

The JOURNAL

OF THE RUTGERS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

VOLUME XXVIII

JUNE 1965

NUMBER 2

THE MASONIC HALL OPERA HOUSE:

A FURTHER CHAPTER IN NEW BRUNSWICK'S STAGE HISTORY

Part I

By ORAL S. COAD

DR. COAD, now Professor of English, Emeritus, Douglass College, an authority on American stage history, has a special interest in the role of the theatre in New Brunswick's past.

THE JOURNAL for June, 1943, contained the third instalment of an article on "The First Century of the New Brunswick Stage" by the present writer. It carried the story almost to the end of 1873, at which time a large new theatre was opened in the city. It is now proposed to continue the account through the 23 years of that building's career until its destruction in 1896.

As the earlier article indicated, no noticeable quantity of strictly dramatic entertainment was available here until near the end of that first century. And even then only an occasional minor stock company would stop off in New Brunswick for a night or perhaps even a week to regale the good people with some of the popular thrillers of the time. One looking for a distinguished actor or a drama of solid merit searches the record in vain.

The new theatre in Masonic Hall made possible a much more impressive program of public amusement than the small city on the Raritan had yet seen. Star actors, while not common, were now by no means unknown, and though the typical play was lightweight, major drama did sometimes receive a hearing. But improvement was measurable more clearly by quantitative than by qualitative stand-



THE MASONIC HALL, HOME OF THE OPERA HOUSE

ards. Accordingly, to keep this chapter within considerate limits, it will be necessary to omit much and to set down mainly those events that by some special significance convey a sense of the theatrical tastes, habits, and opportunities of New Brunswick during approximately the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹

It should be remarked at the outset, however, that a complete record of the stage entertainments available here during this period would be evidence not so much of the town's special love for things theatrical but rather of the amazing activity of the "road" in the days when playgoing was the great popular amusement. It may be that its proximity to the dramatic capital of the country made possible for New Brunswick some few attractions that would not have been available otherwise, but the vast majority of the troupes which came were road companies. One may safely assume, therefore, that the annals of the local theatre are representatively those of the average small American city on the main line of a railroad. And therein lies the real justification for a chronicle of the New Brunswick stage.

By November of 1873 the imposing edifice which the Masonic fraternity was erecting on the southwest corner of George and Albany Streets was practically completed. It was a four-story brick building topped by a mansard roof (virtually a fifth story) in the French style greatly esteemed in the era of U. S. Grant, with a front of 72 feet on George Street and 156 feet on Albany. Much of the structure was designed for stores, assembly rooms, and quarters for the Masonic order; but it also contained on the first floor a complete theatre, which occupied an ell that took up 104 feet of the Albany Street front and extended to a depth of 100 feet. The auditorium, with its orchestra, balcony, gallery, and four boxes, seated about 1,200 and was lighted by a prismatic chandelier of 134 gas jets. The stage was 54 feet high, 34 feet deep, and about 61 feet

¹ The material in this article has been derived largely from three New Brunswick daily newspapers: the *Fredonian*, the *Times*, and the *Home News*, the files of which in the Rutgers University Library are sufficiently complete to provide a continuous record. George C. D. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage*, Vols. IX-XV (New York, 1937-1949), Arthur Hobson Quinn's *A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day* (New York, 1936), and *The American Stage* (New Haven, 1929) by Oral S. Coad and Edwin Mims, Jr., have been consulted, often without acknowledgment, for information about plays and players.

wide with a proscenium opening of 31 feet. Equipped with traps, a large rigging loft, border- and foot-lights, and dressing rooms under the wings, the stage had been designed and constructed under the personal supervision of Benson Sherwood of Booth's Theatre. The house was stocked with "all necessary" scenery, painted by G. Gault of New York; it was described as "rich and varied." Sight lines, acoustics, and ventilation were highly praised.

1873-1874

The Opera House, as the theatre soon came to be called,² was formally opened on November 24 by the New Brunswick Choral Society, assisted by an imported orchestra and soloists. In spite of bad weather and high prices about 1,000 people were present, and the proceedings seem to have given general satisfaction, except for the undue length of the three-hour program.

