Early American Operas

by O. G. Sonneck (1873-1928)

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MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF MUSIC

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PREFATORY NOTE

UNLIKE my book "Suum cuique" this collection is devoted almost exclusively to historical studies. The one essay that is not mainly historical has been included for the purpose of showing why it is still impossible in America to attempt historical research work of the kind that attracted me, in any but exceedingly few of our most famous libraries. This lack of essential study material, whether antiquarian or modern, whether literature or scores, has been keenly felt even by those students of musical history who specialize in subjects of a more general local, biographical or evolutional interest. It indicates a sad state of affairs and explains why American contributions to musical history of more than "popular" and limited pedagogical value are so scanty; why, in comparison with Europe, those engaged here in scholarly research or codification of research are so few and why these few men and women have such a disheartening outlet for their life-work.

Most of the essays in this volume were prepared from material available at the Library of Congress. Indeed, it is safe to say that whatever their intrinsic historical value may be, they could have been written nowhere in America except in Washington. They owe their origin mostly to minor historical problems that confronted me in my constructive work as Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress from 1902 to 1917.

The essays are reprinted here, by permission, practically as they appeared in various magazines at the time of writing. I have not attempted to incorporate the subsequent "finds" of other historians. Happily they were

so few and affected my views so little as to justify publication of these essays in their original form without "re-scoring." The expert will know anyhow where to look for controversial and more or less supplemental literature. For instance, those interested in the history of the *pasticcio* will turn to the writings of Lionel de la Laurencie for certain additional data.

As in the case of my books published by G. Schirmer, Inc., I am indebted to Dr. Theodore Baker for seeing this volume through the press. I am also indebted to him for having relieved me of the necessity of translating the first of the essays into English, and especially am I under obligations to him for his remarkably able translation of the rather difficult early Italian text of Il Lasca's *Descrizione*.

O. G. Sonneck.

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EARLY AMERICAN OPERAS

(Sammelbände der I. M. G., 1904-5)

THIS monograph deals with English operas written during the eighteenth century by Americans, native or naturalized, in what are to-day the United States. Though Italian and French operas were introduced in the United States previously to the nineteenth century, a fact widely unknown, they exercised hardly any influence on our early operatic productions. These were imitations, as was our entire musical life, of English models.

Generally speaking, the history of English opera is a history of ballad operas, as in the broad sense of the term even Stanford's "Shamus O'Brien" belongs to this category. The efforts at musical dramas in which every word is sung, remained sporadic in Great Britain, especially after the tyrannical establishment of Italian opera. Whether the critical opposition was artificial or whether such real operas were foreign to the English character, would be out of place to decide here. At any rate, the attempts were sporadic and moreover professedly in the Italian manner, whereas the ballad operas were innumerable and professedly English in character. The theory that they developed out of the masques might be disputed, but they certainly originated quite independently from Italian influences, and it is erroneous to date their beginnings from the Beggar's Opera.

Whatever might be said to the contrary, the famous "Newgate pastoral" was among other things a veiled protest against Italian opera, and its novelty consisted mainly

in the employment of popular ballads, new and old, that is to say, more in appearance than in character. This, together with its political allusions and its literary cleverness, made the Beggar's Opera a formidable rival of the emasculated Italian operas, and encouraged British composers to continue their struggle for English opera. Very soon, however, the popular ballads gave way to original music, a fact which certainly goes far to prove that Dr. Pepusch's setting was considered a polemical experiment, if not the caprice of an antiquarian.

The literature of eighteenth-century ballad operas is abundantly rich, but it shows few stylistic variations. The differences between the older and newer works result from changes in literary and musical taste and from the greater or lesser talents of their authors. The main objection to the *genre* ever has been that the ballad operas are merely plays interspersed with music. The dramatic development is carried on in the spoken dialogue and the composer seldom found an opportunity to call the dramatic possibilities of his art into action, his collaboration being limited to lyrical effusions in soli or ensembles. In fact, a good many ballad operas would gain in interest if the music, however charming it might be, were not allowed to interrupt the plot. It is frequently difficult to see when a play stops to be a play interspersed with music and when it becomes a ballad opera. The distinction lies more or less *a priori* in the title chosen by the authors. For this reason the body of my essay will contain only works entitled operas, musical entertainments, etc., whereas the plays interspersed with music will be enumerated in an appendix, as also the "speaking" pantomimes, which often came nearer being operas than the ballad operas themselves.[1]

If English composers did not care or did not dare to

[1] This Appendix has not here been reprinted from the "Sammelbände." I may add that the whole subject of early American operatic music should be studied in conjunction with my books, "Early Opera in America," "Early Concert-Life in America" and "Bibliography of Early Secular American Music."

improve the genre stylistically, very much less the Colonials. They pinned their faith on their models and imitated them without the slightest effort to infuse new blood into their productions. In America the libretto remained of vastly greater importance than the music—to such an extent that the composer is hardly ever mentioned, unless in the theatrical advertisements. Quite in keeping with this fact is the other, that the librettos were often printed, whereas the music was not. Exceedingly few detached pieces were issued and of these I doubt whether more than a dozen or so have been preserved. This I beg to keep in mind if the data furnished in the following pages are more of a literary and chronological character than musical and if the reader, as would be natural, looks for musical illustrations.

JAMES RALPH'S "FASHIONABLE LADY," 1730

Among the victims of the "Dunciad" was one James Ralph, and to this day his literary reputation has fared ill through Pope's satire. As a member of the "Grub-street" fraternity Ralph certainly deserved his fate, for he was as unscrupulous as Pietro Aretino and ever willing to sell his pen to the highest bidder. But if the politicians took pains to secure or silence his opinion, the man must have been possessed of literary abilities. Indeed, Ralph's writings do not lack ideas, brilliancy, or forcefulness, and his "History of England during the Reigns of King William, Queen Ann and George I." is said to be a remarkable work. It was Ralph's misfortune that he tried to say clever things at any cost, and this journalistic tendency renders his writings unreadable to-day.

James Ralph died at Chiswick (England) on January 24, 1762. But where was he born? Benjamin Franklin narrates in his autobiography that he made the acquaintance of Ralph at Philadelphia, where he was "clerk to a merchant." The two young men soon became friends

and in 1724 together sailed for England to try their luck in London. According to Franklin, Ralph deserted wife and children. Consequently, he must have been born about 1700; but where? To this question there seems to be no definite answer. The authorities merely claim that he was born "probably" in Pennsylvania.[1] If they were more positive, then the honor of being the first opera, or rather opera libretto, written by an American born in what are to-day the United States, would undoubtedly belong to a performance of James Ralph. I allude to

The Fashionable Lady; or Harlequin's Opera. In the Manner of a Rehearsal. As it is Perform'd at the Theatre in Goodman's Fields. Written by Mr. Ralph. [Ornament.]
London. Printed for J. Watts, at the Printing Office in Wild Court near Lincolns-Inn Fields. MDCCXXX. [Price 1 s. 6 d.][2]

The opera is preceded by an adulatory dedication "To His Grace the Duke of Manchester," signed "J. Ralph" (3 pp.), by a table of the songs (2 pp.) and by the *dramatis personæ* with the original cast (1 p.).

Men

Mr. Ballad	Mr. Penkethman
Mr. Meanwell	Mr. W. Giffard
Mr. Modely	Mr. Bullock
Mr. Drama	Mr. Lacey
Mr. Merit	Mr. W. Williams
Mr. Smooth	Mrs. Thomas
Captain Hackum	Mr. Huddy
Mr. Whim	Mr. Smith
Mr. Trifle	Mr. Collet
Voice, Harlequin's Man	Mr. Bardin.

[1] For an excellent sketch of Ralph's subsequent career see Stephens' National Biography, where, however, Ralph's operatic career was overlooked.

[2] 8°. 94 pp. Library of Congress, Brown University, Peabody Institute, Baltimore, New York Public Library (3 copies, as the assistant librarian Mr. *Paltsits* had the kindness to inform me. He also notified me that one of the copies has two pages of advertisements following the text. The latest date mentioned on this list of books published is January 16, 1729/30). The wording of the title renders it clear that the publication took place simultaneously with the performances of The Fashionable Lady, that is, in April, 1730.

Women

Mrs. Foible	Mrs. Mountford
Mrs. Sprightly	Mrs. Giffard
Prattle	Mrs. Palmer.

Mutes

Harlequin	Mr. Burney, jun.
Scaramouch	
Pierot	
Punch	
Pantaloon	
Colombine.	

Sir *Peevish-Terrible,* the Critick, Poets, Sailors, Gods, Goddesses, Witches, Dragons, Devils, etc.

That there must be some connection between The Fashionable Lady and the Beggar's Opera is evident; but though Ralph's work is enumerated in Grove's dictionary among the imitations of Gay-Pepusch's masterpiece, this is only partly correct. As in the Beggar's Opera, the dialogue is spoken and the songs are set to popular airs and ballads. But it certainly was not Ralph's serious intention to imitate the Beggar's Opera. On the contrary, he had in view to ridicule ballad operas with an occasional attack on the stilted Italian operas. He says in the dedication:

> I must confess it appears no great compliment to present Your Grace with a Play, which has not the Sanction of either of the establish'd Theatres, to recommend it.

If this is not convincing, the following remarks, I hope, will prove my theory.

In the first edition of the "Dunciad" Pope did not mention our author by name. Nevertheless Ralph attacked, in a coarse parody of the Dunciad, entitled "Sawney," *Pope, Swift* and *Gay.* In the same year, 1728, he published under the pseudonym of "A. Primcock"

The Taste of the Town, or a Guide to all publick Diversions. viz.

I. Of Musick, Operas and Plays. Their Original, Progress and Improvement . . .
II. Of Poetry, Sacred and Profane.
III. Of Dancing, Religious and Dramatical.
IV. Of the Mimes, Pantomimes and Choruses of the Ancients . . .
V. Of Audiences . . .
VI. Of Masquerades . . .
VII. Of the Athletic Sports of the Ancients . . .

The Taste of the Town, though somewhat different in scope, would be a worthy pendant to Marcello's *Teatro alla moda,* had not Ralph's ambition to be a "Wit" led him to caricature his own style. Still, the book is exceedingly interesting. It is a grotesque, almost clownish, forerunner of "Oper und Drama" and certainly deserved not to be overlooked as it has been by the historians of opera and of English opera in particular. This by the way; with reference to my theme, Ralph leaves no doubt as to his aversion to ballad operas, though he does not fully agree with the champions of Italian opera. Two characteristic quotations will render this clear. He says (on p. 11):

After the Restoration, we had at different Times several Entertainments, which were then stiled *Drammatick Operas;* which were indeed regular Stage plays larded with Pieces of occasional Musick, vocal and instrumental, proper to the Fable, and introduced either in the Beginning, Middle or End of an Act, by single Voices, two or three Part Songs, and Chorus: These were likewise embellished with Scenes, Machines, *French* Dancing Masters, long Trains, and Plumes of Feathers . . . This I look upon as the second age of Operas, as we then stiled them; but I absolutely deny them that Title; that Term implying a regular compleat musical Entertainment, which they never could arrive at, till they entirely came into a finished *Italian* Plan; nor do we bestow the name of Opera on any Dramma, but those where every Word is sung.

and on p. 16:

The Beggar's Opera by robbing the Performers at *Pye-corner, Fleet-ditch, Moorfields* (and other Stations of this Metropolis, famed for travelling Sounds) of their undoubted Properties, has reinstated them in Wealth and Grandeur; and what shock'd most Ears, and set most Teeth on Edge, at turning the Corner of a Street, for half a Moment; when thrown into a regular Entertainment, charms for Hours.

I must own they never appear'd to that Advantage in any musical Light as this Opera of the *Beggars;* Their rags of *Poetry* and Scraps of *Musick* joining so naturally, that in whatever View we consider it as to Character or Circumstance, its Title is the most apropos Thought on Earth.

If Ralph entertained hopes of injuring the Beggar's Opera with his parody, he failed, but he certainly succeeded in making his *Harlequin's Opera* more grotesque than a "Medley of fools at a Masquerade." Though a real plot is missing, a thread clearly runs through all the chaotic nonsense: Drama versus ballad opera. Mr. Ballad wants only "Highwaymen and Whores, Beggars and Rusticks . . . they raise the loud laugh"; and Mr. Drama remarks at the end of the play:

. . . every little Creature now, who has ever scribbled a popular Ballad, or an amorous Song, thinks himself capable of writing *English Opera* and charming the politest Audience.

Harlequin, in the few scenes he appears with his man "Voice," has nothing to do but to dance and play the fooling fool. He takes a special fancy to Captain Hackum, and is finally imprisoned by Sir Peevish Terrible, the Critic. Mrs. Foible with Mr. Merit and the rest, too, do not act, but talk fashion and nonsense, and their eccentricities are exposed by Messrs. Ballad, Modely, Meanwell and Drama.

At times The Fashionable Lady reads as if three plays were printed in one. An effect results, as intended by Ralph, of absolute nonsense. The idea is carried out with considerable wit. The dialogue is very fluent, even brilliant, but at the same time so coarse and obscene that the play would be impossible on the modern stage. Compared

with The Fashionable Lady, the Beggar's Opera is a model of decency.

It was consistent with the fundamental idea of Ralph's parody that none but popular ballads, such as "A cobbler there was" or "An old Woman poor and blind," were used to lard the play. The entire work contains sixty-eight "Airs," the first act 22, the second 22 and the third 24, all tunes being notated in the text. Beyond this and the fact that The Fashionable Lady was "performed at the Theatre in Goodman's Fields," I have been unable to collect musical data. In particular, I do not know whom Ralph engaged to write the accompaniments to the tunes.[1]

"The Fashionable Lady" was performed for the first time on April 2, 1730, and acted nine times.[2] Surely, a short career if we remember the persistency with which other harlequinades appealed to the public taste. And in this connection the opinion might be ventured that "The Fashionable Lady" was not quite original with Ralph. Possibly he took the idea, if not from French and Italian sources, from the anonymous

Harlequin Hydaspes: or, the Greshamite. A Mock Opera As it is performed at the Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. London: Printed and Sold by J. Roberts in Warwick Lane. MDCCXIX (Price one Shilling).[3]

THE DISAPPOINTMENT, 1767

On April 6–13, 1767, appeared in the "Pennsylvania Chronicle," Philadelphia, the following advertisement:

By Authority. By the American Company at the New Theatre in Southwark on Monday next, being the 20th of April, will be presented a new Comic Opera called *The Disappointment,* or, the Force of Credulity.

[1] More data probably may be obtained in sources not available at the Library of Congress.
[2] Compare "Some Account of the English Stage," v. 3, p. 277. I am indebted to Mr. *Paltsits* for having directed my attention to this book.
[3] Copies of this libretto are at the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress.

But the play was withdrawn in a hurry, the manager laconically informing the public in the "Pennsylvania Gazette" for Wednesday, April 16th, that

> The disappointment (that was advertised for Monday) as it contains personal reflections, is unfit for the stage.

Evidently, the parties reflected on had brought pressure to bear on Mr. Douglass, who could not afford to lose the good will of influential people in a city where opposition to the theatre just then was very strong. However, those whose curiosity had been aroused by the withdrawal had ample and speedy opportunity for enjoying the personal reflections, as the opera was advertised in the "Pennsylvania Chronicle," Monday, April 20–27, as:

> Just published and to be sold at Samuel Taylor's Bookbinder, at the Corner of Market and Water Streets, Price One Shilling and Sixpence . . .

That the libretto was not issued by the Philadelphia press appears from the title-page:

> *The Disappointment:* or, the Force of Credulity. A new American Comic Opera of two Acts. By Andrew *Barton,* Esq. [verses.]
> New York: Printed in the Year M,DCC,LXVII.[1]

Until James Ralph is positively proven not to have been born in America, The Disappointment will have to be considered the first American opera. If I devote a detailed description and discussion to the work it is on account of its unique position in the history of American music. The preface, important for several reasons, reads:

The Author's Preface To The Public.

