

OLD HONESTY'S REMINISCENCES OF SALT LAKE THEATRE.

The Theatre is situated on the corner of State and First South streets; in dimensions, its ground plan is eighty by one hundred and forty-four feet, with walls forty feet high to the square. From the ground to the top of the decking it is sixty-five feet; it has an additional roof of shingles over the decking. The rock work, three feet thick, rises twenty feet above the water table; the upper part of the wall is of adobies, two and a half feet thick; the roof is self-supporting. The front entrance of the building has an open porch, supported by two doric columns. The stage has an opening at the drop curtain of thirty-one by thirty-three feet, the whole depth of the stage being sixty-two feet.

The first ground was broke, July 1st, 1861. The architect, Mr. W. H. Folsom, the carpenters, the masons, the painters, the decorators, the laborers, the teamsters, all went to work for its erection and completion with an energy which was truly praiseworthy. From its commencement until its completion, not a serious accident befel any of the workmen employed upon it.

The building contains an office, each for Manager, Treasurer, Stage Manager, Janitor, Copyist and Band Master; also a Band Room, Male Wardrobe, Ladies' Wardrobe, Carpenter's Shop, Painters' Shop, three Property Rooms, Lamp Rooms, Green Rooms, Scene Rooms, seven Stove Rooms and fifteen Dressing Rooms.

In the month of February, 1862, as we visited this mammoth building, we saw near two hundred men working with all their might and strength, to get this temple of the drama ready for the opening night, which was fixed for the 6th of the following month. The carpenters, under the direction of W. H. Folsom; the masons under J. Staples; the painters under W. Pitt; the scenery by W. V. Morris, G. M. Ottinger and their assistants; the costumes by C. Clive, Mrs. H. Maiben and their assistants, and properties by C. Millard and assistants. Each seemed determined to be ready for the appointed time. The long anticipated hour arrived; we were favored with an invitation from President B. Young to be present with our family at the dedication, which commenced with the choristers singing—

"Lo! on the mountain tops appearing."

Then came a prayer by President D. H. Wells. We have a very vivid recollection of that prayer, and often think of it; we imagine, even now, if it were occasionally repeated with the same spirit, and sensed as it should be, it would not have a bad influence. Perhaps it was the first and only Theatre upon this continent that was ever dedicated by prayer, and indeed it was a great and good prayer. After the dedicatory prayer Elder W. C. Dunbar sung,

"Then conquer we must, when our cause
it is just,
And this be our motto 'in God is our trust.'"

Then followed addresses by President B. Young and our much-lamented and highly esteemed friend, the late President Heber C. Kimball, and Elder John Taylor. Songs and music were interspersed during the evening, the music under the direction of Professor C. J. Thomas.

On Saturday the 8th, the first dramatic performance was given, when the Deseret Dramatic Association performed the "Pride of the Market" and the farce of "State Secrets." A few performances were given in quick succession, when the first season closed with the play of "Love's Sacrifice" and the farce of the "Widow's Victim," on Saturday, April 19th.

Immediately after the close of this season the auditorium was pulled down, remodelled and re-arranged, and many improvements made, affecting both sound and sight; and on Christmas Eve, 1862, it was so far completed that the doors were again opened to receive an auditory, invited by President B. Young. The house was soon filled to its utmost capacity with a respectable and delighted audience. On the stage were seated Presidents Young and Kimball, with ten of the Twelve Apostles. The Orchestra opened the entertainment, the Tabernacle choir appeared before the footlights and sung

"On the Mountain Tops appearing,"

and Elder E. T. Benson (who has since finished his earthly mission) offered prayer. The choir sang

"Hard Times come again no more."