Thomas Nast, cartoonist; Blind Tom, Negro pianist; a collection of paintings representing a world tour; and a minstrel show,³ which drew considerably better than did the three hours of classical music, were the next attractions. Drama did not gain much of a hearing until the holiday season when a "Grand Dramatic Jubilee" was held, consisting of *All That Glitters is Not Gold* and *The Hidden Hand; or, The Mysteries of the Lone House*—two most unChristmaslike titles—for the afternoon and evening of December 25, and Dion Boucicault's popular melodrama, *The Streets of New York*, for the 26th. The casts hailed from the New York theatres, and the Christmas performances were described as worthy of any first-class metropolitan stage. But a slim house and listless acting made the 26th a dreary evening, relieved chiefly by the dubious pleasure of watching inexpert stagehands hoist the handsome new scenery as

² Not to be confused with Shortridge's Theatre, erected on Liberty Street in 1900 and known from 1905 as the New Brunswick Opera House. Mainly a vaudeville and movie theatre, it was destroyed by fire in 1952.

³ For the benefit of younger readers it may be well to explain that minstrel shows were a species of variety entertainment of American origin presented (usually) by white men in blackface and extravagant costume, seated in a semi-circle on the stage. The programs specialized in Negro songs (some of them by Stephen Foster), comic dialogue, farcical skits, and dances. Tambourine, bone castanets, and banjo were standard musical instruments. Beginning in the 1840s, the minstrel show enjoyed great popularity until the early twentieth century.

though it were sail on a river sloop—two feet up and one down at every jerk, as the *Fredonian* saw it.

New Year's Day was honored by that hardy perennial, *East Lynne*, offered by the noted but aging *East Lynne* specialist, Lucille Western, who was welcomed by the *Fredonian* as the most distinguished actress ever to appear in New Brunswick. On the 20th John Thompson, an old variety actor who was a frequent attraction at the cheaper New York theatres, entertained with *On Hand; or, True to the Last*, in which he assumed nine characters and played on 20 different musical instruments. The next night a higher if less protean level of the mimetic and musical arts was attempted by the New York Parlor Opera Company in Flotow's *Martha*. The plan called for an opera a week for five weeks, but despite a seemingly meritorious performance the initial appearance achieved a loss of \$120, and the New York Parlor Opera Company was heard in New Brunswick no more forever.

On February 3 the stage was taken over by Mlle. Marie Zoe, "The Cuban Sylph," no longer very sylphlike, in the venerable *French Spy; or, The Fall of Algiers*. The evening's program also contained a farce; and, lest the New Brunswickers consider themselves short-changed by this double-header, a further attraction was provided in the person of "Prof." de Houne, "the only One-Legged Tight-Rope Artist in the world." The esteemed Zanfretta Troupe, on the 13th and 14th, mounted three performances of the vastly popular pantomime, *Humpty Dumpty*. The first showing drew a crowded and delighted house, but the third was so carelessly done that the dreaded hiss was heard—probably for the first time within the salmon-colored walls of the Opera House. New Brunswick's own son, J. Holmes Grover, now a professional with a modest metropolitan standing, came home on the 23rd in *I. O. U.; or, The Way of the Wicked*, wherein he appeared as an office boy, an Irishman, a German, and a Frenchman. The *Fredonian* dutifully found him "admirable."

In 1866 a new trend in American stage shows had been established by the daring extravaganza, *The Black Crook*, which captivated so many masculine playgoers that its imitators were legion. One of these, *The Black Fiend*, arrived on March 4 after some pub-

licity stressing its well developed young ladies who offered a "pleasant field to the student of anatomy." New Brunswick's studious males flocked to this irresistible laboratory, and even the chaste *Fredonian* found the exhibition quite interesting if not very refined. Interest and refinement were both present on the 11th when the comedians, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, long-time favorites throughout America as well as in London, presented two of their standard plays, *The Fairy Circle* and *The Customs of the Country*. The occasion was a gala event, not only because of these sterling actors but because the Governor, the Senate, and the Assembly had accepted the management's invitation to attend and to inspect the new house. Some 1,500 people, enticed by so varied an assortment of celebrities, crowded into the auditorium, many of them standees. Again Lucille Western and her "heavy," W. H. Whalley, drew a large crowd on the 18th, this time in *Oliver Twist*. Their acting was found to be true to life—too true in fact, for during the murder scene many ladies left the hall, not caring to witness such brutal realism. Shakespeare made one of his rare bows in the Opera House when J. B. Roberts did *Richard III* on the 26th, supported by a large company. Able acting together with effective costumes and scenery gave much satisfaction to the more intelligent portion of the small audience.