The following local piece, intitled *The Disappointment, or the Force of Credulity* was originally wrote for my own, and the

[1] Collation: 12mo.; t. p. v. bl.; pref. pp. [III]–IV; prol.; dramatis personae V–VIII; text 9–56; epilogue [57]–58; errata p. 58. Boston Public Library; Library of Congress; Library Company, Philadelphia; Pennsylvania Historical Society. According to George Seilhamer's monumental "History of the American Theatre from 1749 to 1797", 3 vols. New York, 1896, the book recently sold at auction for $13. It should bring more than that.

amusement of a few particular friends, who (unknown to me) were pleased to signify their approbation of it, in such a manner, that it soon engrossed the chief part of the conversation of all ranks of people; who expressed their desire to hear it and have it published.—Under these circumstances I was greatly at a loss how to proceed, I did not choose (as I saw no merit in it) to expose it to the criticism of criticks, to put it in the power of gentlemen skill'd in scholastic knowledge, to ridicule my ignorance, or condescend to the entreaties of those, who I thought had no more sense than myself, and who might (perhaps) have made it better than it really is. Conscious therefore of my own inability, I determined to excuse myself to all, and in this determination I persisted for some time, but at last, for my own safety, was obliged to capitulate and surrender on the following stipulations; First, the infrequency of dramatic compositions in America; Secondly, the torrent of solicitations from all quarters; Thirdly, the necessity of contributing to the entertainment of the city; Fourthly and lastly, to put a stop (if possible) to the foolish and pernicious practice of searching *after supposed hidden treasure.*

These terms, hard as they are, I have with reluctance been forced to submit to, I am therefore obliged in vindication of my conduct to assure the public that the story is founded on matter of fact, transacted near the city, not long since, and recent in the memory of thousands; for the truth of which assertion I appeal to numbers of my fellow citizens. But in order to give strangers, and those unacquainted with the story some idea of it, the following short history is thought necessary.—The scheme was planned by four humorous gentlemen, Hum, Parchment, Quadrant, and Rattletrap, to divert themselves and friends, and try what lengths of credulity and the love of money would carry men. In order to put their scheme into execution, they fram'd a plausible, well connected story of hidden treasure; and to gloss the matter, adapted sundry papers to their purpose, and pitch'd upon two suitable old fellows, Washball and Raccoon (as principal dupes) with others to try the success of their scheme; which had the desired effect!—The moral: the folly of an over credulity, and desire of money, and how apt men are (especially old men) to be unwarily drawn into schemes where there is but the least shadow of gain; and concludes with these observations, that mankind ought to be contented with their respective stations to follow their vocations with honesty and industry—the only sure way to gain riches.

I do not figure to myself the least advantage accruing from it, but the inward satisfaction of contributing my mite to stop the

current of such folly. Such as it is, I submit to the public for their sanction or condemnation, and if any merit should appear in the performance, I shall not vainly attribute it to myself but give the credit of it to mere chance.

I am the Public's
most obedient,
most devoted and
most faithful
humble Servant
Andrew Barton.

The prologue flows in very much the same vein as the preface. But if the author claims that in The Disappointment "Our artless muse hath made her first essay", I fear modern historians will not agree with him, any more than Mr. *Douglass* did with the last lines of the prologue:

The subject's suited to our present times,
No person's touch'd, altho' she lash their crimes.
Nor gall or copp'ras tincture her design,
But gay good humor breathe in ev'ry line;
If you condemn her—she for censure stands;
But if applaud—then thund'ring clap your hands.

However thinly the personal reflections might have been veiled, we feel inclined to side with the author and to admit that his work breathes none but gay good humor through the medium of the

Dramatis Personae

Men

Hum	Humorists
Parchment	"
Quadrant	"
Rattletrap, a supposed Conjurer	
Raccoon, an old Debauchee	
Washball, an avaricious old Barber	Dupes
Trushoop, a Cooper	"
M'Snip, a Taylor	"
Meanwell, a Gentleman, in love with Washball's Niece	
Topinlift, a Sailor	
Spitfire, an Assistant to Rattletrap.	

Women

Moll Placket, a Woman of the Town, in keeping by Raccoon
Mrs. Trushoop, Wife to Trushoop
Miss Lucy, Washball's Niece, in love with Meanwell
Collector, Blackbeard's Ghost, Taylors, Servants, etc.

If these names are ludicrous, very much more so the plot.[1] When the curtain rises Hum, Parchment and Quadrant are discovered seated around a table in a tavern, where they are drinking and discussing their theme. Raccoon, who "if he smells money, as great a coward as they say he is," will "venture to the gates of hell for it," is expected. Hum announces that he has contrived matters so that Raccoon shall make the discovery himself. Quadrant informs the others that he has drawn in both Trushoop and M'Snip. With his share of the treasures, Quadrant says, Trushoop "talks of building a chapel at his own expense and employing a score of priests to keep up a continual rotation of prayers for the repose of the souls of those poor fellows who buried it." As for M'Snip, he "intends to knock off business, go home to England and purchase a title."

Mr. Parchment prepared the papers, which were duly enclosed in a letter to Mr. Hum, purporting to come from his sister in England. One of these papers, that "looks as if it had been preserv'd in the temple of Apollo or in the tower of Babel," contains the "draught of the place where the treasure lies: together with the memorandum signed by all present at the time it was deposited." Quadrant thinks this droll enough and—we are in a comic opera—expresses his sentiments in a Song:

Air I

I am a brisk young lively lass
In all the town there's none like you,
When you're on mischief bent, sirs;

[1] Mr. Seilhamer's analysis of the plot (op. cit. v. I, pp. 180–4) being so witty and clear, I availed myself of it except where I considered corrections and additions necessary.

With pen and ink, one well can write,
What you do both invent, sirs, etc.

Rattletrap, whom Quadrant found "poreing over the canto of Hudibras and Sydrophel in order to furnish himself with a set of hard words, which added to his knowledge in the mathematicks, will sufficiently gratify him for a modern conjurer," enters singing

Air II

The Bloom of May

Behold you my magic phiz,
How solemn and grave I look;
Here, here, my good friends, here is
My brass bound magical book, etc.

His idea is to have a fifth person to act as a "demi-devil or familiar spirit," and Hum proposes "an old artillery . . . a snug dry dog" of his acquaintance.

When Raccoon enters, Hum steps out for a moment, dropping the papers. Raccoon picks them up, looks over them and crams them into his bosom. Hum returns lamenting the loss of his papers and declaring that the drawer must have picked his pocket. The poor servant is roughly handled and searched. At the beginning of this scene Washball, Trushoop and M'Snip enter. Finally Raccoon gives up the papers on condition that Hum lets him in for a share. Parchment pretends to know nothing of the papers, and declares that if they contain any scheme, plot, combination, rout, riot or unlawful assembly —in fine anything against his most sacred Majesty, George II., etc., etc.—he'll at once to the Attorney General and lodge an information against every man in the company and hang every mother's son of them. Parchment is finally convinced and then wishes he had been in such a plot twenty years ago.

Hum pretends to have received a letter from his "loving sister-in-law in England (who is heir to the famous Capt.

Blackbeard) inclosing sundry papers, such as plans, draughts and memorandums, of a great quantity of treasure, that was buried by the pirates." Parchment reads the particular account of the treasure:

Imprimis, in golden candlesticks, chalises, and crucifixes; 30 000 Portugal pieces; 20 000 Spanish pistoles; 470 000 pistereens; 73 bars of gold; a small box of diamonds; 60 000 pieces of eight; and 150 pounds of weight of gold dust.

This remarkable instrument is signed by Edward Teach, *alias* Blackbeard, captain; Moses Brimstone, first lieutenant; Judas Guzzlefire, gunner, and Jeffery Eatdevil, cook.

"By my saul," cries M'Snip, "I'll away we all me dranken joorneymen and kick the shapboard oot a the wandow."

"I'll shave no more," exclaims Washball,—"no, not I—I'll keep my hands out of the suds."

"Dis will make me cut de figure in life," says Raccoon, "and appear in de world de proper importance; and den I'll do someting for my poor ting," *alias* his mistress Moll Placket.

The conspirators obtain two pistoles each from the dupes and the scene ends with a solo by Parchment:

Air III

How blessed has my time been.

Now let us join hands and unite in this cause;
'Tis glorious gold, that shall gain us applause:
How blest now are we, with such treasure in store,
We'll clothe all the naked, and feed all the poor.
We'll clothe, etc.

In the second scene of the first act Trushoop finds himself locked out by his wife. The old reprobate, Raccoon, in the third carries a spit, pick-axe, and spade into Moll Placket's home and puts them under the bed. Moll calls him her "dear cooney" and he not only tells his "pet" and "dear ting" all about the treasure but promises her 500 a year for pin money when it is obtainable. Both have a song in this scene.

Raccoon:

Air IV

Yankee Doodle

O! how joyful shall I be
When I get de money,
I will bring it all to dee;
O! my diddling honey! etc.
(Exit, singing the chorus, Yankee Doodle, etc.)

Moll:

Air V

Shambuy

Tho' I hate the old wretch, full as bad as Jack-Ketch,
My necessities tell me to please him;
I will ogle and whine, till I make the gold mine:
For that's the best method to ease him, etc.

The fourth is a street scene where Hum, Rattletrap and Quadrant agree to assemble their dupes at the town tavern. In the fifth, M'Snip, after turning his journeymen out of the shop, sings with a Scotch accent

Air VI

The bonny Broom

I'se cut out political claith,
To patch and mend the state;
My bodkin and my thamble beith,
Combine to make me great, etc.

Follows a love-scene between Lucy and Meanwell. Lucy tells her lover that her uncle Washball has ordered her to discard him, and promised her a marriage portion of 10,000 if she marries agreeably to his wishes. Of course this scene gives occasion to a duet.

Air VII

My fond Shepherds, etc.

Meanwell

My dear Lucy; you ravish my heart,
I am blest with such language as this;

To my arms then, oh, come, we'll ne'er part
And let's mutually seal with a kiss.

Lucy

Ten thousand sweet kisses I'd give,
O! be you but contented with me,
Then for you my dear Meanwell I'll live,
And as happy as constant I'll be.

As always in comic opera, Washball makes his appearance at the most inopportune moment and the love-scene ends like all such love-scenes—Meanwell is put out of the house.

The seventh scene discovers the humorists and dupes at the tavern discussing the details of their plan. In one point they all agree, that "the greatest exertion of . . . courage will be necessary," as they "have to engage with principalities and powers of darkness, with invisibles and demons, more powerful than the united legions of the most invincible monarchs on earth." But they become quite merry in prospect of the treasure and do a good deal of drinking, singing and boasting.

M'Snip has

Air VIII

Over the hills and far away.

This money makes the coward brave,
And freedom gives to ev'ry slave;
My gude brod-sword I'll soon display,
And drive those warlocks far away,
And drive those warlocks, etc.
And drive those warlocks, etc.
My gude brod-sword I'll soon display,
And drive those warlocks far away.

After "canoe" has been chosen as watchword, Trushoop sings:

Air IX

Chiling o Guirey

By shaint Patrick, dear honeys, no longer let's stay
But take laave together, and bundle away,
To the plashe under ground, where the treasure's expos'd

And bring that to light, which shall ne'er be disclosed;
And when we have got it, my jewels, o hone!
For keeping it snug,—arra! let us alone,
We'll sing whillalew, at the sight of the palf,
And as for the sharing, laave that to myself.
Sing laral lal, etc.

The act ends with a drinking song by Rattletrap:

Air X

The Jolly Toper

The merchant roams from clime to climes
Regardless of his pleasure;
To hardships and fatigue resigns,
When in pursuit of treasure.
And, a digging, etc. (*they drink and fill.*)

The second act opens with a broad, coarse scene that would be inadmissable nowadays between Topinlift, the sailor, and Moll Placket, in which Topinlift sings (Air XI): "No girl with Placket can compare" to the tune of Nancy Dawson. Shortly afterwards Raccoon comes for his spit, pick-axe and spade. Topinlift conceals himself under the bed where the implements were placed, but to prevent Raccoon from going there Moll pretends that she is about to raise a familiar spirit, and the sailor makes his escape as a ghost, knocking Raccoon over as he rushes out. Raccoon when recovering from his shock thinks "he look like de sailor," finds his tools, and walks out with

Air XII

The lass of Patie's mill.

Oh! when I get de welt, dat's bury'd by de mill;
Insur'd long-life and helt, and pleasure at my will.
What store of gold I'll bring my lovely pet to dee,
Den none but my poor ting shall share de same wid me.

Moll, after his departure, adds some peculiar reflections of her own, partly in a monologue and partly in

Air XIII

Black joke and band so white
Sure gold is the fewel, that kindles the fire,
And serves for to fan up a woman's desire,
To a fumbling fool, that's decrepid and old, etc.

The next scene is the "Place of Action, near the Stone Bridge." Rattletrap, dressed in his magic *habit,* when all are assembled "draws the magic circle and pronounces words of incantation: Diapaculum interravo, testiculum stravaganza." The digging proceeds under similar incantations and astrological reflections of a most grotesque character; the convulsions of nature are rather unusual, and finally the ghost of the pirate appears and spits fire. Trushoop says the spook "looks like no slouch of a fellow"; Washball, thoroughly frightened, prays *Mea culpa,* and Raccoon, who now wishes he had lived a better life, asks him to pray in English, saying "dese spirits don't understand de Latin.' The ghost resists the search for the treasure, but in vain, and when the chest is finally secured Rattletrap jubilantly breaks forth into

Air XIV

Granby

Tho' my art some despise, I appear to your eyes,
For a proof of my magical knowledge;
Tho' the wisdom of schools, damn our art and our tools,
We can laugh at the fools of the college.
Chorus: We can, etc.

The second scene takes place in a room in Washball's house, where Lucy and Meanwell decide to elope. But though "the precious moments are swiftly passing" they find time to sing a duet:

Air XV

Kitty the Nonpareille

Lucy: My throbbing heart must now give way
To love, to honor, and obey.

Lo! Hymen's torch is lighted.
Lo! Hymen's, etc.

My heart! my all!—I do resign,
O! Meanwell!—Meanwell!—I'll be thine,
In wedlock's band united!
In wedlock's, etc.

Meanwell: Of Venus' charms, let poets write!
Diana chaste, or, Juno bright!
Of Kitty, Doll, or, Susey!
Of Kitty, etc.

The charms of all, are center'd here,
In Lucy!—charming Lucy dear!
Haste! haste! my lovely Lucy!
Haste, etc.

The third scene is a street-scene in front of the collector's house and begins with a monologue of Washball which leaves no doubt as to his being "an avaricious old barber." It begins:

I can't bear the toughts of dividing, not I . . . charity begins at home and he must be the greatest fool on earth that cheats himself. . . . I'll go and inform the collector; then I shall have one half to myself, the other will go to the king.

This he does in the fourth scene. The fifth opens in a room in Washball's house and discovers M'Snip, Trushoop and Raccoon, sitting on the chest, and old Gabriel, Washball's servant, standing by. When Washball enters with the collector, Hum takes the latter aside and tells him of the "scheme of diversion" whereupon the collector on some pretense retires. The chest is now opened and, of course, contains nothing but stones. The dupes look at one another confused, it dawning upon them that they have been fooled, and the "humorists" laugh and run off the stage. Poor Trushoop is the first to remember that he is the duped hero in a comic opera and he bewails his fate in

Air XVI

The Milking Pail. (To be sung slow and with an Irish accent.)

Arra what a fool was I; by my showl! I think I'll cry.
When I spake of all thish, it encreases my blish;
I will kill me bafare I die, etc.

But on the whole he takes it good-naturedly and begins to enjoy the joke as much as the humorists.

The piece ought to end with the opening of the chest, but it cannot, for Lucy and Meanwell have eloped and are to be forgiven by Washball. They receive his blessing, after which he takes occasion to sing the doleful

Air XVII

Ah! who is me, poor Walley cry'd.

Ah! who is me, poor wretched I,
With broken heart and downcast eyes;
To ease my mind where shall I fly?
A prey to knaves poor Washball dies.
Let future generations take
Example by my dismal fall.
Nor gods of gold, nor idols make,
To shun the fate of poor Washball.

He is full of resignation, invites the dupes for dinner, tells old Gabriel to call in the neighbors, to bring his fiddle and play for a dance. He also requests Lucy and Meanwell to give them a song, which they do with

Air XVIII

Jolly Bacchanalian.

Meanwell: Banish sorrow, welcome joy
. . . . . .
Banish care and be at rest,
Of a bad bargain make the best.
Banish care, etc.

Lucy: Room for joy, how blest am I
. . . . . .
Virgins all, example take;
Virtue love, for virtue's sake,

Constant be as turtle dove,
Let your theme be virtuous love.
Constant be, etc.

Enter Gabriel with his fiddle and the neighbors. They strike up a country dance called "Excuse me" and the whole ends with an epilogue in which Hum sings some popular refrains like: Down Derry Derry down, tantara-rara, tol de rol, lol de rol loddy—and in which all the characters, including Moll Placket and Topinlift, make their final bow to the audience.