Presidents Young and Kimball and

several of the Twelve made brief and pertinent addresses. During the pleasant evening several songs were sung by ladies and gentlemen, after which the scenes were suddenly drawn and the orchestra struck up that beautiful old English contra-dance, "Sir Roger de Coverly," and a select company, already on the boards, went through it with right good will. The time flew swiftly on, until the hour of eleven,

"When a kind good night to all" Was pronounced. The following night the doors were opened for a dramatic entertainment. Manager J. T. Caine stepped before the curtain and expressed a short and welcome greeting to the patrons of the drama; then came a few harmonious strains from the Orchestra, lead by Professor C. J. Thomas, when "tinkle" went that ever welcome bell (to the audience), up rolled the beautiful proscenium curtain, and Tobin's splendid comedy of "The Honeymoon," with a strong and excellent cast from the Deseret Dramatic Association, appeared to great credit. A patriotic address, composed by T. A. Lyne, Esq. and spoken by J. R. Clawson, was next in order, which was followed by the side splitting farce of "Paddy Miles' Boy," concluding an excellent bill, for the first night, everybody going home highly gratified with the magnificent appearance of the Theatre, and the careful and spirited manner in which each played his respective part.

A few nights rolled by when we had presented that famous "Charcoal Burner," whose commodity was at that time at a high premium in the market, and he availed himself of the opportunity, and nightly supplied the great demand until stone coal was discovered in abundance, which soon run out the old burner with his

"Eleven of the night."

The first foreign artist who made his debut on the boards was T. A. Lyne, in "Damon and Pythias," on February 14th, '63. Who does not remember as though 'twas yesterday,

"Philistius then is president at last."

Performances came in quick succession every Wednesday and Saturday until April 11th, when the irrepressible Margetts gave the tag

"Oh, our joy would be prodigious."

Busy spring had fairly set in with its labors and bustle, summer with its increased labors, and autumn with its harvest had about passed away and again, Oct. 3rd, we remember seeing, passing through every street, a large concourse of people of all ages, in full view going to witness the opening of the fall and winter season. Nov. 4th, more foreign talent made its appearance and played "Claude Melnotte and the Line in the "Lady of Lyons."

Feb. 6th, a few specimens of necromancy were given by (that naughty man) Professor Simmons. On the 8th of the same month the world renowned snowman, Artemus Ward, delivered a lecture on the "Babes in the Wood," and they were so completely lost in the thickest of the wood, that it was impossible for Artemus himself or his audience to find them. After a while came "Jessie Brown." Who does not remember, who happened to be present on that occasion, they can still hear

"Upon your lugs you black devils you."

On the last night but one of the season, which ended April 8th, that intellectual piece the "Frisky Clobber" was presented regardless of expense! We all remember the sufferings of poor Mrs. Blunderbus where she was being tossed up in a blanket.

May 14th, the Spring season commenced with a performance once a week—on Saturday nights. Good bills were presented, generally ending with popular song by W. C. Dunbar. On May 27th, semi-weekly performances were resumed, when the great high comedian, G. Pauncefort, bowed before Salt Lake audience, with his "Romance of a Poor Young Man." "The Lake's Motto" followed, and

"I am here, Lagardere,"

All rings in our ears. May 1st, 1865 brought with it the first Matinee, when we beheld that interesting sight of 2,500 juvenile faces with great enthusiasm watching the mysterious spectacular performance of the "Forty Thieves," and "Bombastes Furioso" which were presented and played in splendid style.

Friday, August 11th, the Queen of the American boards graced our stage. Who has not a vivid recollection of Julia Dean Hayne?

"All nature hopes for Spring, and why not I!"

With what sympathetic affinity of pain do we remember that cough, also when we think of the dying speech,

"Armand is here and I am so happy! Oh, how strange!"

Where is there an admirer of the legitimate drama that cannot remember her Julia in the "Hunchback,"

"Show me some way to 'scape these nuptials."

Then again, that curse in Leah, why, the very recollection of it makes one's very blood curdle!

