THE THEATRE IN MOBILE
1822-1860

By

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A THESIS

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PREFACE

The writer wishes to express her most grateful appreciation to the editors of the Mobile Press Register for making the complete files of their newspapers available for her use, and to the entire staff of the Press Register for its kind helpfulness and consideration during eight weeks of a long, hot summer.

Thanks are also accorded Mrs. W. N. Ludlow of Mobile, for the privilege of seeing several old costumes, relics and playbills of Ludlow and Smith's theatre; Dr. C. J. Adams of Mobile, for the loan of N. M. Ludlow's Dramatic Life as I Found It; Miss Leila Aunspaugh, of the Mobile Public Library, for her interest and help; and Miss Heba Turner, of the University of Alabama Library, for making the T. P. Thompson collection available for her use.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mobile, Alabama, possesses one of the most fascinating histories of any city in the United States; it is a treasure-house of story and romance. Rich in culture and tradition, Mobile had yielded many secrets of her vivid past to the chronicler, but many more remained to be uncovered. It has been the aim of this writer to uncover some information on one of the most salient factors in Mobile's cultural development -- the theatre.

Because of limited time and facilities, it was decided to consider only the most glorious period of theatrical activity -- those years from the time the first theatre was established until the outbreak of the War between the States.

This writer has attempted to present, in chronicle form, only the highlights of each theatrical season, with its actors and plays. Little attention has been given to "background" material. The writer has used the newspapers of the time as much as possible, referring to other sources only for coloring and explanation, or when the newspapers were not available. The writer began with the earliest paper in the files of the Mobile
During the period under consideration, Mobile usually had a permanent winter stock theatre. This stock company, under the direction of the manager, presented plays from three to six times a week. After Thomas A. Cooper popularized the "star" system, the stock company was almost never without a visiting performer, who assumed the leading roles in the plays given during his engagement. (The plays, of course, were of the "star's" choosing.) Most of the Mobile managers were very popular, and the company members seem to have been cordially received by the townspeople. Some of the "stars" were recruited from the southern and western theatres, but most of them were well-known in New York. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that a majority of the most popular actors and actresses in America came to Mobile at one time or another.

Mobile audiences were privileged to witness the same plays that were being given at the same time in the large theatres of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. As was customary during this period, the playbills were very lengthy. A dance, an orchestra selection, and two, three, and sometimes even four plays were given on an evening.
Although the public's fancy was often caught by animal acts, vaudevillism, and the like, the taste of the Mobile theatre-goers seems to have been high. Standard and classic comedies and tragedies, and musical plays, generally found most favor with the Mobile audiences.

The press of the day encouraged the interest in the drama. There were frequent editorials on the stock members, the stars, the plays, etc., and many letters from subscribers concerning the theatre were published.

During this thirty-eight year period, the drama flourished in Mobile as it never has since that time. Today Mobile is barren of a "temple of Thespis;" it has no stock company, no road shows, no plays of a professional kind. When such a condition exists, it is comforting to delve into the past records of the wondrous days that used to be.
CHAPTER II
EARLY DAYS

1. Seasons of 1822-1824

The first English theatre in Mobile of which there is any record was established by a Mr. Judah and a Mr. Scott\(^1\) in May, 1822\(^2\).

It is not to be thought, however, that interest in the drama was wanting in Mobile before this time. Anecdotes of actors and actresses and references to plays in other cities appear frequently in the editorial sections of the newspaper. Several months previous to this first theatrical season, it had been rumored that James H. Caldwell, manager of the New Orleans theatre, proposed to establish a circuit of theatres in Natchez, Baton Rouge, Mobile, and Pensacola,\(^3\) but this plan evidently failed to materialize.

Messrs. Scott and Judah had given two recitations in Mobile at some previous time, and their company had been playing in New Orleans during the winter season.\(^4\)

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1. The author is unable to ascertain if this is the James Scott of the New Orleans and Baltimore theatres who played in New York for many years after making his debut there in 1825.
2. Mobile Commercial Register, May 2, 1822.
3. Ibid., January 34, 1822.
4. Ibid., May 2, 1822.
Having leased the old hospital on Dauphin from the city,¹ the gentlemen fitted it up "in a very neat and commodious manner," with the boxes "judiciously arranged, having a full view and command of the stage."²

The company played on alternate nights from May 6th until about the middle of June. Standard plays, such as Cherry's "The Soldier's Daughter," Maturin's "Bertram," Colman's "John Bull," and Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice," were given. Members of the stock company whose names appear in the theatrical advertisements include Messrs. Judah, Scott, Vaughn,³ Boyle, Carr, and Messdames Vos and Degrushe. An orchestra was also engaged for the whole season.⁴

From editorial comments and the letters of correspondents, we surmise that Mobilians were pleased with this brief theatrical season and were hopeful that the success of the endeavor would prompt Messrs. Judah and Scott or some other manager to build a real theatre in Mobile.