Mr. Seilhamer claims The Disappointment to be "without merit as a dramatic composition" (op. cit. I, 184), but I disagree with him. I fear the coarseness of the play prevented him from being just. No doubt The Disappointment contains scenes which would to-day be quite unfit for public performance, but it must be added that this indecency is that of naïve brutality and not of a morbid suggestiveness, as in so many plays of our *fin de siècle* decadents.

Should these scenes undergo a skillful operation, a performance of The Disappointment would prove that it does contain a good deal of merit as a dramatic composition. To-day the personal reflections would neither make a performance impossible, nor would they—as a species of published gossip—facilitate a success of the work. It would have to stand on its intrinsic merits.

The fundamental idea is excellent and well adapted to dramatic treatment. The characters are cleverly contrasted, and the different dialects, not being used to exaggeration, give a delightful flavor to the whole. The dialogue is exceedingly fluent, and the plot is well developed. It falls short only on account of the conventional *finale* of the play, which was caused by the preceding love-scenes between Lucy and Meanwell, and they, too, conventional. The author possessed a surprisingly keen eye for what is effective on the stage. This, combined with much natural wit and humor, makes many scenes "irresistibly comic," as

even Mr. Seilhamer had to admit. Take, for instance, the scene in which the poor devil of a waiter is accused of theft, abused and maltreated, the real culprit, that rascal Raccoon, not making the slightest effort to interfere, but quietly and as if unconcerned waiting for the storm to pass. Here are unusual opportunities for a clever comedian!

But even this scene is surpassed in theatrical clairvoyance, brilliancy and wit by the one at the place of action. It is masterly with all its fantastic and burlesque drollery. It is within the limits of dramatic probability and worthy of the pen of famous playwrights. All in all, The Disappointment deserves more attention than has been paid to it, and the fate of the farce vividly recalls that of Otto Niebergall's brilliant but also unduly neglected "Tatterich."

Turning to The Disappointment as a comic opera, we readily classify it as a ballad opera. Evidently the Beggar's Opera, then immensely enjoyed in the Colonies, was taken as a model. With this difference, however, that the American work is not overloaded with ballads, there being only eighteen of them in the opera. The introduction of Yankee Doodle is especially noteworthy, being probably the earliest reference to the tune in American literature, and liable to overthrow certain theories as to its history in the Colonies. That the airs have a right of dramatic existence cannot reasonably be maintained, but this ever has been and ever will be the weak point in ballad operas, Singspiele, vaudevilles and the like. The attempts at ensembles and choruses are exceedingly few and feeble. To improvise or to write "accompaniments" for "The Disappointment" cannot have been a very interesting task, and we hardly regret not to know the name of the musician whose duty it was to do so.

Thirty years after the first, a second edition of the opera, protected by copyright, appeared at Philadelphia under the title:

The Disappointment, or, the Force of Credulity. A new comic opera in three acts. By Andrew *Barton*, Esq. Second Edition, revised and corrected with large additions by the Author. [verses.]
Philadelphia. Printed for and sold by Francis Shallus, No. 40, Vinestreet. 1796.[1]

The preface and prologue show but unimportant alterations, whereas the expansion of the opera into three acts called for considerable changes. It is hardly necessary to dwell on them in detail. A rapid survey will be sufficient.

In the first place the dramatis personae have increased. Instead of four dupes we notice five, M'Snip having been superseded by "Buckram, a Taylor" and "Trowell, a Plaisterer," "Perrance, Servant to Trushoop," is also new. Furthermore we make the acquaintance of "Mrs. Trowell, Wife to Trowell" and "Dolly, Servant to Mrs. Trushoop."

The first scene opens as in the edition of 1767, but the dialogue is now preceded by a drinking song by Parchment:

Song I

Come now, my boys, let's jovial be,
The cash we'll soon disclose;
And spurn at sneaking poverty,
Tho' Gorgons dire! oppose.

In the middle of the scene Trushoop now addresses Washball with a very lengthy

Song IV

You seem in a flutter
And pray what's the matter, etc.

We further notice that all allusions to the government in Parchment's monologue have been revised. Instead of "His most sacred Majesty, George the Second" we now read "illustrious President of the United States." In the

[1] 12°. 94 p. Boston Public Library; Brown Univ.; Mass. Hist. Soc.; New York Public Library; Library of Congress; Pennsylvania Hist. Soc.; British Museum, etc.

third scene we witness Mrs. Trushoop's efforts to starve her husband into fidelity. Then follows the burlesque and coarse meeting between Moll Placket, Topinlift and Raccoon. In the fifth scene Mrs. Trushoop repents her treatment of Mr. Trushoop and endeavors to reconcile him by ordering Dolly to

take the two market baskets, and go down into the cellar, and fetch up everything there for master to eat and drink.

In the following scene Dolly and Ferrance, as servants probably will do in all eternity, laugh at their master and mistress, and the scene ends in harmony between Mr. and Mrs. Trushoop.

The second act discovers Mrs. Trowell at work in her parlor. Mrs. Trushoop enters and we soon become familiar with her family troubles: that Mr. Trushoop has become a Free Mason, that he spends more time at the Lodge than at home, that she revenges herself by almost starving him to death, and that "he ought to be sent to the Bastille and Burttong-bay in the bargain." The moment she is at the height of her rage Mrs. Trowell mentions the "mistery" and how she "wheedled, coaxed, fonded, hugg'd, squeez'd, caress'd and kiss'd her husband" till she got the whole secret of the buried treasure out of him. The change that overcomes Mrs. Trushoop's sentiments for her now "dare Trushoop" is highly comical and she hastens away to "make it up with him."

What was the seventh scene of the first act in the edition of 1767 now follows with slight alterations as the second of the second act, and the play proceeds on the same lines as the original until the "Place of action" is reached, which has become the opening scene of the third act. The last scenes have remained intact as far as the plot is concerned. Finally, instead of an ensemble-epilogue, we notice one in the form of a monologue, without being told by whom it shall be spoken. It "shews" the moral lessons contained in the opera and ends rather proudly thus:

Condemn or not—we satisfaction feel,
In thinking, we have caus'd a reformation,
Amongst the dupes of this our congregation.

Owing to the expansion of the play, of course, the numerical order of the "Songs," as they are now called, has not remained the same. If I further remark that the names of the tunes have been dropped, that the language is less coarse, that the changes in literary taste, political and social conditions between 1767 and 1796 were taken into consideration, I believe I have mentioned all that is necessary to indicate the difference between the two editions. If the author felt satisfied with his revision, not so the historian. While The Disappointment in its original form had been considered unfit for the stage on account of its personal reflections, it became impossible for performance in 1796 for very much stronger reasons: the expansion and revision weakened the plot, diluted the witty dialogue, and robbed the "opera" of its genuine and forceful, though brutal, spontaneity.

So far The Disappointment calls not for much critical acumen. However, the opera comes in for a full share of the mystery that surrounds the beginnings of art in the United States. We need but take an interest in the person of Andrew *Barton,* Esq., to be confronted with a threatening question mark.

"Evidently," says Mr. Seilhamer, "the name of Andrew Barton, Esq., on the title page is an assumed one, and in the Ridgway Library [1] copy the name of Colonel Thomas *Forrest,* of Germantown, is written in ink as the author." [2] A startling statement; the more so as it is not at all self-evident why the not very uncommon name of Barton should be a pseudonym. Had Mr. Seilhamer written "because" instead of "and" he would, at least, not have dismissed his readers without a reason for his theory. As the statement stands, his "evidently" appears merely to

[1] A branch of the Library Company of Philadelphia.
[2] Op. cit. I, 178.

be an argument *a posteriori*. The fact is, that Mr. Seilhamer, like Messrs. Durang, Ford, Tyler and other historians, based the theory more or less on a few delightful passages in Watson's "Annals of Philadelphia." Had they informed us that they failed to find the name of Andrew Barton either in the Barton genealogies or in the city directories of Philadelphia and New York published before 1797, and that "in most of the English chronicles under the year 1511" the story is to be found of how Lord Charles Howard captured Sir Andrew Barton, "a Scotish rover on the sea"—we should be prone to abide by their decision.[1] Under the circumstances, however, a reëxamination of their mutual source is advisable.

Mr. Watson had this to say:[2]

Colonel Thomas *Forrest*, who died in 1828, at the age of 83, had been in his early days a youth of much frolic and fun, always well disposed to give time and application toward a joke. He found much to amuse himself in the credulity of some of the German families. I have heard him relate some of his anecdotes of the prestigious kind with much humor. When he was about 21 years of age, a tailor who was measuring him for a suit of clothes, happened to say, "Ah, Thomas, if you and I could only find some of the money of the sea robbers (the pirates), we might drive our coach for life!" The sincerity and simplicity with which he uttered this, caught the attention of young Forrest, and when he went home he began to devise some scheme to be amused with his credulity and superstition. There was a prevailing belief that the pirates had hidden many sums of money and much of treasure about the banks of the Delaware. Forrest got an old parchment, on which he wrote the dying statement of John Hendricks, executed at Tyburn for piracy, in which he stated that he had deposited a chest and pot of money at Cooper's Point in the Jerseys. This parchment he smoked and gave it the appearance of antiquity; and calling on his German tailor, he told him he had found it among his father's papers, who had got it in England from the prisoner, whom he visited in prison. This he showed to the tailor as a precious paper which he could by no means lend out his hands. This operated the desired effect.

[1] See the splendid ballad of Sir Andrew Barton in "A select collection of English songs," London, 1783.
[2] Op. cit. v. I, pp. 268–70.

Soon after the tailor called on Forrest with one Ambruster, a printer, whom he introduced as capable of "printing any spirit out of hell," by his knowledge of the black art. He asked to show him the parchment; he was delighted with it, and confidently said he could conjure Hendricks to give up the money. A time was appointed to meet in an upper room of a public house in Philadelphia, by night, and the innkeeper was let into the secret by Forrest. By the night appointed, they had prepared a closet, a communication with a room above their sitting room, so as to lower down by a pulley, the invoked ghost, who was represented by a young man entirely sewed up in a close white dress on which were printed black-eyed sockets, mouth, and bare ribs with dashes of black between them, the outside and inside of the legs and thighs blackened, so as to make white bones conspicuous there. About twelve persons met in all, seated around a table. Ambruster shofled and dealt out cards, on which were inscribed the names of the new Testament saints, telling them he should bring Hendricks to encompass the table, visible or invisible he could not tell. At the words "John Hendricks, du verfluchter, cum heraus," the pulley was heard to reel, the closet door to fly open, and John Hendricks with ghastly appearance to stand forth. The whole were dismayed and fled, save Forrest, the brave. After this, Ambruster, on whom they all depended, declared that he had by spells got permission to take up the money. A day was therefore appointed to visit the Jersey shore and to dig there by night. The parchment said it lay there between two great stones. Forrest, therefore, prepared two black men to be entirely naked except white petticoat breeches, and these were to jump each on the stone whenever they came to the pot, which had been previously put there. These frightened off the company for a little. When they next essayed they were assailed by cats tied two and two, to whose tails were spiral papers of gunpowder, which illuminated and whizzed, while the cats whawled. The pot was at length got up, and brought in great triumph to Philadelphia wharf: but oh, sad disaster! while helping it out of the boat, Forrest, who managed it, and was handing it up to the tailor, trod upon the gunnel and filled the boat, and holding on to the pot dragged the tailor into the river—it was lost! For years afterwards they reproached Forrest for that loss, and declared he had got the chest himself and was enriched thereby. He favored the conceit, until at last they actually sued him on a writ of treasure trove; but their lawyer was persuaded to give it up as idle. Some years afterwards Mr. Forrest wrote a very

humorous play (which I have seen printed),[1] which contained many incidents of this kind of superstition. It gave such offense to the parties represented, that it could not be exhibited on the stage. I remember some lines in it, for it had much of broken English and German English verses, to wit:

My dearest wife, in all my life
Ich neber was so frighten'd,
De spirit come and I did run,
'Twas juste like tunder mit lightning.

A pretty story, but does it go to prove the authorship of Colonel Thomas Forrest or De Forest, as he is sometimes called, of "The Disappointment"?[2]

If the Colonel wrote the libretto, so full of personal reflections as to be unfit for the stage, why should its plot differ so widely from Mr. Watson's anecdote, particularly as the incidents of the latter would lend themselves easily and without many alterations, even as to the name of the pirate, for the plot of a farce? Then again, Mr. Watson says that Thomas Forrest fooled the tailor "when he was about 21 years of age" and that he wrote the play *"some* years afterwards." How is this? The Colonel died in 1828 at the age of 83. Consequently he was born in 1745. Adding to this date 21 years we gain the year 1766. The Disappointment was *published* (!!) only one year later, in April, 1767.—I confess, a strange contradiction! But this is not all. Says Mr. Watson: "I remember some lines.

My dearest wife, in all my life
Ich neber was so frighten'd,
De spirit come and I did run,
'Twas juste like tunder mit lightning.

He must have had a peculiar memory, for *these lines appear in neither edition of The Disappointment.*

[1] A copy is now in the Athenæum, called "The Disappointment, or Force of Credulity, 2d edition, 1796." (This is Watson's Footnote.)

[2] I lay no stress on the suspicious footnote: the second edition is mentioned, but not the first!

The inference is plain. It would be incompatible with historical reasoning to accept Forrest's traditional authorship unchallenged. But Mr. Seilhamer claims that "in the Ridgway Library copy the name of Colonel Thomas Forrest, of Germantown, is written in ink as the author." This is a fact. We indeed read, following the verses on the title-page, the ink memorandum "by Col. Thomas Forrest of Germantown."

As this gentleman became a colonel in the later part of the War for Independence, the memorandum cannot have been added until, let us say, about 1779—twelve years after the book was published. It might just as well have been added many years later, perhaps by somebody who read Watson's Annals! Furthermore, is it not strange that, though a second edition of the opera appeared after thirty years, no other and more convincing allusions to Forrest's authorship should have been preserved, not to mention the fact that this gentleman did not himself come forward with such a claim when secrecy was no longer a virtue?

But let us examine the Ridgway copy more closely! It is full of manuscript corrections and additions, such as only the author himself can have made. Now the handwriting of these corrections differs from that of the memorandum on the title-page. Consequently it was not Thomas Forrest who attributed the book to himself in after years, and therefore the ink memorandum is by no means authoritative. Finally, how if the half faded sign, that follows this ink memorandum, should have been intended as a question mark, as it looked to me when I examined the copy Mr. Seilhamer mentions?

This historian ends his chapter on "The Disappointment" with the words: "there is no reason to doubt, . . . that the author was Colonel Forrest." We are obliged to contradict him. It seems to me that there are reasons enough to doubt that gentleman's authorship. In fact, Thomas Forrest is not the only competitor for the possible

pseudonym of Andrew Barton, Esq.; and Mr. Seilhamer, like others, though predisposed in favor of the Colonel, was cautious enough to mention that "by some" (who?) the authorship of the opera was attributed to *Joseph Leacock,* who was a jeweler and a silversmith in Philadelphia at the time, and by others to *John Leacock,* "who became Coroner after the Revolution."

We may dispose of Joseph, by saying that he seems to have been among the dead when, in 1796, the second edition of The Disappointment, revised and corrected by the author, was issued. On the other hand, Coroner John Leacock figures in the Philadelphia directories even later.

If Andrew Barton, Esq., is to be considered a pseudonym, it seems to me that John Leacock, claimed also (by Mr. Hildeburn) to have written the tragi-comedy of "The Fall of British Tyranny," should not be cast aside so cheerfully in favor of Thomas Forrest. However, the simplest and most satisfactory theory will be to attribute The Disappointment to the pen of one Andrew Barton, Esq., until this name has *convincingly* been proved to be a pseudonym.

1780–1790

1781: The Temple of Minerva. 1782: The Blockheads. 1787: May Day in Town. 1790: The Reconciliation.

After the publication of The Disappointment in 1767 we do not come across American operas until the war for Independence drew to its end.[1] In my monograph on Francis Hopkinson[2] as the first native American poet-composer I described at some length his Temple of Minerva, performed in 1781, and it is hardly necessary to repeat here the history of this curious "Oratorial entertainment," as the newspapers called it. It was a politi-

[1] In 1778 was published at Philadelphia the comic opera "The Political Duenna," but as this piece was not written by an American, it is unnecessary to describe it.

[2] Extracts were published in Sammelbände V, p. 119–154. The book itself was published in 1905 under the title of "Francis Hopkinson and James Lyon."

cal, allegorical, semi-operatic sketch in two scenes, in which the Genius of America, the Genius of France, the High-priest of Minerva and the Goddess herself unite in saying and singing pleasant things of the French-American alliance. I also stated that it ended with the usual glorification of George Washington, that Hopkinson's music is not extant, and that the Temple of Minerva made part of a concert given on the 11th of December, 1781, by the minister of France in honor of "his excellency general Washington and his lady, the lady of general Greene, and a very polite circle of gentlemen and ladies."