Tony Pastor's variety company headed by the great Tony in person on April 7 drew the largest house since the visit of the legislators, and a well-pleased house it was. The first of an incredible number of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* troupes came on the 13th with Mrs. George C. Howard, the most famous of all Topsy's. Again a capacity turn-out, which the next day received a scolding from the *Times* for flocking to such an inferior attraction while allowing *Richard III* to incur a deficit.

On May 4 Mlle. Zoe once more displayed her talents in that melodramatic classic, *Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl*. But the stout "sylph" drew a slim audience, and she and her 20 "artistes" left several unpaid bills behind. Of an impressively different order was the attraction for the 8th when the mighty Augustin Daly sent down from his Fifth Avenue Theatre a notable company, including D. H. Harkins, William Davidge, George Parkes, Sara Jewett, and Minnie

Conway in *Monsieur Alphonse* by Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, which Daly had brought out in his own adaptation in April. One would be disposed to accept the *Fredonian's* assertion that this was the finest dramatic entertainment yet witnessed in New Brunswick. The descent is painful to *The Black Crook* on the 22nd. In spite of—or because of—an announcement that this production was a moral one, the attendance was small.

The ambitious managers bravely pushed their first season through much of the summer with commonplace offerings. In all some 70 evenings and matinees of entertainment had been provided, including many minstrel shows, some plays by small traveling companies, vaudeville, amateur performances, and the like, not listed in the foregoing paragraphs. Not a discreditable record for a town of only about 15,000 inhabitants, and in its general characteristics an approximate pattern of the ensuing years.

1874-1875

The first full season at the Opera House was opened on September 3 by the versatile John Thompson, who was *On Hand* again in his usual nine parts. The 16th should have been an interesting evening when Niblo's Garden Combination of New York enacted an adaptation of Charles Reade's powerful novel, *Griffith Gaunt; or, Jealousy*. But the interest may have suffered a bit from the non-appearance of some actors, which necessitated the reshuffling of certain parts and the omission of others. Probably Niblo's Garden Combination of New York felt it could safely play down to the provincial standards of remote New Brunswick. A favorite form of humor of the period was "Dutch" (really German) comedy, and one of the popular specialists in Teutonic roles was J. K. Emmet. When he appeared here on the 29th in *Fritz, Our Cousin German* "unqualified gratification" was the result.

Comparable satisfaction was derived from James H. Stoddart, a genuinely gifted interpreter of both broad comedy and simple pathos, who presented *Dearer Than Life* and a farce on October 15. But the playgoers felt themselves taken in on the 30th because "Little Nelle, the California Diamond," one of the youthful prodigies of the day,

failed to assume four parts in *No Name*, Wilkie Collins' dramatization of his own novel, she having left the company a few days before. So the mature Mrs. J. L. Sanford substituted for the young thespian.

On November 18 a hitherto commonplace season was lifted to distinction through a performance of *The School for Scandal* by an exceptional company from Daly's Fifth Avenue Theatre. Louis James, according to Dr. Odell, was one of the best Josephs known to the American stage, William Davidge (Sir Peter Teazle) was famed for his old men roles, George Parkes (Charles) was a handsome and vivacious young man, the exquisite Nina Varian (Lady Sneerwell) was one of the most charming actresses of the time, and "Grandma" Gilbert (Mrs. Candour) probably never had a superior in this country as an impersonator of elderly women. All in all a cast one would give something to have seen in Sheridan's masterpiece.

A different sort of audience from that of November 18 was probably equally gratified on December 10 by *Scouts of the Plains; or, Red Deviltry As It Is*, with the one and only Buffalo Bill himself. A company of female minstrels shocked the *Fredonian* on the 17th by a scene displaying a half dozen girls in flesh colored tights. The male audience, so the decorous journal declared, would unite in condemning this feature—which one may be permitted to doubt. Reluctantly I report that the next night at a performance of *The Streets of New York* by the Niblo's Garden Company certain Rutgers students created such a disturbance that a "gentleman" in the audience arose and rebuked them to silence. The *Fredonian* opined that, since this was not the collegians' first offense, some arrests would have a salutary effect.