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¹ Hamilton, Peter J., Colonial Mobile, p. 412.
² Mobile Commercial Register, May 2, 1822.
³ This is probably John or Henry Vaughn, who, with Ludlow and Morgan, operated a theatre in New Orleans in 1817; Ludlow, Noah M., Dramatic Life as I Found It., p. 107.
⁴ Mobile Commercial Register, May 2, 1822, through June 10, 1822, inclusive.
The second season of theatrical activity began on November 13, 1822, with the tragedy "Douglass" and the farce "The Jew and the Doctor." The theatre was under the sole management of Mr. Judah, who had once more collected a small company which included Mr. John H. Vos and his small daughter little Miss Vos. These are the only two mentioned in the press of the time. This is the same Miss Vos who was later to become the reigning stock favorite of the Mobile boards for almost thirty years.

A communication from a theatre-goer in the Mobile Commercial Register of December 12 throws light on several aspects of the theatrical season. He asks the citizens to support the theatre and assured them that the performances have been better conducted than they were last season. He says further, "Our manager has spared no expense in making the house comfortable, provided with good music, and is daily making improvements, and I trust that he will meet with such success as may induce him to remain in this city and enable him to secure some aid from the north." As a "nota bene" is added this statement: "The performers we hope will be particular in committing their parts to memory and then pronounce them distinctly -- in good English."  

1. Ibid., November 11, 1822.  
2. Ibid., December 12, 1822.
Following the December 12, 1822, edition of the Mobile Commercial Register there is a gap in the files of the newspapers of an entire year, so nothing is known of the length of the season nor of the season, if any, of 1823.

Not until February 5, 1824, is there another theatrical announcement. On that date Mr. Vaughn (probably the same Vaughn who was with Judah and Scott in 1822 and later gave performances in St. Louis and New York) stated that he had fitted up the City Ball Room as a theatre and that performances would be held there after February 7. The opening program was *Poor Gentleman,* with Mr. Emberton of the Baltimore and Philadelphia theatres, as the leading man; and the farce *Honest Thieves.* But once again the season -- if it may be dignified with that name -- is shrouded in mystery. The newspaper files of this year are fairly complete, but no further notice of Vaughn's theatre can be found.

Before the episode of the Vaughn theatre, there appeared an announcement of a meeting of the stockholders and others interested in the erection of a new theatre. Later editorials tell of the rapid progress of the build-

1. Ibid., January 24, 1824.
ing. However, when Noah M. Ludlow left Caldwell's com-
pany in New Orleans and came to Mobile in June, 1824,
to make arrangements for a winter season in Mobile, he
found only a

"...brick building of very limited dimensions,
enclosed, but not finished. The frame-work for
the stage and first tier boxes was down, but no
further inside work had been done. The build-
ing so far, had been erected from funds sub-
scribed by the citizens, who, with the owner of
the ground, were to receive shares of stock in
payment; at $100 a share. The funds, as so far
subscribed, had been exhausted, and the stock-
holders were indebted to the man who had con-
tracted to put up and finish the building as
fast as supplied by the building company with
the means...."¹

It was in this theatre that Ludlow began his man-
gerial career in Mobile that was to continue for almost
two decades. With the coming of Ludlow to Mobile there
begins a period of almost unabated dramatic activity.
Except for the 4 or 5 years following the disastrous
burning of the first theatre, there were one or more
theatrical seasons in Mobile every year.

¹ Ludlow, Noah M., Dramatic Life as I Found It,
p. 255.
2. Season of 1824-1825

Ludlow's assertion that his was the "first regular company that played in the city of Mobile"¹ is quite evidently disputed by the facts contained in the previous chapter. However, it was to him that Mobilians were indebted for a glorious period of dramatic activity that probably knew no equal in the South except in New Orleans and Charleston.