In the following year a mysterious work left the press, entitled:

The Blockheads, or, Fortunate Contractor. An opera in two acts. As it was performed at New York.
New York printed. London, reprinted for S. Kearsley, 1782.

I have not seen the libretto and can only say that Mr. Wegelin [1] attributes it to the pen of Mrs. Mercy Warren, the author of two other political plays. The Blockheads is said to have been written as a counterfarce to General Burgoyne's Blockade of Boston, performed by his military Thespians in January, 1776, at Boston.[2]

Somewhat firmer ground is gained with Royall Tyler's "May Day in Town, or New York in an Uproar." This

"comic opera in 2 acts (never performed), written by the author of 'The Contrast' . . . The Music compiled from the most eminent Masters. With an Overture and Accompaniments.
The Songs of the Opera to be sold on the Evening of Performance."

was advertised in the "New York Daily Advertiser," May 17, 1787, for performance on the following evening. It was given for the benefit of the much admired actor Thomas Wignell, who in 1793 with Alexander Reinagle became manager of the "New Theatre" at Philadelphia.

[1] Oscar Wegelin: Early American Plays, 1714—1830. Dunlap Society publications. New series. No. 10. New York, 1900.
[2] Seilhamer, op. cit. II, 20.

The opera seems not to have been received favorably, for only one performance is on record. Mr. Seilhamer (II, 215) ably calls it "a skit on what has lasted in New York to our day—the much dreaded May-movings." By whom the music was compiled from the most eminent masters I have been unable to ascertain.

A very much more pretentious opera was Peter Markoe's "Reconciliation." The libretto was advertised as "this day . . . published" in the "Federal Gazette," Philadelphia, on May 24, 1790. The title reads:

The *Reconciliation;* or the Triumph of Nature. A comic opera, in two acts by Peter Markoe. [verses.]
Philadelphia: Printed and sold by Prichard & Hall, in Market Street between Front and Second streets, MDCCXC.[1]

As was the case with Andrew Barton's Disappointment, Peter Markoe's opera was accepted by the manager of the American Company but not performed. Of this the author informs us with some bitterness in the dedication

"To his Excellency Thomas Mifflin, Esq., President of the State of Pennsylvania; and to the Honorable Thomas M'Kean, Esq., Chief Justice of the said State; this *Comic Opera* approved of by them in their official Capacity according to Law; but withdrawn from the Managers of the Theater, after it had remained in their hands more than four Months; is . . . inscribed . . ."

The author also relieved us of the necessity of investigating the source of his plot. He remarks in the preface:

A revisal and correction of "Erastus," literally translated by a native of Germany, lately arrived in Pennsylvania, gave rise to the following piece.
The happy simplicity of the German original, written in one act by the celebrated Gesner, [*sic*] suggested an enlargement of the plan. A new character is added, songs are introduced, and the dialogue so modeled, as to be rendered (it is presumed) pleasing to an American ear. Those who understand the Ger-

[1] 8vo.; pp. III ded.; V–VI pref.; VIII Dram. pers.; 9–48. Text. Brown Univ.; Library of Congress; Library Company of Philadelphia.

man and the English languages will, on comparing the two pieces, readily perceive the difference between them . . .

Though this task of comparison would be simple, I prefer to avail myself of the "impartial review" of Markoe's [1] libretto, as it appeared in the "Universal Asylum," Philadelphia, July, 1790 (pp. 46–47). Being practically the earliest critical analysis of an American opera, a literal quotation cannot fail to arouse some interest. It reads:

The Reconciliation: or the Triumph of Nature: a comic opera, in two Acts. By Peter Markoe. Published in Philadelphia.

This little performance is founded on Erastus, a dramatic piece in one act, written by Gessner. The plan is said to be enlarged, so as to differ considerably from the German production. The plot is perfectly simple. Wilson by marrying Amelia has displeased his father. Neglected by him, and forsaken by his friends, he retired from the world, into an obscure retreat, with his wife and son, a man and maid-servant. Here they remained twelve years struggling with all the evils of poverty, but supporting themselves under their afflictions with the consciousness of innocence. Old Wilson, during a violent illness, became sensible of his unjust and cruel treatment of his children, and determined to find them out. While passing over the mountains, with this intent he is met by honest Simon, Wilson's servant, who, not knowing him, obliges him to deliver him half of his money, conceiving it more consistent with justice to rob a man of superfluous wealth, than to suffer a family to starve. The money he offers to Wilson, and tells him that he received it for him from an unknown friend. But the incoherence of his tale leads Wilson to suspect the truth of it and he at length makes a confession of the robbery. Wilson convinces him of the iniquity of his conduct, and obliges him to set out to find the man whom he has robbed, and to restore the money to him. As he is preparing to do this old Wilson enters to enquire the road, and upon seeing Simon is much alarmed. But his fears are soon removed by Wilson's assurances. By means of a letter the old man drops from his pocket, Simon

[1] Peter Markoe was born in Santa Cruz (St. Croix) in 1735 and died at Philadelphia in 1792. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin; read law in London and settled in Philadelphia in 1783. His "Miscellaneous Poems" were printed in 1787.

discovers him to be his master's father; a reconciliation takes place, and all parties are happy.

Such a story appears calculated for the pathetic, rather than the humorous. Accordingly we find the former abounding, and the latter very scantily dispersed. The sentiments are in general fine. The moral inculcated throughout the whole is a confidence in the ways of Providence, and an adherence to probity and rectitude.

The characters are uniformly supported. Wilson is an amiable virtuous man, who in the midst of his afflictions and concern for his wife and child, and all the distresses which have been heaped upon him, suffers not his integrity to be lessened. Amelia is an admirable pattern of conjugal affection, and firm reliance upon the justice of Heaven. This gives to her, in the greatest misfortunes, a tranquillity of soul, with which she endeavours to inspire her husband; nor are her attempts fruitless. Their son William, unconnected with the world, talks with the most childish simplicity, at the same time manifesting a virtuous charitable disposition. Simon is a faithful, affectionate servant, who prefers the service of his old master, to a more profitable place, and retires with him into the mountains. He is made sometimes to utter sentiments which seem superior to the station in which he is placed. Debby is an honest, plain woman. She and her Simon have some little quarrels, but all matters are at last composed between them.—Old Wilson manifests sincere contrition for his harsh conduct towards his son.

The songs are in general good. Some of them appear to us to possess real excellence; particularly the 2d, 3d, 6th and 7th. What effect this piece would have upon the stage we cannot say. It appears to us, however, that the want of humour, of variety in the dialogue, and the length of some of the soliloquies, render it less fit for the stage than for the closet.

There is no occasion to disagree with the *confrère* of olden times except where he touches the musical side of the Reconciliation. If the impartial reviewer attributes real excellence to the songs mentioned—*de gustibus non est disputandam.* For instance, Wilson sings:

Air II

Tune, The Birks of Indermay.

Why sleeps the thunder in the skies,
When guilty men to grandeur rise?—

Or why should innocence bewail
Distress, in bleak misfortune's vale?
Just are the dark decrees of heaven,
Since short the date to either given,
Vice earns unnecessary dread and shame,
While endless joys are virtue's claim.

These may be good ethics but they are poor musical lyrics. Such stilted poetry may do in the philosophical abortions of Wagnerian epigones, but certainly not in comic ballad operas. Especially not if they be fashioned after those of the older type, that is, those in which the songs are sung to popular tunes. Of the seven "airs" used as solos or duets and which precede the finale the first is the least objectionable from the standpoint of ballad opera, though certainly not from that of poetry. It runs thus to the tune of "My Jockey is the blythest lad":

How happy once were Debby's days!
Ah! days of sweet content!
The hearth rejoic'd her with its blaze
The jack alertly went.
Since Simon leaves his love to weep
No comfort can she know;
The jack eternally may sleep;
And Debby's cake is dough, etc.

Still it cannot be denied that Peter Markoe possessed a faint conception of operatic effect. He concludes his opera after the reconciliation has taken place with what we may call a feeble attempt at a finale:

Duet.

Tune, Guardian Angels, etc.

Wilson.

Nature! to thy throne thus bending
Hear a son—

Amelia.

A daughter too!

Both.

Grief no more our bosoms rending,
Brighter prospects now we view.

Wilson.

Let him, Heaven! thy favours share.

Amelia.

Make him thy peculiar care!

Both.

And in Death's awful hour
On him the blessings pour,
Who thus preserves a faithful pair.

William.

Tune, The Babes in the Wood.

Dear Grand-papa! indeed, indeed!
I love you passing well.
To you with joy I'll sing and read,
And pretty stories tell.
I mean to copy all your ways,
Instructed by mamma;
That wond'ring crouds the youth may praise
Who loves his Grand-papa.

Deborah.

Tune, Good morning to your Night-cap.

If she may be so bold, Sir,
Poor Debby takes upon her,
Although you are not old, Sir,
To tend and nurse your honor.
With happy art I'll play my part,
With soup and sago cheer your heart;
For you I'll pray,
And bid each day
Good morning to your night-cap.

Simon.

Tune, the same as the last.

Since now our cares are over
I sue for Debby's favor;

No more I'll play the rover
But stick to her for ever.
To you—and you
My thanks are due;
Your worship claims my service too.
For you I'll pray,
And bid each day,
Good morning to your night-cap.

Wilson, senior.

Tune, How happy a life does a miller possess.

Affection! continue to warm ev'ry breast;
Henceforth I shall hail thee the welcome guest.
To nature if just, we most evils defy;
It charms us on earth and conducts to the sky.
If fond of our friends and our kindred we prove.
Our country may safely depend on our love.
Then may true affection each bosom possess!
'Tis the parent of union; the source of success!

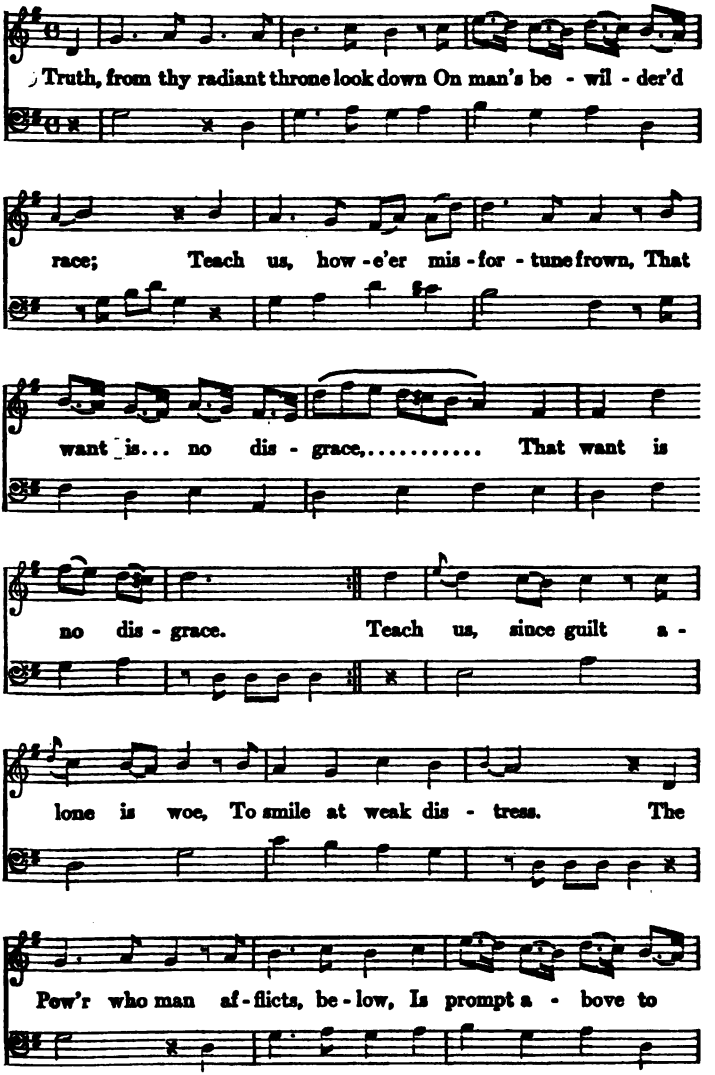
Chorus.

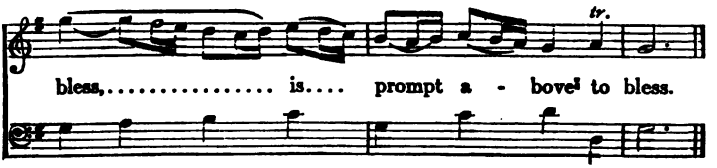
If fond of our friends and kindred we prove, etc.

Evidently Peter Markoe's libretto was considered quite an achievement in some quarters, for not only did the Universal Asylum review the opera "impartialy," but it published in June, 1790, in addition to the words of two airs both words and music of Air VI to the tune of "In Infamy" (Wilson. Act II, Scene 5). This interest taken by the editor in Peter Markoe should be appreciated, as it enables us to submit at last, if nothing better, at least an excerpt from the operatic literature of the United States during the eighteenth century.[1] It is the following:

Air in the Reconciliation; A Comic Opera, by Peter *Markoe.*

[1] To avoid confusion I remark that the 'Reconsaliation' (sic). The Words by a Gentleman of Philadelphia. Music by J. Gehot, in the first number of Young's Vocal and Instrumental Miscellany has nothing to do with the opera as performed. Gehot, the violinist, member of the "opera house, Hanover square," London, did not come to the United States before 1792, and the collection mentioned was published in 1793.





1793–1794.

1793: Capocchio and Dorinna; Needs must; Old woman of eighty-three; 1794 Tammany.

Until the last decade of the eighteenth century Hallam and Henry's "American Company" controlled theatrical matters entirely in our country. Being without serious competitors, this company deteriorated about 1790. Finally it was dissolved. This dissolution marked a new era in our theatrical life. A rivalry sprang up between Hallam and Henry, and Thomas Wignell and Alexander Reinagle, to import English actors and singers of high standing. Henry reorganized his company under the name of the "Old American Company," with headquarters at New York; Wignell and Reinagle selected Philadelphia, where in 1793 they built the Chestnut Street Theatre, for many years the wonder of the United States. Though the two companies were about equally matched as to histrionic and musical talent, they differed in one respect. Without neglecting opera the Old American Company took more to drama, whereas Wignell and Reinagle decided to lay stress on opera. This rivalry of the two companies filled our operatic life with new blood. By far the majority of popular English operas received a hearing in our country and often in a manner to command respect.

The weak spot in the performances of former years had been the orchestra. Here, too, a remarkable change took place after the conclusion of the War for Independence. To the many adventurous persons who flocked to the newborn United States musicians contributed a proportionate

percentage. Though these musical emigrants did not, as a rule, represent the highest order of their profession, yet not a few, like Alexander Reinagle, William Brown, Benjamin Carr, Raynor Taylor, James Hewitt and others, were able men. Furthermore, when the revolutions in France and the West Indies broke out, the number of skillful musicians was increased by many who sought refuge in the United States. They added to the English and German a distinctly French element, represented by such artists as Gehot and Victor Pelissier. While this influx of musical talent was due mostly to political causes, the above-mentioned progress in theatrical matters contributed towards the improvement of our orchestras, as the managers of the rival companies took pains to enlarge and improve their "bands." Ready to pay good salaries, they had little difficulty in securing musicians who, with justifiable pride, would advertise upon their arrival in the New World that they had played, for instance, under Haydn.

As a matter of course, all this had its effect on the literature of American opera. Musicians, even the meanest, will insist on reaching for the laurels of composers, and whether the managers needed new accompaniments to older works or new settings to accepted operatic novelties, they could now count upon their own forces to supply the demand. For a while the activity in these spheres of "Kapellmeister-Musik" assumed, relatively speaking, formidable proportions until suddenly checked by various obstacles.

