education, his carefully cultivated aristocratic friendships, his political allegiance to the Crown, and even his fortuitous marriage to respectable Ellen Tree gave the actor a distinct advantage over his talented rival, William C. Macready. In 1838, the year of the Kean-Macready battle for pre-eminence on the London stage, Kean enjoyed a fashionable rage as a romantic idol of the Court and the upper social circles. Macready's older acting style and his overtly anti-royal sentiments were among the causes for the subtle antagonism which developed between the older actor and the proud young Queen. Kean's brief, but substantial victory over his rival was openly aided and abetted by Victoria, who was very favorably impressed with Kean's acting. Consequently, when the decision to appoint a director for the private theatricals arose in the late summer of 1848, her Majesty discreetly delayed making the Crown's choice public until after Macready had left for a farewell tour of America.

Since the first series of Windsor theatricals set an acceptable
pattern which was followed without appreciable alteration for the next eight years, a detailed description of the first series of productions has served to delineate the nature of all the Windsor performances. The concentration of written and iconographic materials used in describing the Queen's private entertainments has provided a fuller, more detailed account than has previously been offered in earlier studies. With a capacity of about sixty guests in the elegant Rubens room theatre, with a stage accommodating only minimum scenery and with the physical intimacy between audience and performers indicated in the engravings, the Windsor plays necessarily relied more upon realistic, detailed acting than was commonly seen in the public theatres at that time. Earlier, Macready had made great strides in the direction of historical accuracy in staging and costuming and pictorially significant directing practice. Charles Kean clearly built upon the foundation laid by his arch-rival both at Windsor and later in his productions at the Princess's Theatre.

The importance of the Windsor theatricals to British stage history is closely associated with Charles Kean's emergence in the 1850's as London's leading actor-manager. Though his appointment in 1848 caused rival professionals to accuse him of using his privileged position solely for self-aggrandizement, he was, in fact, not initially in a position to take unfair advantage of his post, even if he had wished to do so. In later years, when Victoria and Albert turned their attention to more pressing matters, Kean became largely responsible for selecting both plays and players. That his company appeared more frequently than any other suggests that the Windsor appointment was used to particular advantage by Kean. Often, Kean's new productions
were given preview performances at Windsor Castle, a circumstance which provided them with special publicity and prestige. Yet, to all but his enemies, Kean's productions were the finest available, so it was quite natural that they played most often for the private enjoyment of the Queen and her holiday guests. The managerial experience afforded by directing two seasons of Windsor plays combined with assurances of his continued tenure and the realization that Victoria had begun to favor the theatres of his rivals to encourage Kean to embark upon commercial management himself. Venturing cautiously at first, with the support of a co-manager, Kean and partner Robert Keeley gathered together the largest concentration of London talent since Macready managed the patent theatres. With Victoria, Albert and the royal children frequently in the royal box to help turn the tide, Charles Kean made the first significant long-term gain in the effort by every metropolitan manager in the early nineteenth century to win back the aristocracy and the more critically minded of the general public to the legitimate drama. Kean also numbered among his regular patrons a sizable portion of the populace who for moral and religious reasons previously had abstained from theatricals altogether. They came to the Princess's as they might visit the British Museum, to enjoy an illustrated history lesson staged more beautifully than anything England had seen since the Stuart Court masques. Kean made his theatre serve as a panorama and lecture-room where distant places and antique facts could be enjoyed as entertainment. He gave his patrons culture, too. Well-upholstered Shakespeare, exciting French melodramas and occasional new English plays were his bill of fare.
Charles Kean could never have made the contribution to modern theatre with which scholars have credited him without the support of significant royal patronage. The dignity and fashionability royal favor gave his theatre helped turn the tide of aristocratic and middle class patronage toward the British stage. The principal evidence of Victoria's genuine, sustained interest in the plight of the early nineteenth century British theatre rests almost equally between her institution of the Windsor Castle theatricals and the special royal approbation with which she marked the Princess's Theatre under Kean. However, just as royal favor had helped the socially ambitious actor climb to his position of leadership of the London stage, the withdrawal of royal favor in 1858 ended his fondest dream. On the occasion of the Royal Princess's marriage, the Crown's public insult to Kean clearly indicated that he would climb no further toward the goal of knighthood for which he had labored both on and off the stage.

The rise of modern realistic theatre heralded in England by Boucicault's adaptations of French melodrama and Robertson's "teacup and saucer" dramaturgy has been linked to Kean's accomplishments at the Princess's Theatre. This study has shown that Kean's accomplishments were in large measure a consequence of Victoria's patronage. In this indirect way her decision in 1848 to "revive and elevate the English drama," and her subsequent efforts in that regard are seen to have been almost as significant as the royal patronage of any of her predecessors.
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