Ludlow's first Mobile season barely escaped being postponed because of the unfinished condition of the theatre building. Having negotiated to bring his corps to Mobile for the winter of 1824-1825, Ludlow was very distressed to learn by letter in October from Henry Stickney, a prominent Mobilian, that the theatre was still only partially completed.² But Ludlow was nothing if not industrious, and within seven weeks from the time he reached Mobile in October, the enterprising manager was ready to open his playhouse.

He had secured financial aid and promise of aid from several influential Mobilians, including Mr. John Stocking and Mr. John Duncan,³ and the first Mobile theatre building was completed. Ludlow describes the

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2. Ibid., p. 260.
3. Ibid., p. 261.
of brick, and erected on a part of the site of an old fort, built and occupied by Spaniards during the time when the country was a portion of the territory of Spain. The theatre stood on the north-west corner of Theatre and Royal Streets, the latter taking its name after the erection of the theatre. It had a front of about sixty feet on Royal St., running back west about one hundred and ten feet. It was arranged with a pit and two tiers of boxes, and would seat between six and seven hundred people. The center of the upper tier was partitioned off for the use of the colored population; this was subdivided so as to accommodate a certain class of them known as 'quadroons', who, having a portion of white blood in their veins, would not condescend to mix with those that had purely negro blood...."

Previous to their season in Mobile, Ludlow's company had played in Cahaba and in Nashville. In Nashville Ludlow says the company included:

"N. M. Ludlow, manager, and genteel comedian; A. M. Wilson, leading tragedian; Jackson Gray, first old men, and some low comedy; George W. Frethy, low comedy; William L. Forrest, second tragedy; Samuel P. Jones, heavy tragedy; Edwin A. Caldwell, second comedy; William Riddle, second old men and sedate fathers; Mrs. M. L. Riddle, leading heavy business; Miss Sarah Riddle, romp and juvenile comedy; Mrs. Ludlow, soubrettes and best old women; Mrs. Mongin, second chambermaids; Mrs. Noke, general utility."

These names are included because it is very likely that the same corps, with perhaps one or two exceptions, appeared during the 1824-1825 season in Mobile.

1. Ibid., pp. 264-265.
2. Ibid., p. 258.
Ludlow says that the winter was a happy prosperous one, and the theatre seems to have been well attended until its closing in the middle of May.¹ The high light of the season was the visit of Lafayette to the city, on which occasion a grand ball was given.² At the end of the season Ludlow was presented with "a handsome cane, mounted with gold and ivory,"³ which is now, according to one of his great granddaughters, Mrs. W. N. Ludlow, in the possession of another one of his great granddaughters in St. Louis.

3. Season of 1825-1826

Ludlow states that his second theatrical season in Mobile began about the middle of November,⁴ but his advertisement in the Mobile Commercial Register indicates that the season began on December 22, 1825, with performances scheduled for every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights.

Stock company members included Mr. and Mrs. John ⁵ Greene; Abraham W. Jackson, who played under the stage

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¹ Ibid., p. 264.
² Ibid., p. 263.
³ Ibid., p. 265.
⁴ Ibid., p. 268.
⁵ According to Ludlow they joined his troupe during the next season, but he is evidently mistaken. From newspaper advertisements we learn that they played first and second leads during this entire season.
name of Wilton, and who later managed the Bowery theatre in New York; Mr. and Mrs. John H. Vos; Mr. and Mrs. Albert J. Marks (he was known as Old Rowley and later took up residence in New Orleans, where he occasionally officiated as a rabbi and directed summer shows; 1)

Samuel Emberton, printer and actor, who was addicted to the bottle; 2) William Riddle; John H. Wells; Samuel P. Jones; Edwin A. Caldwell; George O. Champlin; George W. Frethy; Thomas Ballou; John Young; B. McKinney; Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow; Mrs. Mongin; and Mrs. Nokes. 4) Ludlow states that Mrs. Riddle and her two daughters Sarah and Eliza (the latter was very young at the time, but later was to become a leading stock performer in Mobile and St. Louis) were members of the company. However, the theatrical casts published in the newspapers never give their names, and Odell says that Miss Sarah Riddle was playing at the Chatham Garden theatre during the winter of 1825-1826. 5) Little Miss Mary Vos, who is not mentioned by Ludlow as being a member of the company, must