For the years 1791 to 1793 I am not aware of any work to be called an American opera as defined in the introduction. True, Raynor Taylor[1] advertised

[1] Taylor, Raynor, born [1747] in England, died at Philadelphia, Aug. 17, 1825.—According to John R. Parker (Musical Biography, Boston, 1825, pp. 179–180) Taylor entered, at an early age, the king's singing school as one of the boys of the Chapel Royal. After leaving the school, he was for many years established at Chelmesford, Essex county, as organist and teacher. From there he was called to be the composer and director of the music to the Sadler's Wells Theater. Taylor was a ballad composer of standing before he, in Oct., 1792, appeared in Baltimore as "Music Pro-

for performance at Annapolis on January 20, 1793,[1] his

Mock Italian Opera, called *Capocchio and Dorinna* . . . Dressed in Character . . . Consisting of Recitative, Airs and Duets . . . the whole of the music original and composed by Mr. Taylor.

but this vaudeville-parody, like his

"comic burletta never performed, called *Old Woman of eighty-three*"

announced for performance *ibidem* on February 28,[2] cannot be considered as operas. The nearest approach to this kind of entertainment in 1793 was a musical trifle, called "Needs Must, or the Ballad Singers." It had its first performance at New York on December 23d and served as a vehicle for the reappearance of the popular Mrs. Pownall who, having broken her leg during the first few weeks of the season, when she again came before the public was still on crutches.[3] For "Needs Must" Mrs. Anne Julia Hatton, a sister of Mrs. Siddons, and wife of Wm. Hatton, a musical instrument maker at New York, furnished the plot, which was slight, and wrote one of the songs. The whole of the dialogue was the work of Mrs. Pownall. The only example of the songs in "Needs Must" that has come down to us is the following:

fessor, Organist and Teacher of Music in general, lately arrived from London." He was appointed in the same year organist at St. Anne's in Annapolis, but receiving no fixed salary he preferred to settle in Philadelphia. Here he was for many years organist at St. Peter's and, in 1820, influential in founding the Musical Fund Society. His compositions are numerous, and mostly of a secular character. As a specialty he cultivated burlesque olios or "extravaganzas" which came dangerously near being music-hall skits. He strikingly illustrates the fact that the American public of the eighteenth century was not horrified by secular tendencies in an organist, outside of the church walls. Besides Taylor it was B. Carr and Alexander Reinagle who worked most for the progress of music at Philadelphia about 1800. He was famous for his improvisations. His more important works were never published.

[1] "Maryland Gazette," January 14, 1793.

[2] "Maryland Gazette," Feb. 21.

[3] Mrs. Pownall, who arrived in the United States during the winter of 1793–4, was identical with the celebrated Mrs. Wrighten. Comp. Seilhamer, v. III; for the remarks on Needs Must, see this author or his source, Dunlap's History of the American Theatre.

To her enraptured fancy flies
Whose image fills the heart;
Swells on the beam of her dear eyes
Whose smiles ecstatic joy impart, etc.

More important as an attempt at opera was Mrs. Hatton's "Tammany, or the Indian Chief." [1] A serious opera, "the music composed by James Hewitt," [2] and first performed at the John Street Theatre, New York, on March 3, 1794. The performance was thus advertised in the "New York Daily Advertiser" for the same day:

This evening . . . An opera (a new piece) never before performed, written by a lady of this city, called *Tammany,* or the Indian Chief.

The Prologue by Mr. Hodgkinson
The Epilogue by Mr. Martin.

The overture and accompaniments composed by Mr. Hewitt with new scenery, dresses and decorations.[3]

In Act 3rd a Procession, by the Company. And an Italian Dance, by Messrs. Durang and Miller.

Soon after her arrival at New York during the winter of 1793–94 Mrs. Hatton began to wield her pen as the bard of American Democracy. Party spirit ran high in those years, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists opposing each other with the same fervor as Republicans and Democrats of to-day. Mrs. Hatton catered to the Anti-Federalists, whose "platform" among other political issues strongly

[1] Comp. Wegelin, op. cit.

[2] Hewitt, James, violinist, composer, music publisher.—Came to New York in 1792 with Gehot, Bergman, Young and Philips as "Professors of music, from the operahouse, Hanoversquare, and professional concerts under the direction of Haydn, Pleyel, etc. London." Hewitt managed excellent "Subscription Concerts" at New York during the following year and was very active as virtuoso and "leader of the band" of the Old Americans. He held an undisputed position as leading musician of New York, and his social standing was excellent. In 1797 or late in 1796 he seems to have purchased the New York branch of B. Carr's Musical Repository. Though he can be traced back to 1794 as publisher it was not until 1798 that he became important in that capacity. Hewitt's career extends far into the nineteenth century. He was born in 1770 and died in 1827. Quite a number of his compositions are extant, scattered in our libraries, though mostly his less important works.

[3] The new scenery was painted by Charles Ciceri, and (to use the words of Dunlap) "they were gaudy and unnatural, but had a brilliancy of colouring, red and yellow being abundant."

favored the French revolution. The Tammany Society, then almost as powerful as it is now, belonged to the same party. Under the circumstances Mrs. Hatton could easily win the far-reaching protection of the society for an opera based on the legend of its patron. She hesitated not to do so, and, as a matter of course, the opera was praised by the Anti-Federalists and condemned by their political opponents. For instance, when the work was revived in the following year, the critic of the "New York Magazine" indignantly queried on March 13th:

> Why is that wretched thing Tammany again brought forward? Messrs. Hallam and Henry, we are told, used to excuse themselves for getting it up, by saying that it was sent them by the Tammany Society, and that they were afraid of disobliging so respectable a body of critics, who, having appointed a committee to report on the merits of this piece, had determined it to be one of the finest things of its kind ever seen.

The opera actually seems to have been received with "unbounded applause" on the first night, but even the report of this success in the "Daily Advertiser" did not pass unchallenged, and William Dunlap, he too a Federalist, with evident satisfaction quotes in his History of the American Theatre several sarcastic communications to that paper. He calls Tammany "literally a melange of bombast" and finally remarks:

> . . . a more severe and well written communication takes notice of the *ruse* made use of to collect an audience for the support of the piece by circulating a report that a party had been made up to hiss it; and goes on to describe the audience assembled as made up of "the poorer class of mechanics and clerks" and of bankrupts who ought to be content with the mischief they had already done, and who might be much better employed than in disturbing a theatre.
>
> The disturbance alluded to was an attack upon James Hewitt, the leader in the orchestra, for not being ready with a popular air when called upon.

From all this it might be seen that Tammany was not treated with indifference. However, the interest did not

last, as is the case with most plays applauded for reasons not artistic. The opera enjoyed three performances at New York and two at Philadelphia in 1794, one upon its revival at New York in 1795, and one at Boston in 1796, where the eminent singer and actor John Hodgkinson selected it for his benefit performance.[1]

It would be an easy task for us later-day critics, not hampered by the political jealousies of yore, to disclose the real merits of the case by an examination of the book and the music. But neither seems to have been published. Only "books with the words of the songs" were "sold at the doors" at the second and third performances,[2] and nothing appears to have become of the

Proposals for printing by Subscription, the Overture with the Songs, Choruses, etc., etc., to Tammany as composed and adapted to the Pianoforte by Mr. Hewitt.

The price to subscribers 12 s. each copy, 4 s. to be paid at the time of subscribing, and one dollar on delivery of the book, to non-subscribers it will be two dollars. Subscriptions received by James Harrison, No. 108 Maiden-lane.[3]

By reading the prologue, the cast, and

"The Songs of Tammany, or the Indian Chief. A Serious Opera. By Ann Julia Hatton. To be had at the Printing Office of John Harrison, No. 3 Peck Slip and of Mr. Faulkner at the Box Office of the Theatre (Price One Shilling) 1794."[4]

we may, at least, gain a vague idea of the plot.

The prologue was written by a young poet named Richard Bingham Davis, and published in a volume of his poems at New York in 1807. It reads in part as follows:

Secure the Indian roved his native soil,
Secure enjoy'd the produce of his toil,

[1] Comp. the lists of productions for these years in Sellhamer and in my book "Early Opera in America."

[2] Comp. "Daily Advertiser" for March 5 and 7. On March 5 the public was also "respectfully acquainted that two of the Songs will be omitted as unnecessary to the conduct or interest of the piece."

[3] Comp. "New York Daily Advertiser" for March 29, 1794.

[4] Collation: 12mo. 16 pp. New York Historical Society; 2 copies, one lacking title-page.

Nor knew, nor feared a haughty master's pow'r
To force his labors, or his gains devour.
And when the slaves of Europe here unfurl'd
The bloody standard of their servile world,
When heaven, to curse them more, first deign'd to bless
Their base attempts with undeserved success,
He knew the sweets of liberty to prize,
And lost on earth he sought her in the skies;
Scorned life divested of its noblest good,
And seal'd the cause of freedom with his blood.

Manifestly the historically correct but poetically absurd lines present the plot in an ethno-ethical nutshell. After this prelude came the fugue, with the following subjects:

Tammany	Mr. Hodgkinson
Columbus	Mr. Hallam
Perez	Mr. King
Ferdinand	Mr. Martin
Wegaw	Mr. Prigmore
Indian Dancers	Mr. Durang, Mr. Miller
Manana	Mrs. Hodgkinson
Zulla	Mrs. Hamilton[1]

Reading between the lines of the "Songs" we observe this: Tammany and Manana are in love; Ferdinand tries to separate them and finally carries Manana off by force. Tammany comes to her rescue, but the Spaniards burn him up in his cabin with his beloved squaw. Truly, a serious opera, but not enough so to exclude the comic element, which is represented by Wegaw. Beyond this nothing definite appears between the lines of the songs. The musical structure is simple and was evidently made to order for Mrs. Hodgkinson, as Manana sings most of the airs.

The first act contained four, and all for Manana. There seems to have followed an ensemble scene in which the refrain of a chorus of Indians is taken up first by Zulla, then by Manana, with an additional monologue. The act ends with the same refrain. The second act contains an

[1] Cast copied from Seilhamer, v. III, p. 84.

Air for Wegaw, a Song for Ferdinand, two more airs for Manana and a final chorus. In the third act Tammany at last, in Air I, shows his power of song. Manana follows with two airs, and the act ends with a regular operatic finale. It consists of a duet between Tammany and Manana before they are burned up in their cabin, and a chorus of "Indian Priests." After the catastrophe is reached, follows a chorus of "Indians and Spaniards" in praise of "valiant, good and brave" Tammany, and a chorus of women in praise of "chaste" Manana. The whole ends with a chorus drawing the moral *facit.*

A few examples may show that Mrs. Hatton possessed some power of characterization and that her songs called for an operatic setting very much more than those of Peter Markoe. For instance, after Ferdinand carries Manana off Tammany sings:

> Fury swells my aching soul,
> Boils and maddens in my veins;
> Fierce contending passions roll
> Where Manana's image reigns.
> Hark! her shrill cries thro' the dark woods resound!
> She struggles in lust's cruel arms,
> My bleeding bosom, my ears how they wound
> And fill ev'ry pulse with alarms.
> Come, revenge! my spirit inspire,
> Breathe on my soul thy frantic fire,
> O'er each nerve thy impulse roll,
> Breathe thy spirit on my soul, etc.

Quite different from these somewhat bombastic strains is Wegaw's hymn in praise of the "fire-water:

> For deep cups of this liquor I swear,
> Have made foolish Wegaw quite wise;
> And faith now, I can tell to a hair
> What's doing above in the skies.
> The sun is a deep thinking fellow,
> He drys up the dews of the night,
> Lest old father Time should get mellow,
> And so become slow in his flight.

The moon she looks drinking, 'tis plain,
She governs the tides of each flood,
And oft takes a sip from the main;
You may know by her changeable mood.
Thou dear tippling orb give me drink,
Large lakes full of glorious rum.
My head turns, I'm swimming I think,
Sweet Rhema! Why look you so glum?

This is really not bad for a drinking song, and we only hope that Mrs. Hatton herself enjoyed the charms of Bacchus in a more womanly manner.

To these specimens, though they are sufficient to illustrate Mrs. Hatton's art, I add the duet between Tammany and Manana for a particular reason:

Tammany. Altered from the old Indian Song.

The sun sets in night and the stars shun the day
But glory unfading can never decay,
You white men deceivers your smiles are in vain;
The son of Alkmoonac, shall ne'er wear your chain.

Manana

To the land where our fathers are gone we will go,
Where grief never enters but pleasures still flow,
Death comes like a friend: he relieves us from pain,
Thy children, Alkmoonac, shall ne'er wear their chain.

Both

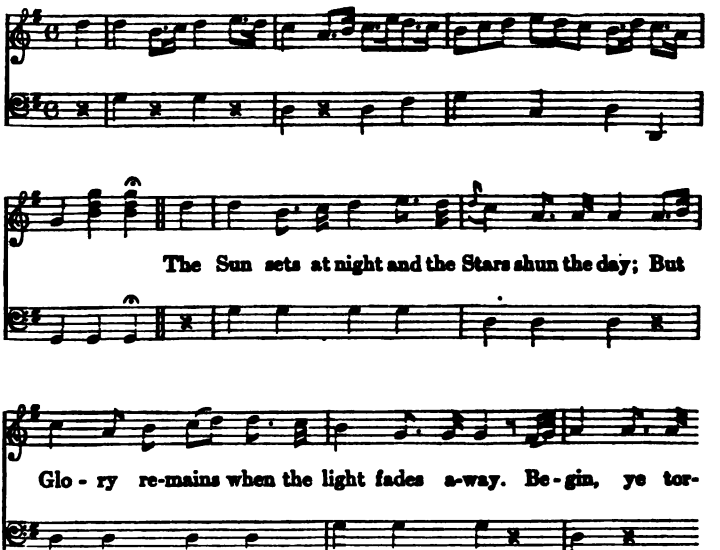
Farewell then ye woods which have witness'd our flame,
Let time on his wings bear our record of fame,
Together we die for our spirits disdain,
Ye white children of Europe your rankling chain.

The reason for quoting this certainly not very poetical duet is this. In Royall Tyler's comedy, "The Contrast," published at Philadelphia in 1790, *Maria* sings almost identical words in the second scene of the first act. Had they been original with Tyler, Mrs. Hatton certainly would not have remarked "altered from the *old* Indian song." This remark of hers was evidently overlooked

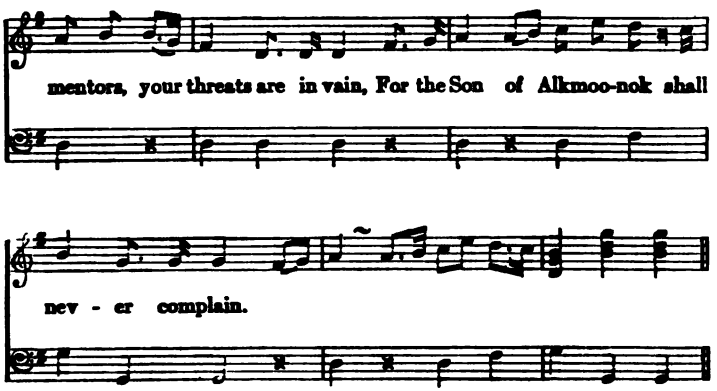
by the Dunlap Society when it reprinted "The Contrast" in 1887 together with "Alkmoonok. The Death Song of the Cherokee Indians" by way of illustration. The curious little piece deserves a second reprint in this monograph on early American operas, as there can be no doubt that the air had also been used in Mrs. Hatton's opera.

ALKMOONOK.[1]

The Death Song of the Cherokee Indians.
New York. Printed & sold by G. Gilfert. No. 177 Broadway.
Likewise to be had at P. A. Von Hagen, Musicstore No. 3 Cornhill, Boston.



[1] Mr. Thomas McKee says on p. X of the introduction to the reprint: "The illustration to the song of Alkmoonok, is from music published contemporaneously with the play. This song had long the popularity of a national air and was familiar in every drawing room in the early part of the century."—But the New York directories render it impossible that the song was published contemporaneously with the play (1790), for Gilfert's address above given appears only between the years 1798–1801. Furthermore, P. A. Von Hagen resided, according to the Boston directories, at No. 3 Cornhill, Boston, not earlier than 1800 (or possibly 1799, as a directory for this year was not issued). Therefore, the date of publication was probably 1800.



1795-1796

1795: Sicilian Romance; 1796: The Recruit; The Archers; Edwin and Angelina.[1]

In 1794 Mrs. Siddon's Sicilian Romance with William Reeve's music was received with great favor at London. Always eager to acquaint their public with successful novelties, Messrs. Wignell and Reinagle introduced the work to Philadelphians on May 6, 1795. As a rule Alexander Reinagle [2] contented himself with writing new accompani-

[1] The "Little Yankee Sailor" of 1795 was a "musical farce" with music borrowed from Shield, Hook, Dibdin, Taylor, etc.