January 1 was made memorable by the appearance of Matilda Heron, one of the stage celebrities of the day, and her talented young daughter, Bijou. In *The Little Flower*, in which she took the lead, Bijou was "simply perfect," said the *Times*; in fact the amazing child carried the entire play, she alone seeming to be on speaking terms with it and serving repeatedly as audible prompter for the adult actors. As for Miss Heron herself, she was content to recite a part of *Hiawatha* as her contribution to the evening. Six nights later the stage was graced by another eminent actress, the charming

comedienne Maggie Mitchell in *Jane Eyre*, in which she held her auditors "spell-bound from alpha to omega," as the *Times* phrased it. And still a third noteworthy event for January was a visit on the 25th by another talented company including the esteemed Emily Rigl and Charles Fisher in Boucicault's *London Assurance*. To be sure some of the actors spoke indistinctly and seemed only distantly acquainted with their lines, but the audience of about 400 was reasonably well satisfied.

Thereafter, except for the famous clown, George L. Fox, who drew 1,200 customers on February 9 with the pantomime *Humpty Dumpty at Home*, nothing calls for notice until April 5. Then Augustin Daly once more favored the town with a good company containing, among others, the delightful Louis James and the gifted young Sara Jewett. The play was Daly's own amusing satire on speculation, *The Big Bonanza*, and both production and audience were all that could be desired. The opera composer, Flotow, was given another hearing on the 23rd when his widely admired *L'Ombra* was presented by conductor Max Maretzek and a cast of singers—all artists in good standing at the New York Academy of Music. Unfortunately many people stayed away from an "excellent" performance because the usual prices of 25 cents to 75 cents had been doubled for this occasion.

The usual prices were paid by many gratified patrons on May 21 to see John T. Raymond in *The Gilded Age*, a dramatization, largely Mark Twain's, of the novel by himself and Charles Dudley Warner. As Colonel Mulberry Sellers, impecunious but lovable speculator and visionary, Raymond impersonated a character that was to be his stock in trade for years and that was to place him in the public regard not a great way below Joseph Jefferson. Nothing else calls for our attention before the closing date of July 5.

1875-1876

Of some interest in what proved to be a generally dull season was the appearance on September 29 of two old vaudeville stars, the well known team of Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart in *The Doyle Brothers*. This play, largely by Harrigan, which was being tried out before its big city appearances, featured the Irish characters that were

even more in demand than the "Dutch" variety. A substantial evening was provided on October 22 by the Charles Gayler Comedy Company in *Caste*, one of the best plays of the skilful and much liked English dramatist, Thomas W. Robertson. A large audience found the highest satisfaction in it.

A month later the (or a) Gayler Comedy Company was again announced, but this troupe turned out to be a fraud concocted by one Frank Gayler, and the *Fredonian*, charging a series of such impostures in New Brunswick, counseled the management to be on its guard if it wanted to avoid non-paying houses. Nonetheless a good house greeted the distinguished old comedian, John Brougham, who appeared with a company from Daly's Theatre in his own comedy, *Playing with Fire*, on November 25. Nobody cried fraud this time.

Skipping a few minor events, we note strong evidence on February 1 of a growing trend toward elaborate spectacle. On that date the Kiralfy Brothers' Combination exhibited a show based on Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, for which purpose they employed 58 performers and three carloads of special scenery. I am sorry, but I find nothing else worth setting down to the credit of this season, which closed on May 31.

1876-1877

A somewhat routine opening on August 29 was followed three weeks later by the arrival of one of the fabulous actors of the day, Edward Askew Sothorn, whose ineffably vacuous and foppish Lord Dundreary in Tom Taylor's *Our American Cousin* was for long one of the most celebrated characters on the English speaking stage. The *Times* declared that "a more delighted audience we do not remember having seen." After an approximate vacuum for several weeks another engaging comedian, Stuart Robson, was welcomed on December 1 in Bret Harte's weak play, *Two Men of Sandy Bar*.

Again a long absence of reportable doings, interrupted on January 23 by W. S. Gilbert's sober play, *Daniel Druce, Blacksmith*, which was presented by a good company from Booth's Theatre in New York. The *Times* considered both play and playing to be admirable but deplored a meagreness of audience which it held to be typical of the town whenever a really meritorious attraction was offered. The

town did considerably better by Joseph H. Keane in his own version of *Rip Van Winkle* on February 13. Although Keane was not an eminent actor, the *Times* regarded his delineation of Rip as second only to Jefferson's.