1. Ibid., p. 270.
2. Smith, Sol, Theatrical Management in the West and South, p. 201.
4. These names are contained in the various newspaper advertisements from December 20, 1825, through April 28, 1826.
have made several appearances, for she was given a ben-

\footnote{1 Mobile Commercial Register, April 7, 1826.}

efit. Thomas Placide, brother of the then more famous

\footnote{2 Ibid., January 17 through January 24, 1826.}

Henry Placide, also joined the company as a novice,

\footnote{3 Ibid., February 21, 1826.}

doing walk-on parts. He was destined to become one of

the most popular comedians in the South and West.

The only "star" of the season was John Still, a

singing actor, and he was a very minor light. During

his brief engagement he played Count Belino in the

operatic drama "Devil's Bridge," Henry Bertram in the

musical play "Guy Mannering," Young Meadows in 'the

Grand Opera in 3 acts', "Love in a Village," Don Carlos

in the farce "Lover's Quarrels" and Delaval in the comic

piece "Castle de Limberg." A Mr. Meyers, "the cele-

brated Jew converted to Christianity, who has sung with

so much applause in all the principal theatres of Europe

and America" made a one night appearance at the theatre.

A wide variety of plays was given, the most popular

being "The Maid and the Magpie," which was given four

times. Since the bills were changed every night and few

plays were repeated, this was a good record.

In summarizing the season Ludlow says:

"...although it might not be thought a great sea-

\footnote{4 Mobile Commercial Register, April 7, 1826.}

son in the present day of theatricals in these
United States, yet I was very well satisfied with the company. The society of the leading members of the theatre was sought after, and many pleasant little parties and suppers occurred during the season."  

4. Season of 1826-1827

Although a newspaper advertisement anticipates that the season of 1826-1827 was to begin the first week in December, 2 Ludlow says that the theatre opened on December 28th. The latter date will have to be accepted, for once more there is a long gap in the newspaper files, and no records on the season from this source are available.

From Ludlow we learn that stock company members for the 1826-1827 season were: William Anderson, heavies and tragedy villains; E. R. Davis, comedy; George Rowe; J. E. Watson, an "Englishman of good general utility;" A. Wilton Jackson; Thomas Gough; Philip Le Brun; William A. Kidd; William Rutter, James Byrnes (these latter three were novices); Charles Francis Staunton (whose real name was McClure, under which cognomen he afterwards played); "Rowley" Marks, John Wells, John Greene, Horatio N. Barry, Mrs. E. R. Davis, juvenile

2. Mobile Commercial Register, December 2, 1826.
3. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 287.
tragedy; Mrs. George Rowe; Miss Caroline Rowe, sister of George Rowe; Mrs. Mary Ball, comedy and romps; Miss Mary Ann Meek (she soon married McClure); Mrs. Marks; Mrs. Greene; and the twin sisters Emeline and Almira Dunham (one of the twins married Jackson several weeks before the season began); Mrs. Vos and Miss Mary Vos.

The lone star of this season was Thomas A. Cooper, who played a successful ten night engagement in Mobile, appearing as Macbeth, Virginius, Damon (each of the last two characters twice), Richard III, Leon in "Rule a Wife," Hamlet, Rolla in "Pizarro," Beverly in "Gamester," and Petruchio in "Catherine and Petruchio" (a version of Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew" that was played for many years).

5. Season of 1828

The next season did not begin until January 19, 1828, when the theatre opened with "Speed the Plough" and "Family Jars." According to Ludlow the season was "tolerably good as far as compensation went, and it was closed with satisfaction as regarded the plays performed and the company performing them...." Somewhat contrary

2. Ibid., p. 289.
4. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 305.
to this statement is the sentiment voiced by a subscriber in the Mobile Commercial Register, who says, "We regret to learn, the manager has incurred a considerable loss."  

Stock company members included Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow, Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Marks, Mr. and Mrs. McClure, Mr. and Mrs. George Rowe, J. E. Watson, H. N. Barry, Samuel P. Jones, Edwin A. Caldwell, W. A. Kidd, William L. Riddle, Edward S. Duncan, Thomas Talbot, Miss Almira Dunham, Mrs. Vos, Miss Mary Vos, Mr. Burns, and Henry Heidmann, orchestra leader. A Mr. Anderson joined the company late in the season. Little Miss Ludlow, aged six, also made several appearances in comic songs.  