[2] Reinagle, Alexander. Pianist, theatrical manager, composer.—According to John R. Parker (Euterpiad, 1822), Reinagle was born [1756] in Portsmouth, England, and commenced his early career in Scotland, where he received instruction in both the theory and practice of music from Raynor Taylor. He came to New York in 1786, calling himself "Member of the Society of Musicians in London." His proposals to settle in New York not meeting with sufficient encouragement, he went to Philadelphia after giving proof of his abilities to the New Yorkers in an excellent concert. In Philadelphia his talents were readily appreciated, and he became music teacher in the best families. He conducted and performed in numerous concerts, besides presiding at the harpsichord in opera, in several cities, especially in Baltimore, before he and Wignell founded the New Theatre at Philadelphia in 1793. This enterprise was in every respect remarkable, but too great a preference was given to opera, and the commercial success was not in keeping with the artistic. Reinagle developed an astonishing activity as composer and arranger during these years. He died at Baltimore on September 21, 1809. "During the latter years of his life, he was ardently engaged in composing music to parts of Milton's Paradise Lost, which he did not live to complete. It was intended to be

ments and occasionally a new overture to such importations, but in this case he reset the entire libretto for reasons unknown to us. The "Daily American Advertiser" announced on May 5, 1795, that for Mrs. Morris's benefit would be given on the following evening:

. . . a Musical Dramatic Tale, in 2 acts, called The Sicilian Romance, or, the Apparition of the Cliffs. Now performing at Covent Garden in London with unbounded applause. The music composed by Mr. Reinagle.

Merely alluding to an unimportant "Musical Interlude" called "The Recruit" and performed at Charleston, S. C., in 1796, the book of which was written by the actor John D. Turnbull, we now have to concentrate our attention on two operas, whose librettos were both published in 1796: *The Archers,* frequently but erroneously called the first American opera, and *Edwin and Angelina.*

The book to The Archers was written by William Dunlap,[1] and the music by Benjamin Carr.[2] The opera was advertised for first performance at the John Street Theatre,

performed in the oratorio style, except that instead of recitatives, the best speakers were to be engaged in reciting the intermediate passages." [Parker.] The L. of C. possesses some really fine sonatas of his in autograph.

[1] Dunlap, William, 1766–1839. The well-known painter (pupil of Benjamin West), playwright (70 original plays and translations), theatrical manager, historian, founder and vice-president of the National Academy of Design, etc.

[2] Carr, Benjamin, [1769]–1831. This prolific composer was a member of the London "Concert of Antient Music" before he, in 1793, emigrated to the United States. He is first mentioned in the Philadelphia papers of the same year as partner of "B. Carr & Co., music printers and importers." When opening a branch of his "Musical Repository" at New York in 1794 he probably removed his residence from Philadelphia to New York. Late in 1796 or early in 1797 he seems to have sold the New York branch to James Hewitt.—Carr was a favorite of the American public as a ballad singer, and tried the operatic stage with some success. But his career as organist, pianist, concert manager, publisher and composer was of by far greater importance for the development of musical life in Philadelphia. In fact, he is equaled by very few in that respect.—His compositions, both sacred and secular, are very numerous, but scattered. The New York Public Library, for instance, possesses a miscellaneous collection of sacred music in Carr's handwriting and full of original compositions by him, a fact that has escaped attention. Carr tried almost every branch of composition with success. He was a thoroughly trained musician of the old school. His works are distinguished by a pleasing softness of lines. He also wrote a few theoretical treatises.—The Musical Fund Society, of which he was a founder (1820), erected a monument to his memory after his death in Philadelphia on May 24, 1831.

New York, in the "American Daily Advertiser," 1796, April 16th, as follows:

On Monday Evening the 18th of April will be presented a new Dramatic Piece, in 3 Acts, called *The Archers*, Founded on the story of William Tell. Interspersed with Songs, Choruses, etc. . . .

The opera was repeated "by particular Desire and the last time of performing it this Season" on April 22nd,[1] and revived on November 25th, 1796, for one performance.[2] During the following year it was twice given at Boston, the second time with an advertisement to the effect that it had been performed in New York "several nights, with unbounded applause." [3] The Archers then seems to have fallen into oblivion.

For want of other contemporaneous criticisms I quote what Dunlap had to say on his own behalf in the American Theatre (1832, pp. 147, 149):

The story of William Tell and the struggle for Helvetic liberty was . . . moulded into dramatic form . . . and with songs, choruses, etc., was called an opera . . . Mr. Carr, for whom the principal singing part was allotted, composed the music. Comic parts were introduced with some effect. Schiller's play on the same subject did not then exist . . . The writer of the American play gave it a very bad title, "The Archers." . . .

On the 18th of April, 1796, the opera of The Archers was performed for the first time, and received with great applause. The music by Carr was pleasing and well got up; Hodgkinson and Mrs. Melmoth were forcible in Tell and wife. The comic parts told well with Hallam and Mrs. Hodgkinson, although Conrad ought to have been given to Jefferson. The piece was repeatedly played, and was printed immediately.

The title-page reads:

The Archers or Mountaineers of Switzerland; an opera, in three acts as performed by the Old American Company, in New

[1] Comp. "American Daily Advertiser," April 22, 1796.
[2] Comp. "American Minerva," November 25, 1796. This third performance escaped Mr. Seilhamer's attention, and it must be said that his antagonism to William Dunlap induced him to treat of The Archers too superficially.
[3] Comp. "Columbian Centinel," Boston, October 7, 1797.

York. To which is subjoined a brief historical account of Switzerland, from the dissolution of the Roman Empire to the final establishment of the Helvetic Confederacy by the battle of Sempach.

New York. Printed by T. & J. Sword, No. 99 Pearl Street—1796—[1]

The history of the libretto is thus given in the preface:

In the summer of the year 1794, a dramatic performance, published in London, was left with me, called Helvetic Liberty. I was requested to adapt it to our stage. After several perusals I gave it up, as incorrigible; but pleased with the subject, I recurred to the history of Switzerland, and composed the piece now presented to the public.

Any person, who has the curiosity to compare the two pieces, will observe that I have adopted three of the imaginary characters, from Helvetic Liberty,—the Burgomaster, Lieutenant, and Rhodolpha: I believe they are, however, strictly my own. The other similarities are the necessary consequences of being both founded on the same historic fact. . . .

The principal liberty taken with history is, that I have concentrated some of the actions of these heroic mountaineers; making time submit to the laws of the Drama. But the reader will not have that sublime pleasure invaded, which is felt in the contemplation of virtuous characters; Tell, Furst, Melchthal, Staffach, and Winkelried, are not the children of poetic fiction. . . .

New York, April 10th, 1796. W. Dunlap.

After the prologue ("We tell a tale of Liberty to-night . . .") follow the

Characters.

William Tell, Burgher of Altdorf, Canton of Uri	Mr. Hodgkinson
Walter Furst, of Uri	Mr. Johnson
Werner Staffach, of Schwyz	Mr. Hallam, jun.
Arnold Melchthal, of Unterwalden	Mr. Tyler
Gesler, Austrian Governor of Uri	Mr. Cleveland
Lieutenant to Gesler	Mr. Jefferson
Burgomaster of Altdorf	Mr. Prigmore
Conrad, a seller of wooden ware in Altdorf	Mr. Hallam
Leopold, Duke of Austria	Mr. King

[1] Collation: 8vo. pref. pp. (V)–VI; prol. (VII)–VIII; text 78 pp.; hist. account pp. 81—94 (1). Boston Public Library; Brown University; Library of Congress; Library Company of Philadelphia; New York Historical Society; New York Public Library; Pennsylvania Historical Society.

Bowmen	Messrs. Lee, Durang, etc.
Pikemen	Messrs. Munto, Tomkins, etc.
Burghers	Messrs. Des Moulins, Wools, etc.
Portia, Tell's wife	Mrs. Melmoth
Rhodolpha, Walter Furst's daughter	Miss Broadhurst
Cecily, a basket woman	Mrs. Hodgkinson
Boy, Tell's son	Miss Harding
Maidens of Uri	Madame Gardie, Madame Val, Miss Brett, etc.

Scene lies in the City of Altdorf and its Environs. Time, part of two days.

A fair example of the strength and high standard of the Old American Company!

Having the right of priority over Schiller's Wilhelm Tell, The Archers shall be treated here with especial consideration. A synopsis will also help to disclose the differences in plot, spirit and *genre* between the work of the so-called Father of the American Stage and the German master-poet.

The first scene of the first act "shows" a Street in Altdorf. Enter Cecily crying "Baskets for Sale" or rather soliciting trade with a song. She is met by "Conrad with a Jackass loaded with Wooden Bowls, Dishes, Ladles, etc." Conrad is a jolly sort of fellow from beginning to end of the opera, as may be seen from his entrance-song:

> Here are bowls by the dozen, and spoons by the gross,
> And a ladle or two in the bargain I'll toss.
> Here are ladles for soup and ladles for pap,
> To feed little Cob as he lies in your lap.
> By, by, by, by,
> Come, buy . . . etc.

In the following dialogue we hear of the troubles of the peasantry and of their preparations for overthrowing Gesler's tyrannical government. But the couple is not very much interested in politics and prefers to make love in a duet. Their happiness comes to a sudden end "when

enter Lieutenant and Guard, Drums, etc. Some pressed men bound—Citizens following—Conrad attempts to steal off" but is seized by the guards and made a prisoner. This calls for a Trio between Conrad, Cecily and the Lieutenant. The latter is anything but "honest and sound at the heart," as Cecily sings of her Conrad, for his entreaties are cynically outspoken.

In the second scene we discover William Tell adjusting his arms, "his little son trying to draw his sword." They are joined by Portia, and in a highly patriotic dialogue we are informed in detail of Gesler's violations of chartered rights. Finally we are entertained with a song by Tell, the following lines of which will prove him to have been a greater marksman than Dunlap a poet.

Forever lives the patriot's fame,
Forever useful is his name,
  Inspiring virtuous deeds.
How glorious 'tis in spite of time
In spite of death, to live sublime;
  While age to age succeeds.

The scene shifts and "bowmen are discovered preparing their arms by the Side of a Piece of Water; on the other Side of which is seen the sublime Hills, hanging Rocks, and various appropriate Beauties of the Lake of Uri." After a chorus by the bowmen, enter Walter Furst and Arnold Melchthal. Horns sound at a distance, are recognized as those of Schwyz and answered by the bowmen of Uri with the "song of Uri." Enter Werner Staffach at the head of warriors. They march down the stage and range opposite (we are in opera) the bowmen of Uri, singing

To the war horn's loud and solemn blast,
  Floating on the affrighted air,
Obedient Schweitzers hither haste,
  The fight with Uri's sons to share.

Of course, the "Ruetli Schwur" follows, Dunlap spelling the word *Gruti,* and it is here where he "concentrated

some of the action of these heroic mountaineers" by availing himself of Arnold Winkelried and the Battle of Sempach—an anachronism of eighty years, to make "time submit to the laws of the Drama."

The operatic illusion becomes complete when "enter Rhodolpha, equip'd as a Huntress." She requests and receives her father's permission to fight with the men for the liberty of her country. The act could end here to the satisfaction of everybody, but a finale is needed. It is furnished by Melchthal and Rhodolpha in a duet and by the "Chorus of the whole."

The second act opens "in front of the castle of Altdorf. A pole is seen with a Hat on it. Enter Lieutenant with Guards, among whom is Conrad, armed as a Cuirassier, his Armour much too large for him and apparently very heavy." The Lieutenant leads him to a spot near the castle, with orders to force every passer-by to bow to the governor's hat. Exit Lieutenant after a clever duet with Conrad, who continues his buffooneries. He not even interrupts them when Gesler and Lieutenant enter with deep-laid plans against the burghers of Altdorf in general and "saucy Tell" in particular. Having informed the audience of their intention to hang Tell, they leave, whereupon enters Rhodolpha. We are now entertained with a rather burlesque episode between her and Conrad. The play again becomes serious for a while after the appearance of the burgomaster, who bows to the hat. A skillfully contrasted dialogue follows between him

"traitor! no, no, . . . one of Switzerland's best friends"

(as he calls himself) and Rhodolpha. Finally, aiming at the burgomaster with her weapon, she forces him to kneel down and bow to her, "the representative of Liberty." From a melodramatic standpoint this is very effective and would please an American audience to-day as much as it probably did one hundred years ago. The scene, however,

is weakened by a rather tawdry song of Rhodolpha and by additional buffooneries of Conrad.

The next scene carries us to the town-hall of Altdorf. Its interest is concentrated in a fine monologue of Tell, who incites his fellow-citizens to speedy action. He is surprised and disarmed, whereupon we are carried back to the castle, the pole, etc., and—Conrad in *Morpheus'* arms. Enter Burgomaster, Tell, and Lieutenant. Traitor and patriot are contrasted in a pathetic manner, but the effect is destroyed by what follows: a low-comedy scene between Conrad and Cecily. For instance, Cecily sings a song, tickling at its refrains her sleeping lover's nose. Finally, Conrad "gets out of the cuirass and dresses up Cecily."

The fourth scene carries us to the governor's palace, where Gesler gives orders to execute Tell immediately, though Portia pathetically cries for mercy. The news that the Austrians "have stop'd; amaz'd" and that Leopold of Austria has taken supreme command, forces Gesler to defer the execution. He resolves to free Tell under the condition that "he must somewhat do to please us." Of course, we now expect to be witnesses of how Tell shoots the apple from his son's head. Strange to say, Dunlap contents himself with merely letting Gesler stipulate this feat as the *conditio sine qua non,* and with contrasting Gesler's devilishly cruel designs with Portia's pathetic outcries.

The next scene shows "the Mountains, a Waterfall and a distant View of a part of the Lake." Enter Walter, then Melchthal and bowmen, rejoicing in the news of the emperor's death. After a rather bombastic song of Melchthal, those present are joined by Werner, Rhodolpha, pikemen, and maidens bringing the belated news that "Gesler hath seiz'd on Tell, and threatens death." All this occasions a trio between Rhodolpha, Melchthal and first bowman "altered from Goldsmith":

Dear is the homely cot, and dear the shed
To which the soul conforms;
And dear to us the hill, whose snow-crowned head
Uplifts us to the storms, etc.

With the quoted lines as chorus-refrain, the curtain falls, the interruption of the apple-scene being an obvious technical blunder.

Its development is taken up in the first scene of the third act, on lines and at times in words almost literally the same as in Schiller's drama. The second scene presents "The mountains. Violent Storm, Wind, Rain and Thunder." After the storm has abated, enter Melchthal with this song:

Hark! from the mountain's awful head,
To stranger's hearts inspiring dread,
The genius of our hills in thunder speaks!
Switzers, to arms! to arms! arise!
To arms! each hollow cave replies
To arms! to arms! from every echo breaks.

Then enters Rhodolpha, followed by her female archers. We listen to a song by her and are then notified by Werner Staffach—how weak is this all compared with the corresponding scenes in Schiller—:

the tyrant Gesler's slain
. . . . . .
'Twas Tell that slew him—here upon the lake.

Hardly has he narrated how Tell escaped, when the hero arrives. He is greeted with:

Song

Rhodolpha

He comes! he comes! the victor comes,
Who conquers in his country's cause, etc.

Chorus

He comes! he comes! etc.

Arnold

Not so the bloodstain'd hero, he
Who murders but to gain a name, etc.

Chorus

He comes! etc.

Tell is chosen commander in chief. He distributes his orders. Exeunt all except Rhodolpha and Arnold, who remain true to the traditions of opera by singing a duet before hastening away.

The third scene is of an essentially comic character. It plays in the Castle of Altdorf, where Conrad is tried as a deserter. But he seems to know that nothing will happen to him, for he is extremely merry, though the guards prepare to shoot him. They are prevented from doing so by Rhodolpha and her Amazons, who have attacked and stormed the castle (as Melchthal has the kindness to inform the public). After some funny lines by Conrad and a song by Cecily, the scene closes with a *glee* between Rhodolpha, Arnold and Cecily.

Scenes fourth and fifth represent the *finale* of the work on "the Field of Battle, surrounded by Mountains." It is a regular stage skirmish void of dramatic interest. Leopold is slain by Tell, Conrad has a few jokes in store, and with much noise of sounding horns and trumpets "an almost bloodless victory" is won by the Swiss. Tell advances and delivers a patriotic speech with a song:

When heaven pours blessings all around
O! May mankind be grateful found, etc.

Arnold Melchthal follows with

Ye youths, to Melchthal look and learn;—
It's blest reward to see Virtue earn, etc.

Rhodolpha with

If foreign foes our land invade,
Like me, may each undaunted maid
A patriot heart display, etc.

Cecily with

> Now war is o'er, and Conrad mine,
> I'll make my baskets, neat and fine, etc.

Chorus of the whole:

> When heaven pours blessings all around, etc.

and curtain.