A return of Raymond in *The Gilded Age*, a performance of Daly's frothy comedy, *Lemons*, and a timely melodrama, *Custer and His Avengers*, preceded the appearance on March 26 of George Rignold, an extraordinarily handsome English actor who had recently created a sensation in New York as Henry V. Perhaps doubting that New Brunswick would care for a whole evening of Shakespeare, with the able support of F. B. Warde, Annie Edmondson, and Marie Bradbrook he enacted a current piece called *Alone*, which he followed with the wooing scene from *Henry V*, Irene Curtis playing Katherine. The *Fredonian* pronounced him a genius.

A couple of additional melodramas, a "Dutch" comedy, some female minstrels doing the cancan, and a few similarly intellectual treats occupied the last weeks of the season.

1877-1878

After a late opening, Mrs. E. L. Davenport, a member of one of America's best known theatrical families, and other players from Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre gave Leonard Grover's popular play, *Our Boarding House*, on October 26. Both "beauty and fashion" turned out for the occasion. On November 2 an unusually strong cast (F. B. Warde, Jeffreys Lewis, B. T. Ringgold, Ida Jeffreys, Charles Le Clercq), all formerly with Daly, appeared in *Pink Dominoes*, a lively comedy by James Albery. A week later the handsome matinee idol, George Rignold, returned in *Alone*, and with the aid of some competent companions in his aloneness he gave much pleasure.

Of the precocious young actresses who adorned the nineteenth century boards, a great favorite, whose name has not yet lost all its glamor, was Lotta Crabtree. Although a mature woman when she visited New Brunswick on December 14, Lotta still retained the juvenile animation and irresponsible charm that had made her the pet of the California miners 20 years before. In Fred Marsden's

Musette; or, Little Bright Eyes she displayed her very individual traits, and the comment was "excellent."

Grand opera was audible on January 1—Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* sung by the New York Opera Troupe. But it drew only a very meagre audience, and grand opera was seldom heard thereafter in the misnamed Opera House. Light opera, however, was available this year, *The Chimes of Normandy* being presented on April 25 by the Hess English Opera Company. The impression made by this able group was highly favorable.

Much laughter was evoked on May 4 by Pat Rooney, noted vaudeville artist, and his cohorts. More laughter on the 10th at the antics of Rutgers students in a travesty of *Romeo and Juliet*, staged to raise funds for enclosing the baseball field. On the third night thereafter *As You Like It*, pure and undefiled, was interpreted by another of Daly's distinguished casts, which included Maurice Barrymore (father of Lionel, Ethel, and John) as Orlando, and the brilliant Fanny Davenport as Rosalind. Of Miss Davenport the *Times* remarked without much exaggeration that "she is the most beautiful, accomplished and graceful artiste of the period in high comedy." Then, just for the sake of anti-climax, beginning on the 27th a week of "Aunt Polly Bassett's Singin' Skewl" with the humors of Jedediah, the loutish Yankee boy.

On June 5 Pat Rooney, in a return engagement by special request, brought to a close a varied season. And the amazing fact should be added that only two minstrel shows were billed for the entire time, whereas each of the preceding seasons had been blessed with five or more.

1878-1879

After a limping start this season suddenly developed a vigorous stride. On October 17 came Rose Eytonge, one of the beautiful and highly talented actresses of the period, in *A Woman of the People*. She and her company from the Broadway Theatre were greeted by a delighted and surprisingly large house.

But no theatrical event in New Brunswick's annals had ever created anything like the excitement occasioned by the appearance of Kate Claxton in d'Ennery and Cormon's *The Two Orphans* on

November 4. Miss Claxton, lovely and gifted, had become something of a national institution as the blind Louise in this enormously popular play. What made the occasion unique, however, was the fact that Miss Claxton had spent her school days in New Brunswick, where her parents still lived. Some 1,500 people jammed into the theatre, and the verdict was apparently unanimous that Kate was superb. Another ovation was accorded the home town girl on January 23 for her "magnificent" acting in a dramatization of Charles Reade's novel, *The Double Marriage*, mounted exactly as for its New York run.

This was the year in which Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* reached the shores of America, and the result was a furore that beggars description. Of it Dr. Odell writes: "Never was there anything before or since like the craze, the madness, the lunacy for this opera."⁴ The good ship arrived at the port of New Brunswick on February 28, but the unhappy sequel was complete shipwreck. The Opera was presented by something calling itself the Fifth Avenue Theatre Company, but the "large and respectable" assembly that had gathered to greet it quickly discovered it had been victimized. The "respectable" people began to betake themselves elsewhere, while the rougher element crowded forward ready for the kill. Perhaps they had received advance information or perhaps they always went to the theatre armed, but at any rate wads of wet paper, rotten eggs, and cabbages soon began to fly. Amid a tremendous uproar the final curtain was rung down about 9:00 o'clock. The police came to the rescue, and Little Buttercup swooned into the arms of Officer Gregory.