Mr. Still had a short engagement during which he played in "Devil's Bridge," "Lady of the Lake," "Guy Mannering," "Don Giovanni" and "A Cure for the Heartache."  

Probably the best received play of the season was "Gambler's Fate," which, according to a correspondent, was "a most interesting Drama, and fraught with more moral qualities than any that has been produced for many years.... It is awfully instructive." This play  

1. Mobile Commercial Register, May 6, 1828.  
2. Ibid., January 17 through May 13, 1828.  
3. Ibid., April 22 through May 1, 1828.  
4. Ibid., May 7, 1828.
was given four times. 1 "The Forest of Bondy" or "Dog of Montargis," with Ludlow's dog Nero in the lead, was also a popular presentation. As usual, comic songs and recitations were a prominent feature of the programs.

The theatre closed May 13 with "Gambler's Fate" and "Intrigue," or "Married Yesterday."

6. Seasons of 1828-1831

Ludlow evidently errs in saying that the 1828-1829 season opened late in December with "Laugh When You Can," 2 for according to theatre advertisements it opened on Monday, December 8th with "Speed the Plough."

Stars of the season included Mrs. Hartwig (sometimes known as Mrs. Fritchard and as Mrs. Tatnall, for she is known to have been married five times), George Holland and Thomas A. Cooper. Mrs. Hartwig, well known in New York originally as a circus performer, was engaged for six nights but extended her stay to about six weeks. 3 Holland played only six nights, giving his imitative burletta, "A Day After the Fair;" his eccentric piece composed of songs, recitations, ventriloquism, etc., "Whims of a Comedian;" the "petit comedy," "Secret;"

1. Mobile Commercial Register, May 6 through May 10, 1829.
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 329.
3. Mobile Commercial Register, December 8, 1828, through January 23, 1829.
"School of Reform;" and the interlude, "Mayor of Garrat," or "The Henpecked Husband." Cooper played his usual roles: Virginius, Duke Aranza in "Honeymoon," Beverly in "Gamester," Damon in "Damon and Pythias," scenes from "Julius Caesar" and "Macbeth," and Leon in "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife." The stars received the support of the following stock members: Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow, Mr. and Mrs. McClure, Mr. and Mrs. William Baldwin, Miss Dunham, Daniel Reed, William Anderson (who joined late in the season), Hamilton Hosack, Thomas Ansell, Mr. and Mrs. Honey and Thomas D. Rice. The latter was then a novice engaged to "do anything on the stage and assist the 'property man' ..."; later he became very famous as "Jim Crow" Rice, negro impersonator. Ludlow says that Mrs. Vos, Mary Vos, John Still, H. N. Barry, H. N. Cambridge, Alexander Egbert, Mrs. Edstrum, Thomas Pierson, J. W. Child, and a Mr. Prior were also members of the company, but their names do not appear in the theatrical announcements in the newspapers. J. C. Lefolle was orchestra leader, McConkey and Crowl were machinists, Edstrum was ticket-seller, Lewis and Duffield were property men.

1. Ibid., January 7 through 12, 1829.
2. Ibid., February 9 through 20, 1829.
4. Ibid., p. 328.
5. Ibid., p. 328.
Late in February a portion of Mr. J. Purdy Brown's circus troupe, which had been appearing in Mobile, was united with Ludlow's dramatic corps for several equestrian dramas. "El Hyder" and M. G. Lewis' "Timour the Tartar" were given with a "full stud of horses and beautiful scenic effects."¹

But now disaster befell the flourishing theatre. At 1:30 on the morning of March 1st the building caught fire and was completely destroyed before the arrival of the fire wagons. No part of the theatre was insured, so the manager and company members suffered heavy losses.²

The day after the fire a meeting of citizens was held,³ and $2000 was subscribed for the erection of a new theatre.⁴ Ludlow leased a lot for a short term of years on the north side of St. Francis Street, about four squares west of Royal. From an item captioned "Notice to Builders" in the Mobile Commercial Register of March 4, 1829, we learn that the theatre was planned (and probably was) a "Frame building, eighty feet by forty-five, eighteen feet to the eaves," containing "thirteen windows; one folding and one single door; the weather boarding rough." Ludlow says that the "structure

¹ Mobile Commercial Register, February 20 through February 27, 1829.
² Ibid., March 2, 1829.
³ Ibid., March 2, 1829.
⁴ Ludlow, op. cit., p. 333.
was plain and primitive in construction and finish; there was no time for elaborate ornament." The total cost of the building was $7000, $5000 of which was supplied by Ludlow. 1

The new theatre opened on May 2nd with Cumberland's five-act play "Wheel of Fortune" and the farce "Fortune's Frolic." 2 Actor's benefits were begun almost immediately and continued through the close of the season in the last week of May.