Necessarily, the American and German plays have much in common, "being both founded on the same historic fact," as Dunlap puts it in his preface. That Schiller's drama surpasses The Archers in dramatic logic, vigor, purity of style and poetic beauty goes without saying, for Dunlap was not a master-poet, but merely a dramatically gifted stage-manager. However, it would be unjust to deny The Archers some forcible monologues and skillfully contrasted scenes in which the mongrel form of opera is well kept in mind. It would also be unjust to condemn Dunlap wherever his version differs from Schiller's, merely because it differs. We generally grow so familiar with the structure of a masterpiece that a different version appears to be a failure, though it may possess its independent merits. For instance, no esthetic objection can be raised against Dunlap's endeavors to picture Tell as an active "politician" or to keep Tell's wife more in the foreground than Schiller did.

Dunlap falls short less in such details than in his arid lyrics and in the general aspect of the play. The Tell story is bound to be the theme for a serious drama, and no theme is less appropriate for a comic opera, as the story contains no comic elements whatever. If, therefore, an author stoops to make of it a comic opera, he will be forced to use violence. This Dunlap has done, and this combination of heterogenous elements has been futile, the more so as the comic scenes decidedly smack of low comedy. At times Conrad and not Tell seems to be the hero. In fact, The Archers could greatly be improved if

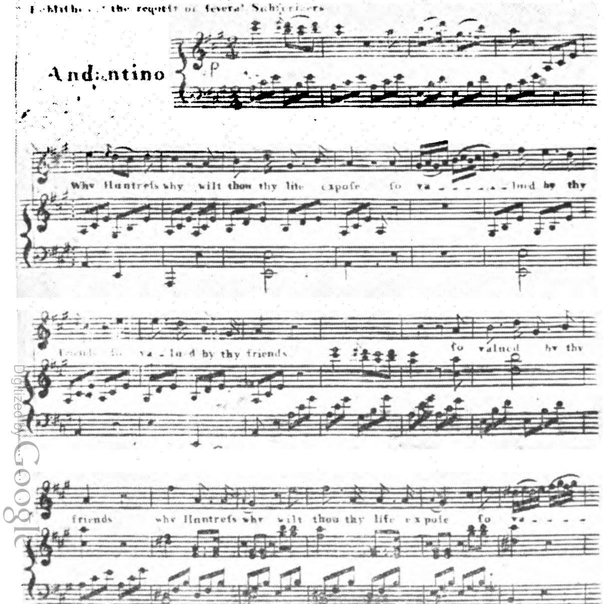
WHY HUNTRESS WHY

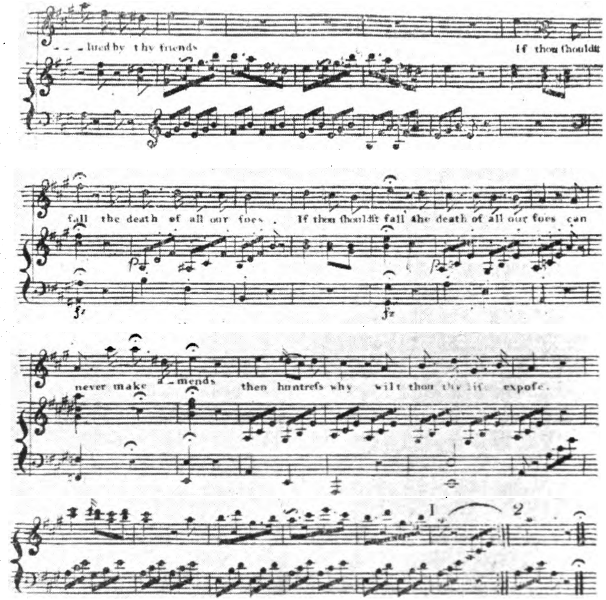
Sung by M.r F... ... the Opera of the Archers at the New York Theatre and by M.r John Darley ... ... of Philadelphia

Compofed by R: Carr

Publifhed at the requeft of feveral Subfcribers

Andantino





Ah! think what pangs thy father ftill ro... t...d
What pangs muft Arnold know
When thou'rt expos'd unto the b...ing fteel
Shall rufh amid the foe
Then huntrefs why &c

Conrad and Cecily were omitted. Of course, then the main reason for calling the work a *comic* opera would disappear and the part which music has in the play would be further reduced.

Perhaps it would have been better to omit music entirely, with the exception of some patriotic choruses and the storm music between scenes 1 and 2 of the third act, since nearly all the songs, duets and trios are wholly undramatic. They retard the solution of the problem and contain but repetitions of the contents of the spoken monologues and dialogues in the form of musical lyrics. Still, we must not censure Dunlap too severely. Others, and greater than he, sinned against good taste by forcing serious themes into the straitjacket of comic opera.

This had to be pointed out, as the origin of the peculiarly spectacular and nonsensical character of the American (so-called) comic operas of to-day—veritable operettinaccias, to murder the Italian language—must partly be traced back to the beginnings of operatic life in America. The remark will go a good way towards a reasonable explanation of why so far the birth of genuine American opera has been so tardy, for American comic opera is, at its best, a deeply rooted national evil.

Of Carr's music to Dunlap's Archers hardly anything can be said, as it seems to be lost. However, I was fortunate enough to discover, in No. 7 of Carr's Musical Miscellany, the number having been copyrighted in 1813, a

Rondo from the Overture to the opera of the Archers or Mountaineers of Switzerland and composed by B. Carr. Arranged for the Piano Forte.

A reprint of this extremely scarce piece[1] will be found in the Sammelbände, 1904-05. That it in no way pre-

[1] The only copy I personally knew of at the time of writing this essay was in the possession of the Hopkinson family of Philadelphia. Since then I acquired a copy for the Library of Congress and also of the song "Why, Huntress, Why" (in B. Carr's "Musical Journal," *ca.* 1800), a facsimile of which was first published in my book "Early Opera in America," G. Schirmer, 1915. Both the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress possess this rare piece.

sents an overture programmatic of the Tell idea will be seen at the first glance. It is a simple rondo, the themes of which may or may not have been used in the opera. If the songs, etc., were as dainty as this rondo, we surely must regret their loss.

Edwin and Angelina.

Allusion was made to the prevailing idea that The Archers was the first American opera. It was not, for at least

Edwin and Angelina, or the Banditti, an opera, in three acts. New York. Printed by T. & J. Swords, No. 99 Pearlstreet. 1797.

possesses the claim of priority.[1] The libretto was written by Elihu Hubbard Smith, a physician, graduate of Yale, who was born at Litchfield, Conn., in 1771 and died of yellow fever at New York in 1798. The preface, as all good prefaces should, gives the history of this opera, and a strange history it is.

. . . The principal scenes of the following Drama were composed in March, 1791, as an exercise to beguile the weariness of a short period of involuntary leisure; and without any view to theatrical representation. From that time, till the month of October, 1793, they lay neglected, and almost forgotten. An accident then bringing them to recollection, several short scenes were added, agreeable to my original design; and the whole adapted to the Stage. The piece was presented to the *then* Managers of the Old American Company, for their acceptance, the December following; but the peculiar situation of the theatre prevented any attention to this application, till June, 1794; when on a change in the management, it was accepted. An interval of six months, and a further acquaintance with the Stage, had convinced me that the piece might undergo alterations, with advantage. These were undertaken, immediately: the loss of a comic character, which was now rejected, was supplied by two new additional scenes; additional songs were com-

[1] Collation: 8vo. t. p. V. bl.; p. (3) ded. signed E. H. Smith "To Reuben and Abigail Smith, Connecticut. My Dear Parents . . ."; pp. (5)–6 pref.; p. 7 dramatis personae; pp. 8–72 text.—Boston Public Library; Brown University; Library Company of Philadelphia; Massachusetts Historical Society; New York Historical Society.

posed; and a Drama of two acts, in prose, was converted into the Opera, in its present form, in the course of the succeeding month. The inherent defects of the plan were such as could not be remedied, without bestowing on the subject a degree of attention incompatible with professional engagements; and, which I, therefore thought myself justified in withholding. But should this performance meet the same generous indulgence, in private, with which it was received in public, I shall neither attempt to disarm Criticism of her severity, nor be ashamed of this feeble effort to contribute to the rational amusement of my fellow-citizens.

New York, Feb. 15, 1797.

P.S. It may not be improper to observe (though the reader can scarcely be supposed uninformed, in this particular) that the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth songs, in the third act of the following Drama, are from Goldsmith; and all except the first, from the Ballad of "Edwin and Angelina." I have taken the liberty to make a slight alteration in the second, to accommodate it more perfectly to my purpose; and it will be obvious that, in the principal scene between Edwin and Angelina, I have availed myself of the sentiments, and, as far as possible, of the very expressions of the Author.

The performance alluded to took place at New York on December 19, 1796. The work was advertised in the "American Minerva" for the same day as:

"never performed . . . With songs, partly from Goldsmith, partly original. Music by Pelissier." [1]

From the libretto the cast appears to have been this:

Sifrid	Mr. Hodgkinson
Edwin	Mr. Tylor
Ethelbert	Mr. Martin
Walter	Mr. Crosby
Edred	Mr. Munto
Houg	Mr. Miller
Banditti	
Angelina	Mrs. Hodgkinson

[1] Pelissier, Victor, performer on the French horn and composer.—First mentioned on Philadelpia concert programs in 1792 as "first French horn of the Theatre in Cape François." After residing in Philadelphia for one year he moved to New York as principal hornplayer in the orchestra of the Old American Company. His name is frequently met with on New York concert programs, and most of the arrangements and compositions for the Old American Company were written either by him or James Hewitt. Pelissier resided in New York for many years.

If Victor Pelissier's music, which seems not to be extant,[1] was as defective as Elihu Hubbard Smith's libretto, the managers were justified in according Edwin and Angelina but one performance.

The "scene lies in a forest, in the northern extremity of England, and in a Cavern, and the entrance of a Hermitage, in the Forest. Time, that of the Representation." Earl Ethelbert, wealthy, and reputed generous, and Sifrid, of noble birth but poor, were born in the same city.

> . . . . . While young,
> Distinction proud was neither known nor felt:
> But Ethelbert, arrived to manhood,
> . . . . . grew vain, debauch'd,
> Selfish and mercenary, false and cruel.

After the death of his father, Ethelbert took possession of the estate and

> . . . in place exalted, he no more,
> His former friend recogniz'd.

Sifrid, deeply wounded, left him and became tenant to a neighboring lord. There he saw, loved and was loved by Emma, the daughter of a simple husbandman like himself. Ethelbert strove to gain, betray and corrupt Emma; and, as she was constant, finally

> . . . . . with armed force
> At night, he bore her captive to his tower.

In vain; she remained "inflexible to faithlessness or shame." Ethelbert then imprisoned Sifrid and caused a report to be spread that he had died, hoping "by long attention to o'ercome her hate." Several years pass. Sifrid forces his escape and flees. Convinced that the worst has happened and that the earl killed Emma, he

[1] Since writing this study, I acquired for the Library of Congress Pelissier's "Columbian Melodies. A monthly publication consisting of a variety of songs and pieces for the pianoforte composed by Victor Pelissier," Philadelphia, 1811. This extremely rare collection contains "Few are the joys" and "The Bird when summer" from his "Edwin and Angelina."

becomes an outlaw and finally chieftain of bandits. But Emma is still alive and still loves Sifrid. In the meantime, Ethelbert "sinks a slave" of Angelina's beauty. She is also loved by Edwin, a poor knight. Angelina loves not Ethelbert but Edwin, though for a while her affection is subdued by "arrogance of wealth" and "false pride of birth." Edwin, "murdered" by her disdain, flees and becomes a hermit in the same forest where Sifrid is chieftain of bandits.

Angelina, tortured by remorse, seeks to find Edwin. Ethelbert follows her to the forest, but again she rejects his love. In this very moment they are attacked by the bandits. Angelina escapes, but Ethelbert is captured. On recognizing him, Sifrid at first contemplates cruel revenge. He abandons all bloodthirsty designs after hearing from Ethelbert that Emma is still living and still true to his memory. The band then receives orders to scour the forest through for Angelina, who has found shelter in Edwin's hermitage. At first the lovers do not recognize each other. After some tearful scenes they do and embrace in perfect harmony.

Alas! Sifrid, Ethelbert, and the robbers rush into the hut. Ethelbert is naturally very much surprised and bewildered to find Angelina in a hermit's arms, and commands him to release her, which Edwin, of course, refuses to do. Provoked by his firmness Ethelbert exclaims:

> I would not harm that reverend form, or dash,
> Against the earth, thy sacred heart;
> But, wert thou young, thy life should answer me,
> For thy insolence, old man.

Whereupon Edwin throws off his disguise and draws his sword.

> Ethelbert (in great surprise): Edwin!
> Edwin (fiercely advancing): Edwin, Lord!
> Ethelbert (with great emotion): The saviour of my life!
> The murderer of my love!

The scene ends in happiness, after an explanation how, when and where Edwin saved Ethelbert's life. But some difficulties remain to be removed. Sifrid is anxious to hasten back to Emma. His words to the bandits

> . . . . . My friends! Hear all,
> To my fond arms, Earl Ethelbert restores
> The woman of my love; unto my care
> My fields paternal, and my earliest home

are met with an outburst of indignation by these gentlemen, who are not very anxious to reform. Gradually, however, their hearts soften, and the *finale* brings universal happiness and perfect harmony.

This plot, though simple, is full of improbabilities. And these improbabilities render the developments complicated, as the author has not carried out the dramatic idea with sufficient clearness and logic. It is, for instance, illogical that Ethelbert should recognize Edwin and not *vice versa* as well, which would have saved the public a good deal of guesswork and surprise, greater than that of Ethelbert on recognizing Edwin. In fact, the main defect of the play lies in the by far too many surprises that are sprung on the audience.

The language is "exalted" and "sublime" as in so many efforts of this era of "Sturm und Drang," Ossian, and "Die Räuber." The characters with their mixture of hyper-romantic sentimentality and stage villainry probably appealed to the public of those days, but they are woefully schematic. To dwell on Edwin and Angelina as an "opera" is hardly necessary after the confessions of the author in his preface. It is sufficient to state that the leading men and leading ladies all come in for their share of the dozen lyrics which protract the dramatic agony, and that the whole winds up in an elaborate but commonplace *finale*.

1797-1800

1797: Ariadne Abandoned; The Iron Chest; The Adopted Child; The Savoyard; The Launch. 1798: The Purse; Americania and Elutheria. 1799: Sterne's Maria; Fourth of July; Rudolph. 1800: Castle of Otranto; Robin Hood; The Spanish Castle; The Wild-goose Chase.

In 1797 a form of operatic entertainment was introduced in New York for which I believe the Americans to be peculiarly gifted: the melodrama. On April 22nd, the much admired Mrs. Melmoth advertised for her benefit on Wednesday the 26th in the New York Daily Advertiser:

> The evening's entertainment will conclude with a piece, in one act, never performed in America, called *Ariadne Abandoned By Theseus, in The Isle of Naxos.*
> Between the different passages spoken by the actors, will be Full Orchestra Music, expressive of each situation and passion. The music composed and managed by Pelissier.

This advertisement is about all I have been able to find regarding Ariadne Abandoned. It probably was an imitation of Benda's work, but neither this nor how the public received the melodrama, could I ascertain. At any rate, when John Hodgkinson invaded Boston during the same year, Ariadne was performed there on July 31st as a "Tragic Piece in one act" and again with Pelissier's music.[1]

The next American opera carries us to Baltimore, where on June 2, 1797,[2] was to be performed

> . . . a favorite new play, interspersed with songs, called *The Iron Chest.*
> Written by George Colman, the younger, founded on the celebrated novel of Caleb Williams, and performed at the theatres in London, with unbounded applause.
> The music and accompaniments by Mr. R. Taylor.

[1] Comp. "Columbian Centinel," July 29, 1797.
[2] Comp. "Federal Gazette," June 2, 1797.

In England this Play, interspersed with songs, was styled an opera. It had its first performance as such with Stephen Storace's music in London in 1796, and it is for this reason that I included The Iron Chest with Reinagle's music in the body of my monograph instead of in the appendix.[1]

Our managers have ever been eager to import the successful London novelties. A case in point is Samuel Birch's Adopted Child. First performed with Thomas Atwood's music at Drury Lane in 1795, it was introduced to a New York audience as early as May, 1796, and continued to meet with the applause of different American audiences. As a rule it was given with Atwood's music, but in Boston, for some reason or other, the managers of the Haymarket Theatre decided to perform "for the last time," on June 5, 1797,[2]

"The Musical Drama of the Adopted Child" with "the music entirely new and composed by Mr. V. Hagen."[3]

Though an advertisement to that effect escaped my attention, it is almost safe to say that the preceding performances, too, were given with Van Hagen's setting. When the first took place I do not know; certainly between January and the middle of March, 1797, since the second

[1] To repeat it, the appendix is not here reprinted from the "Sammelbände."