This fiasco was followed on March 7 by one of the most dignified and impressive events in New Brunswick's entire stage history, an appearance by the glorious Mary Anderson. Dr. Odell has said of her: "Mary Anderson was the most beautiful woman I ever saw on the stage, or, for that matter, off the stage. 'Divinely tall, and most divinely fair,' might have been written of her; there was something noble about everything she did."⁵ Although but 19 years of age at the time of her visit, she was already an authentic star. To the

⁴ Odell, *op. cit.*, X, 605.

⁵ Odell, *op. cit.*, X, 372.

local audience, reported to be one of the most cultivated and appreciative ever to welcome a player to this city, Miss Anderson looked a very goddess as she appeared in the long robes of Parthenia in *Ingomar, the Barbarian*, and the effect was profound.

Despite the untoward occurrence of February 28, by May the *Pinafore* epidemic had struck New Brunswick with full vigor. During the spring three performances by professionals, two by amateurs, and two parodies were given to large and enthusiastic houses.

All told 1878-1879 was one of the most interesting seasons New Brunswick was ever to enjoy, thanks largely to notable women of the stage: Emily Rigl and Maggie Mitchell (both present again this year though omitted from our report), also Rose Eytinge, Kate Claxton, Mary Anderson—and Little Buttercup.

1879-1880

Inevitably the new season opened, on October 2, with *H. M. S. Pinafore* as interpreted by Gorman's Church Choir Pinafore Company. The *Times* considered this curiously named troupe the best yet. The next few weeks brought only trifles, but theatregoing again became serious business when the Standard Opera Company returned with *Pinafore* and *Trial by Jury* on November 26. And about a week later yet another repetition of Gilbert and Sullivan's nautical gem by Haverly's Chicago Church Choir Company, which, according to the reporter, outdistanced all competitors. December 10 was distinguished by the appearance of a then famous actor, Denman Thompson, in a then famous play, *Joshua Whitcomb*, a sentimental drama of Yankee rural life which later became *The Old Homestead*. This limited but gifted actor, who has been mentioned in the same breath with Joseph Jefferson, was taken to its collective bosom by the New Brunswick playgoers.

"Dutch" comedy, Irish humor, Topsy's antics, *Ten Nights in a Barroom*, and similar foibles, available in December and January, can be overlooked when we discover that Mary Anderson was re-engaged for February 23, this time in the title-role of *Evadne*, which the *Times* preferred to her Parthenia. Close behind one beautiful actress came another. On March 8 Fanny Davenport played the lead with finished art in Daly's *Divorce*, in which she had starred

at Daly's Theatre in previous years. A much better American playwright than Daly was represented on the 22nd by Bronson Howard's immensely popular *The Banker's Daughter*. Apparently the company from the Union Square Theatre was a good one. Still another prolific American dramatist, Bartley Campbell, high in the public esteem, was given a hearing on April 9 in his substantial play of the frontier, *My Partner*, with the talented Louis Aldrich, supported by Charles T. Parsloe.

The 4th of May deserves special emphasis because of a performance on that date by the most famous actor ever seen in New Brunswick—Joseph Jefferson. Of course he impersonated Rip Van Winkle, a role in which he had been specializing for 20 years. The Rutgers students turned out en masse, and the usually undemonstrative New Brunswick theatre-goers showed such satisfaction that the inimitable Jefferson actually got a curtain call.

On the whole a creditable season for a small town.

1880-1881

The months now to be reviewed fell decidedly below the level of the preceding period, nine minstrel shows being the most noticeable achievement. Interspersed among them were Bartley Campbell's *The Galley Slave*, with Junius Brutus Booth (brother of Edwin) and elaborate scenery; *The Snow Flower* starring Kate Claxton, but a tedious play rendered even more so by endless waits—one of 35 minutes—between scenes; a Tom show with three genuine bloodhounds; Irish comedy; *The Widow Bedott* by the admired humorist, Petroleum V. Nasby, the truly comic Charles B. Bishop doing the Widow; a return of Howard's *The Banker's Daughter*; and a few lesser offerings.

To be continued.