Ludlow says that after the last of the benefits he and J. Purdy Brown combined their troupes for the production of "Timor," "El Hyder," and "Valentine and Orson" in which Mrs. Hartwig played the leads. He must have mistaken the date of the performances with those that took place in February. Furthermore, there is evidence in the Mobile Commercial Register of May 29th that Ludlow had already left Mobile. Even more conclusive than this is the fact mentioned in Carson's Theatre on the Frontier that Brown inserted an advertisement in a St. Louis newspaper of an equestrian performance on the night of June 2, 1829. 3

1. Ibid., p. 335.
2. Mobile Commercial Register, May 1, 1829. Ludlow (p. 336) says that the theatre opened with "The Dramatist" and gives the cast.
In the Mobile Commercial Register of December 16, 1829, there is an editorial that reports the understanding that Ludlow "will come to Mobile in about two or three weeks and that he and Brown will again produce a series of equestrian dramas." But Ludlow engaged in dramatic pursuits in other regions, and so far as we know, Mobile had no professional performances during this year. This statement is only an assumption, for the files of the Mobile Commercial Register contain no papers from May 29, 1829, through June 1, 1830.

Substantiation is given to the idea that there was no theatrical activity during this season by a statement in Sol Smith's book: "Arrived at Mobile in spring, 1830, I was strongly urged to remain there and open the theatre, a shell of a place in St. Francis Street, which was offered to me by those who represented the interests of Mr. Ludlow...; but considering myself bound to open the Natchez Theatre I pushed on to that city."¹

Ludlow says that the St. Francis street theatre was burned in the summer of 1830, having caught fire from some adjoining stables.²

The next theatrical news we have is found in the Mobile Commercial Register of April 23, 1831. In an

¹. Smith, Sol, Theatrical Journeywork, p. 63.
². Ludlow, op. cit., p. 369.
editorial captioned "Mr. Brown" we learn that:

"The indefatigable and deservedly popular Manager of the Amphitheatre, takes his leave of the Mobile public this evening, and has chosen it for his benefit. Mr. Brown deserves great credit for the zeal, industry and tact, displayed for several weeks past, in catering for our amusement, and all will admit, even without taking into consideration the scanty accommodations which our city afforded, he has been eminently successful...."

Since there was no theatre, it is likely that the "indefatigable" Mr. Brown himself erected an amphitheatre for the occasion, as he is thought to have done during his stay in St. Louis in 1829.

7. Season of 1831-1832

The winter season of 1831-1832 must have been looking dull when there appeared a communication in the paper from one signing himself Coelebs:

"This is the season when we expect some indication of the coming events. We have no theatre;--are we to have no talk? no parties? -- no conversations?"

Then the writer politely suggests that the ladies of the town make some plans for entertainment.

But entertainment in the form of Sol Smith's little theatrical corps was soon on its way to enliven the season with dramatic pleasures for eight weeks. The company

of Old Sol (as he was affectionately known) had been playing in Tuscaloosa, where they had been well received.\(^1\) They were accorded a warm welcome in Mobile; it became fashionable to attend the theatre; and much interest in it was taken by many citizens.\(^2\)

Smith says that a "small theatre was fitted up over a billiard room in Royal street, and the first season of my theatrical management in Mobile commenced...."\(^3\) A correspondent in the Mobile Commercial Register of April 6th says that "the room he occupied was scarcely large enough for a stage alone."