Sept. 8th, we were delighted with some Swiss bell ringing. April 17th, 1866, the house was closed for a short season; a portion of the company formed a combination and gave entertainments in the provinces. June 2nd, the house was re-opened. On the 30th of the month Julia Dean Hayne made her last appearance in the character of "Adrian Peretti" in the "Pope of Rome." Oct. 8th, tri-weekly performances commenced. Jan. 19th, 1867, the house closed with "Jessie Brown," and was re-opened on Feb. 23rd, H. B. Clawson and J. T. Caine having become lessees and managers. The sparkling comedy, "Victims," and that old stock farce, "The Spectre Bridegroom," were presented on the opening night. Do you not fancy that you see "Dickory" with candle in hand, having just seen a gho-gho-gho-ghost? May 20th, the renowned Heller appeared with the Statue Head.

"It speaks and vanishes away."

Those old English church bells still sound pleasing and natural in our ears, reminding us of our boyish days.

The summer dramatic season commenced June 4th and ended June 29th, after which the dancing floor was put down over the parquette, making ample room for twenty-nine sets. The Independence Ball was held July 4th, the Battalion Ball on the 16th, the Pioneer Ball on the 24th, and a Juvenile Ball on Saturday, the 27th. Immediately after the floor was taken up, seats replaced in parquette, and preparations actively made for the appearance of Mr. C. W. Coudock, August 3rd, who presented us with his "Luke Fielding." See that honest old Norfolk farmer, surrounded by a large electioneering party; also the look he gave to his dishonored daughter, and listen to that

"Stand back; and you, sir, stand back."

And again,

"Rose, you shall read that letter."

Then imagine that crabbed, aggravating old "Milky White,"

"I'll indite old Jenkins for letting his pigeons pick the mortar out of my chimneys."

Then,

"Mrs. Saddrip, your boy has been throwing dead rats in my water bucket."

Nov. 3rd brought us a revival of that sensational drama, "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," with Mr. D. McKenzie as the poor broken-hearted, hunted down "Robert Brierly." Dec. 14th, Mr. Coudock gave a very happy impersonation of the lying and cowardly "Sir John Falstaff." Feb. 4th, 1868, Miss Nellie Colebrook rendered "Ophelia" in a very imposing and artistic manner. June 9th, Miss Charlotte Crampton personated "Shylock" in the most striking and powerful manner that we have witnessed it in this house. June 16th, the first line of railroad was laid in this Territory, in "Under the Gaslight," on which "Snorkey," the returned veteran, lay bound to the rails and hearing the whistle of the down express train! Hurrah! the rope is untied and he is liberated just in the very nick of time, the train passing over where he laid; and has done the same thing fifteen times since. Aug. 20th, we were much delighted in beholding Miss Annette Ince's "Queen Elizabeth." With what precision she dictated those two letters at the same time! Behold her on her death-bed, beset as she was with her passions, at the last moment unwillingly bequeathing the crown of England to James of Scotland!

Aug. 27th, E. L. Davenport as "Richard III" commanded our breathless attention.

"Mark where she stands! Around her form I draw the awful circle of our solemn church! Set but a foot within that holy ground, and on thy head,—yea, though it wore a crown, I launch the curse of Rome!"

What a "Julian St. Pierre" he gave!

"The dial and the sun is shining on it; the shadow on the very point of twelve. My case is desperate! Your signature of vital moment is unto my peace! My eye is on

the dial! Pass the shadow the point of noon, the breath of but a hair, as can mine eye discern, and that unsigned the steel is in thy heart. I speak no more!"

November 14th, Parepa Rosa gave us that beautiful ballad of "Waiting," and we waited until the 16th, when we had the descriptive storm song and the "Nightingale's Trill."

November 30th, nightly performances commenced. March 12, 1869, we nearly split our sides laughing at J. H. Herne's "Rip Van Winkle," with his

"Being this is the first time that we have metted to-day," etc! "Well, here is your very good health and your families, and may you all live long and prosper!"

We thought we could smell those strong oysters of "Handy Andy."

May 27th, C. Wheatleigh with his "Old Tom" (a boardman), who was drugged in a saloon, but recovered and found his way to the underground railway and save his friend.

