

ANECDOTES OF THE THEATRE

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Anecdotes of the theatre by Arthur H. Engelbach

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ARTHUR H. ENGELBACH

**ANECDOTES OF
THE THEATRE**

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OF THE THEATRE**

Uniform with this Volume

**ANECDOTES OF
PULPIT AND PARISH**

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY

ARTHUR H. ENGELBACH

"Nearly a thousand good stories."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

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AUTHOR OF "ANECDOTES OF HENCH AND HAK"



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A GOOD story is told of a rich banker at Paris, who, though a sexagenarian, fancied himself a perfect Adonis, and was always behind the scenes, hanging about and making love to Mademoiselle Saulnice, to whom the machinist of the Opera House was paying his addresses. Determined to be revenged, and profiting by the moment when his rival, in uttering soft nonsense, had inadvertently placed his foot upon a cloud, the machinist gave a whistle, which was the signal for raising the cloud. When the curtain was drawn up the audience were not a little edified at seeing the banker, with powdered head, and gorgeously attired in evening costume, embroidered coat and waistcoat, ascending to the clouds by the side of Minerva, represented by the object of his devotion.

UPON another occasion, in the days of pigtails, when an elderly gentleman, with French gallantry, was stooping down to present an actress with a bouquet and kiss her hand, she was suddenly told the stage was waiting ; off she ran, and appeared before the audience unconscious that her aged

admirer's wig had fallen off and clung to the spangles of her dress. Loud was the laughter of those in front, and louder still was it when the bald-headed victim appeared at the wing shorn of his capillary ornament.

THE following bon mot is ascribed to Compton. Meeting a friend one day when the weather had taken a most sudden and unaccountable turn from cold to warmth, the subject was mooted as usual, and characterised by the gentleman as being "most extraordinary." "Yes," replied Compton; "it is a most unheard-of thing. We've jumped from winter into summer without a *spring*."

ONE morning Compton and Douglas Jerrold proceeded together to view the pictures in the "Gallery of Illustrations." On entering the ante-room they found themselves opposite to a number of very long looking-glasses. Pausing before one of these, Compton remarked to Jerrold: "You've come here to admire works of art! Very well; first feast your eyes on that work of nature!" pointing to his own figure reflected in the glass. "Look at it: there's a picture for you!" "Yes," replied Jerrold, regarding it intently; "very fine, very fine indeed!" Then, turning to his friend: "Wants *hanging*, though!"

QUICK and free from the slightest taint of ill nature was Jerrold's remark about the affectionate letters written from America by an actor who had left his wife in London without money, and who

had never sent her any. "What kindness!" he said aloud, with strong emphasis, when one of the letters was read aloud in the green-room of the Haymarket. "Kindness!" ejaculated one of the actresses indignantly, "when he never sends the poor woman a penny?" "Yes," said Jerrold—"unremitting kindness."

BARHAM records a story of King, the actor, who, meeting an old friend, whose name he could not recollect, took him home to dinner. By way of making the discovery, he addressed him in the evening, having previously made several ineffectual efforts: "My dear sir, my friend here and myself have had a dispute as to how you spell your name; indeed, we have wagered a bottle of wine upon it." "Oh, with two P's," was the answer, which left them no wiser than before.

A STORY is told of a somewhat pompous announcement, at one of Foote's dinner-parties, when the Drury Lane manager was among the guests, on the arrival of "Mr Garrick's servants"; whereupon: "Oh, let them wait," cried the wit, adding in an affected undertone to his own servant, but sufficiently loud to be generally heard: "But, James, be sure you lock up the pantry."

COMPTON had a wholesome horror of amateur actors, and on one occasion, when an egotistical young gentleman buttonholed him to discant on acting, he administered an unmistakable reproof

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to the presumptuous one. "I am anxious to become a professional now," said the young man, "for I always get splendid notices, and all my friends think I should make a great hit." "What line?" inquired Compton. "Well," smiled the youth, "I play all the funny parts, but I don't succeed in making my audience laugh heartily. I want to make them scream as you do—to make the house ring with laughter, in fact." "Ah," dryly replied Compton, "change your line of character a bit; try *Hamlet*, and let me know how you succeed."

THE late Sir Henry Irving delighted in telling the following story of Compton. "I shall never forget," said Irving, "the speech which he made on the first hundredth night of *Hamlet*, when, after the performance, the event was celebrated by a supper, given by my dear friend, Mr Bateman, at which a number of our friends and associates were present. Mr Compton was then playing nightly the character of Sam Savory, in the farce of *The Fish out of Water*. This farce had preceded *Hamlet* one hundred nights, and he took occasion to impress this fact upon us in the following way. We were all in high spirits. Mr Bateman's health, Mr Compton's and my own were drunk amidst enthusiasm and jocularity. Compton, with his peculiar gravity, ended the reply to the toast with which he was associated somewhat after this fashion: 'Thank you, gentlemen, for your appreciation of my efforts in that immortal drama, *The Fish out of Water*. I take this opportunity of thanking my friend Irving