[2] Comp. "Columbian Centinel," June 3, 1797.

[3] This Mr. V. Hagen probably was P. A. Van Hagen, senior; organist, violinist, composer.—P. A. Van Hagen, jun., came to Charleston, S. C., in 1774. He called himself in advertisements "Organist and Director of the City's Concert in Rotterdam. Lately arrived from London," and gave lessons on the organ, harpsichord, pianoforte, violin, violoncello, and viola. He was probably identical with the violinist of the same name who appeared at New York in 1789, having changed the "jun." into "sen." in distinction from his son P. A. Van Hagen. In the following year he called himself "Organist, Carilloneur, and Director of the City Concert, at Zutphen." During the following years he resided in New York, from 1793–1796 as principal arranger of the Old City Concerts. After his removal to Boston, during the fall of 1796, J. C. Moller became his successor. At Boston Van Hagen was for a while leader in the New Theatre orchestra. In his advertisements as music teacher he did not fail to call himself "Organist in four of the principal churches in Holland" with an "experience during 27 years as an Instructor." With his son he seems to have opened a music-store in 1798, but the firm probably was dissolved late in the same year or early in the next. Of his year of death I am not certain; possibly he died about 1800.

was advertised for March 15th. I have still less information to offer as regards a musical farce, performed at Wignell and Reinagle's theatre in Philadelphia on July 12, 1797. I glean from a theatrical advertisement in Porcupine's Gazette for the same day the following title and cast:

. . . a musical farce, in two acts (never performed) called The *Savoyard;* or the Repentant Seducer. (The music composed by Mr. Reinagle.)

Jacques	Mr. Moreton
Belton	Mr. Fox
Front	Mr. Harwood
Simond	Mr. Warren
Father Bertrand	Mr. L'Estrange
Benjamin	Master H. Warrell
Banditti	Messrs. Francis, Warrell and Blissett
Countess	Mrs. Francis
Nanette	Mrs. Oldmixon
Claudine	Mrs. Warrell

The plays written during the years immediately following the War for Independence frequently had a patriotic or political background. Though their literary merit was very doubtful, their success with the public was assured if they employed sufficient bombast, stage-battles and patriotic tableaux to appeal to the pride of our newborn nation. To this category belonged John Hodgkinson's "The *Launch,* or, Huzza for the Constitution." Again we are indebted to the old newspapers for the few items relating to this piece. The first was a preliminary "puff" published in the "Columbian Centinel," Boston, on Wednesday, September 13, 1797.

Theatrical

We hear that Mr. Hodgkinson has written a musical Drama, entitled "The Launch," in celebration of the naval fête of Wednesday next;—on which evening it will be performed, concluding with a splendid representation of the frigate Constitution breasting the curled surge.

The piece is said to contain a great diversity of national

character, and incidental Song. The idea is novel—the occasion happy.

On the day of the first performance the same paper went into further particulars concerning the

Musical Piece, in one act, never yet performed, called The Launch; or Huzza for the Constitution. Written by John Hodgkinson. The whole will conclude with a striking Representation of Launching the New Frigate Constitution. Boats passing and repassing on the Water. View of the River of Charlestown, and the neighboring country—taken directly from Jeffry and Russel's Wharf. The scenery principally executed by Mr. Jefferson.

Ned Grog	Mr. Hodgkinson
Constant	Mr. Tyler
Old Lexington	Mr. Johnson
Old Bunker	Mr. Munto
Jack Hawlyard (with a hornpipe)	Mr. Jefferson
Tom Bowling	Mr. Lee
Sam Forecastle	Mr. Leonard
Irishman	Mr. Fawcatt
Scotchman	Mr. Miller
and Nathan	Mr. Martia
Mrs. Lexington	Mr. Brett
and Mary	Miss Brett

Readers familiar with American history will notice patriotic allusions even in the nomenclature of this spectacular piece so generously called a "musical drama" in the "Columbian Centinel." As far as the music is concerned the "great variety of incidental song" stamped The Launch an operatic *pasticcio,* since we read in the advertisement of the fourth performance on November 21, 1797:

The Musick selected from the best Composers, with new Orchestra parts by *Pelisier.*

During the years 1798 and 1799 surprisingly few operas were written in the United States and these few would hardly deserve more than a passing account even if we were in a position to offer a minute description of them.

In his monograph on early American plays Mr. Wegelin mentions:

American Tars (The Purse). Played in the Park Theatre, New York, January 29, 1798.

Mr. Wegelin has not given the title quite correctly, as it should be "The Purse, or, American Tars," and a perusal of the "City Gazette" of Charleston, S. C., would have convinced him that the piece was given there under that title a year earlier than in New York, on February 8, 1797. It evidently was an Americanized version of William Reeve's opera "The Purse, or, the Benevolent Tars" (libretto by Cross), which was introduced in the United States in 1795 with great success. But if such versions *in usum delphini* were to be enumerated, I fear Mr. Wegelin's list would have to be considered very incomplete, as few English plays and operas of the day were not subjected to similar mutilations to suit the American public.

On the other hand, a work escaped Mr. Wegelin's attention that certainly should have found a place in his monograph. It was performed on February, 1798, at Charleston, S. C., and called

a new Musical and Allegorical Masque, never yet printed or performed, entitled *Americania and Elutheria;* or, a new Tale of the Genii.

Neither the author nor the composer are mentioned in the "City Gazette" from which I gleaned the title, but a sketch of the plot is printed, preceded by the following cast:

Jelemmo and Arianthus, Great winged Spirits, attendants on Americania	Mr. Cleveland and Mr. Downie
Offa, Chief of the Alleganian Satyri	Mr. Jones
Musidorus, the Alleganian Hermit, the only Mortal in the Masque	Mr. Whitlock

Horbla, Chief of the Dancing Spirits	Mr. Placide
Damonello, Lucifero, Horrendum, and Zulpho, Dancing Satyrs	Messrs. Hughes, Tubbs, J. Jones and M'Kenzie
Americania, Genius of America, a great Spirit, residing since the creation on the summit of the Allegani	Mrs. Cleveland
Vesperia, a winged Spirit, chief attendant on Americania	Mrs. Tubbs
Hybla, chief of the Hemmadriads or Wood Nymphs, and principal Dancer	Mrs. Placide
Tintoretto, Luciabella, Juberaia, Ariella and Tempe, dancing Nymphs	Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Edgar, Miss Arnold, etc.
Elutheria, Goddess of Liberty, who flies to the arms of Americania for protection	Mrs. Whitlock.

Sketch of the Plot

Hybla, a Mountain Nymph, desirous to see a mortal, implores Offa, a Satyr, to procure that pleasure. Offa deludes an old Hermit up to the Summit of the Allegani Mountain, to a great Rock, inhabited by Genii or Aerial Spirits, the chief of whom, called Americania, understanding that the old Hermit is ignorant of the American Revolution, commands her domestics to perform an *Allegorical Masque* for his Information.

In Act first—A grand Dance of Nymphs and Satyrs, who will form a group of the most whimsical kind.

In Act second—A meeting taken place between Elutheria, the Goddess of Liberty, and Americania, who descend on Clouds on opposite sides.

A *Pas de Deux,* between the Satyr Horbla and the Nymph Hybla. The whole to conclude with a General Dance of the Nymphs and Satyrs, a Pas de Deux, by a young Master and Lady; and a Pas de Trois, by Mrs. Placide, Mr. Placide and Mr. Tubbs.

Turning to the year 1799, at least three works are on record that may be called American operas. In the first place:

An opera, in 2 acts, never performed here, called *Sterne's Maria*, or, the Vintage. In the course of the opera the following new scenery will be displayed. Opening scene—A Sunsetting, with a representation of the vineyards of France, and the manner of gathering in the Vintage.

Entrance to a French inn. Concluding Scene—Landscape and rising Sun.

This was the advertisement of the first performance on Jan. 14, 1799, as it appeared in the "New York Daily Advertiser" for Jan. 12th.[1] The book came from the fertile pen of William Dunlap, and as the author has a few lines to say on his play in the History of the American Theatre (pp. 259–260), they may follow for want of other information:

On the 14th of January, 1799, the manager of the New York theatre brought out an opera written by himself, founded on the story of Maria, and called "Sterne's Maria, or the Vintage." The music was composed by Victor Pelessier, and the piece pleased and was pleasing, but not sufficiently attractive or popular to keep the stage after the original performers in it were removed by those fluctuations common in theatrical establishments. Sterne's Maria was thus cast: Sir Henry Metland, Mr. Hallam, junr.; Yorick, Mr. Cooper; Pierre (an old man, father of Maria), Mr. Hogg; Henry (Maria's lover), Mr. Tyler; La Fleur, Mr. Jefferson; Landlords, Peasants, etc. Maria, Miss E. Westray; Nanette, Mrs. Oldmixon; Lilla, Mrs. Seymour. It is not necessary to observe to those acquainted with any part of American theatrical history, that the music of the piece was confined to Messrs. Tyler and Jefferson among the males. The females were all singers; Mrs. Oldmixon the superior. The opening chorus in the vineyard at sunset, and preparations for the peasant's dance.

Sterne's words were kept for Yorick, with little variation, and the story of Maria told in his language. La Fleur is the lover of Nanette, and gives . . . account of taking leave of his drum and his military life.

Again it was Victor Pelissier who furnished the music to a "musical drama," which, by the way, further illus-

[1] Mr. Wegelin incorrectly gives January 11th as the date of performance.

trates how spectacular theatricals were gradually encroaching upon legitimate drama on the American stage.[1]

At the Park Theatre in New York was performed on July 4, 1799, as appears from the "Daily Advertiser,"

a splendid, allegorical, musical Drama, never exhibited, called: The Fourth of July; or, Temple of American Independence. In which will be displayed (among other scenery, professedly intended to exceed any exhibition yet presented by the Theatre) a view of the lower part of Broadway, Battery, Harbor, and Shipping taken on the spot.

After the shipping shall have saluted, a military Procession in perspective will take place, consisting of all the uniform Companies of the City, Horse, Artillery and Infantry in their respective plans, according to the order of the March.

The whole to conclude with an inside view of the *Temple of Independence* as exhibited on the Birthday of Gen. Washington. Scenery and Machinery by Mr. Ciceri—Music by Mr. Pelessier.

In addition, a melodrama should be mentioned for the year 1799, of which I found neither the date of first performance nor the name of the composer. It was written by the actor John D. Turnbull, and Mr. Wegelin gives the title of the libretto that appeared, he says, in several editions as follows:

Rudolph; or the Robbers of Calabria. A Melodrama in three Acts, as performed at the Boston Theatre.
18mo., pp. 141. Boston 1799.

If we except the "celebrated Musical Romance" of the

Castle of Atranto. Altered from the Sicilian Romance. Music and Accompaniments by Pelissier.

as first performed on November 7, 1800, at New York, and

The much admired Comic Opera of *Robin Hood,* or Sherwood Forest. Compressed in two Acts . . . The Music composed by Mr. Hewitt.

[1] In Pelissier's "Columbian Melodies," 1811, will be found his settings of "I laugh, I sing," "Hope, gentle hope," and "Ah! why on Quebec's bloody plain" for "Sterne's Maria." A copy of this extremely rare collection is in the Library of Congress.

as performed for the first time, also at New York, on December 24, 1800, the few novelties at the close of the eighteenth century were due to William Dunlap's pen.

Says the author in his History of the American Theatre:

On the 5th of December [1800] an opera, the music put together by James Hewitt, and the dialogue by the manager, was performed, not approved of, repeated once, and forgotten. It was called the *"Knight of the Guadalquivir."*

Dunlap, when compiling his history, undoubtedly relied to a great extent upon his memory, and it is not surprising that he should have forgotten the original title of one of his numerous plays in which he himself did not discover literary merits. The "New York Daily Advertiser" thus advertised on December 5th the first performance of the opera with an abundant display of dons and señoritas in the cast and the inevitable Irishman in their midst:

. . . a Comic Opera (never performed here), called *The Spanish Castle,* or, the Knight of the Guadalquivir. With new scenery and Dresses never before exhibited.

Characters.

Montalvan	Mr. Fennel
Sebastian	Mr. Hallam
Algiziras	Mr. Martin
Florenzo	Mr. Fox
Juan	Mr. Hallam, jun.
Anselmo	Mr. Tyler
Manuel	Mr. Powell
Hugo	Mr. Crosby
Pedro	Mr. Hogg
Pero	Mr. Jefferson
O'Tipple	Mr. Hodgkinson

Officers, Soldiers, etc., by Gentlemen of the Company.

Women

Olivia	Mrs. Hodgkinson
Henerica	Miss Brett
Lisetta	Miss Harding

The Music by Mr. Hewitt.

William Dunlap fared somewhat better with a libretto that was only to a limited extent his own, being hardly more than a translation of a farce by Kotzebue, the idol of the theatre-going public of those days. Again we must refer to Dunlap's own words (op. cit., pp. 272, 275):

> In August, 1799, the yellow fever again appeared in New York. The manager of the theatre [Dunlap himself] resided at Perth Amboy, his native place, and was employed in translating Kotzebue's comedy of "False Shame" and turning the farce of "Der Wildfang" into an opera, which he called the "Wild-goose Chase," a title which some wiseacres thought was intended as a translation of the German appellation. . . . As translated and metamorphosed into an opera . . . the Wild-goose Chase was performed on the 24th of January, and continued a favorite as long as Hodgkinson continued to play the young baron.

Strange to say, Dunlap had his version of the "Wildfang" printed, not as an opera libretto, but as

> *The Wild-Goose Chase.* A Play in four Acts; with Songs, from the German of Augustus von Kotzebue; with Notes, marking the Variations from the Original.

The "play," as preserved (for instance) at the Boston and New York Public Libraries, informs us that the music was "composed by Mr. *Hewitt,*" a fact easily to be verified from other sources, and in the notes (pp. 100-104) we read that

> all the songs . . . are added by the translator . . .

This was about the only "metamorphosis" to warrant offering The Wild-Goose Chase to the public as a "comic opera in four acts," as it was called in a favorable criticism under date of January 24th, 1800, in the February issue of the Monthly Magazine and American Review.

Notwithstanding public approval of the modified version of Kotzebue's play, Dunlap must have altered The Wild-Goose Chase immediately after the first performance, for it was advertised in the "New York Daily Advertiser"

for performance on February 19th as "a comic opera, in three acts." But Dunlap was still unsatisfied, for when the next winter season opened, it was given on December 19th, 1800, as "the much admired Comic Opera of the Wild Goose Chase. Compressed in two Acts . . ."

In the meantime James Hewitt seems to have published the music (though I have been unable to find a copy), since Joseph Carr, when announcing in the "New York Daily Advertiser," February 3, 1800, his intention to publish "The Musical Journal," concluded the advertisement with the notice:

> Next week, will be published, by J. Hewitt, the favorite songs in the Wild Goose Chase, as performed at the Theatre with great applause.

* * *

In this survey of early American operas—*sit venia verbo*—I possibly have omitted a few, owing to the difficulty of access to the sources of information, to which I reckon in the very first place the scattered files of our early newspapers. Nothing substantially new, however, I believe, would be added even under more favorable conditions.

Early American opera was an offspring of English ballad opera and hardly contained any promises for a truly national art. The nineteenth century has by no means improved the outlook. During its first quarter the melodrama thrived simultaneously with the senile ballad operas. Then the definite importation of Italian opera inspired a few composers to bloodless imitations of Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, etc. Meyerbeer, Gounod, and finally Wagner, stood godfathers to the more modern American attempts at opera, and to-day we are as far from American opera of artistic importance as we ever have been. Not that our composers lack the power to write dramatic music, but our operatic life has been trimmed into a hot-house product. The one Metropolitan Opera

House of New York supplies the whole country with opera, if we except the French company at New Orleans, the heroic struggle of Mr. Henry W. Savage for opera sung in English, and minor enterprises. Under these circumstances there is neither place nor time for the production of American operas, and our composers have almost stopped trying their hands at this sadly neglected branch of our art. The struggle against the apathy of the public, eternally in love with flimsy operettas, commonly called here comic operas (shades of Figaro!), and on the other hand against the commercial cowardice and avarice of the managers, seems hopeless. Whether or no a change for the better will take place, cannot be foretold. If not, then the task of the future historian of American opera will not be enviable, for he will have very little to say.