On the 31st, the Howsons gave us the "Saber of my Sire." Aug. 18th, the inimitable Ben. Cotton sang "Love among the Roses." Aug. 30th and 31st, the great George Francis Train presented us with new readings from the Cosmopolitan comedy of "Officials, Politicians, Lawyers, Doctors, and Ministers, not forgetting to administer a strong dose to the British Government. Sept. 1r, Neil Warner dashed on with

"Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by the sun of York!"

We beheld him in Desdemona's bed chamber.

"O, balmy breath that dost almost persuade justice herself to break her sword!"

Once more.

"Be thus when thou art dead and I will kill thee and love thee after."

And again.

"And this the last,—she wakes!"

When watching his Sir Giles Overreach we were more than electrified.

"Shall I then fall ingloriously and yield? No; spite of fate I will be forced to hell, like to myself; though you were legions of accursed spirits, thus would I fly among you!"

Behold that noble Roman, Virginius, in the Forum, before Appius.

"My dear child! my dear Virginia! there is only one way to save thine honor, 'tis this."

The visitor, upon entering this mammoth establishment is struck with amazement in beholding the living machinery working so systematically and harmoniously. There are the managers in their private office, corresponding and negotiating for foreign talent, to keep the season well interspersed with a pleasing variety. That solid and pleasant piece of humanity is the Treasurer. How busily he seems engaged in posting up his ponderous ledger, and settling the thousand and one demands made upon him. The stage manager is all activity in casting the plays, prompting, directing stage business, making up his bills, &c. The Janitor (some call him Bishop) is seeing to the stoves, that dirty, dusty room, the broken furniture, those broken windows, the fires, not forgetting the fire engine, &c., &c., and the thousand and two chores, which fall within his province. There sits the copyist, writing each part with great care and correctness. Down in the orchestra is seated the conductor, getting his music cues and selecting his music for night, arranging a march to bring on that imposing army! Look out! here he comes loaded with costume; it looks like a huge mountain! That was worn last night. That's the costumer. That lady on the other side of the stage, with her arms full of muslin dresses, veils, skirts, &c., has the care of the ladies' wardrobe. Stand out of the way! The stage carpenter, with the man assisting him, will run that scene over you if you don't make way for him! That young man with those painted clothes, with his face all splashed, is the artist. He has to get up a new scene for to-night. You see that fellow with his face all black and dirty, he is making his properties and mixing up his tableau fires. Be careful you don't go near that lamp man, or he will spill oil over you! The woman passing with her bucket, dust pan and brush, has the cleaning of every room every day. The man sweeping in front is engaged all the time with his sweeping and dusting. That young man sitting there resting has been all over town posting his bills; mind the paste bucket! Those actors and actresses have not much to say to you; they are intent on their studies and the rehearsal. What a long and tire-

some rehearsal! By jove, near 2 o'clock! Come costumer give us our costume, we want to get home and study! Here it is, the rest of the suit, I want the tailor to repair, and put new lace on! You shall have it at night. Seven o'clock has arrived, the stage is set, actors and actresses are dressing, the door-keepers and ushers are getting their keys and programmes. There go the musicians into the orchestra, here come the scene shifters, there a host of "supers." The master of the supernumeraries wants six couple of villagers, eight soldiers, two servants, two detectives, two policemen and twelve jurymen. Hurry if you please! get dressed. Hear that shout "First Music!" Hallo! there is the call boy with his cry at every dressing room door "First Act." "Tinkle tinkle" goes the bell, up goes the curtain, and everybody at their entrances!

This is the very toilsome and exciting life of the actor and attache of the Theatre. On all holiday times the poor careworn actor has to be strutting the boards, his labors, if possible, being more arduous on these occasions than on any other. It is not the easy and lazy life that many imagine.

Where is there a citizen that is not proud of our Theatre? Who does not admire the great care, the good order, the gentlemanly deportment, which so universally characterize the whole establishment, from Managers down to the bill posters? We hope, nay, prophecy, that in the future the business of the establishment may be conducted in that same sober, honest and virtuous manner that has hitherto attended it, and that the Salt Lake Theatre may always stand a pattern of moral as well as artistic excellence.