The season opened on January 25th, 1832, with the comedy of "Soldier's Daughter," with Mrs. Sol Smith and Lemuel Smith playing Widow Cheerly and Frank Heartall, respectively, and the farce "Lying Valet," with Sol as Sharp.\(^4\) The company consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Carter and little Miss Carter, Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Williams, Messrs. Madden, Morton, Bailey, Davidson, Trower, Donaldson, Lemuel Smith, and Mrs. Sizer.\(^5\)

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1. Ibid., January 23, 1832.
2. Ibid., January 23 through March 14, 1832.
4. Mobile Commercial Register, January 25, 1832.
5. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
Ned (or Edward) Raymond, whom Odell mentions as having played in New York with Ludlow in 1828 and at the Bowery in 1831, played Rolla in "Pizarro," Damon in "Damon and Pythias," and the title roles in "William Tell" and "Virginius" during a brief successful engagement. Smith says that "a year or two afterwards, in a fit of mania potu, he committed suicide by throwing himself from one of the wharves in Boston."  

Henry J. Finn, a noted comedian, played in "Paul Pry," "She Stoops to Conquer," "100 Lb. Note," "Heir at Law," "Married and Single," "Sweethearts and Wives," "Paul and Peter Shuck," and sang an original comic song called the "Mobile Fireman" during a short engagement. Mr. Belmont, "the Fire King of the West" made two appearances at the theatre "Eating a Supper Composed of Live Coals, Heated Rosin, Burning Brimstone, etc." A Mr. Houpt of the Philadelphia and other northern theatres played Octavian in Colman's "Mountaineers" during a one-night stand. Smith concluded operations on March 13th and went to Montgomery for a short season.  

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2. Mobile Commercial Register, February 8 and February 10, 1832.  
3. Smith, op. cit., p. 76.  
4. Mobile Commercial Register, February 20 through February 29, 1832.  
5. Ibid., February 17, 1832.  
6. Ibid., March 12, 1832.
through his agent James P. Baily, had opened a new theatre on St. Emanuel Street on March 10. I can find no information on the building and description of this establishment. Craighead says that J. Purdy Brown erected a building known as the Bath Theatre on the west side of St. Emanuel, two south of Dauphin. This much we accept, although we do not know his source material. But he states that the building was opened in 1833. In this statement he errs.

Names of the stock company members that we can glean from the newspapers include Messrs. Herbert, Heyl, Jones, McCafferty Cabell (stage-manager), Raymond, King, Madden, Mrs. Cabell, Mr. and Mrs. Betts, Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Williams, Master Minnich, Mr. Diamond, and Mr. Noke as orchestra leader.

Stars were numerous during this brief season. Thomas A. Cooper played Othello and Marc Antony during a two-night stop-over. Holland also played for two nights, but we do not know in what plays he appeared.

Master Burke, one of the most renowned children in stage history, opened on March 26 as Young Norval in

2. Mobile Commercial Register, March 19 through March 21, 1832.
3. Ibid., March 21, 1832.
"Douglass" and as Terry O'Rourke in "Irish Tutor."

Other roles he assayed (very successfully we are led to believe by press reports) were Dr. Pangloss in "Heir at Law," Loony Magtwalter in "Review," Richard III, Crack in "Turnpike Gate," Shylock in "Merchant of Venice," five characters in "Of Age Tomorrow," Patrick in "Poor Soldier," Lingo in "Agreeable Surprise," General Bombastes in "Bombastes Furioso," several characters in the eccentric protean piece "Whirligig Hall" or "Day after the Fair" and the equally eccentric interlude "March of Intellect." His violin solos were also an important feature of his programs.¹

The engagement of Mr. Barton, a British provincial actor who had made his American debut in New York only a year before,² immediately followed that of Master Burke, but the "attractions of the inimitable Mr. Burke have somewhat fatigued the Theatre going public"³ and his engagement was apparently not well attended. A pair of French dancers, Madame Hutin and Monsieur Barbiere, "from the Royal Academy of Paris, who have performed at the Bowery Theatre upwards of 200 nights," were engaged and danced pantomimic ballets, German waltzes, "pas de deux" and shawl dances.⁴ Mrs. Ludlow played Dame Gerald

¹. Ibid., March 23 through April 6, 1832.
². Odell, op. cit.; III, p. 499.
³. Mobile Commercial Register, April 9, 1832.
⁴. Ibid., April 11 through April 23, 1832.
in "Magpie and the Maid," Cicely in "Promissory Note," Mrs. Ferment in "School of Reform," and several other roles during a short engagement.

Near the end of the season two very elaborate pieces were given. The wording used in the newspaper advertisements to describe them is worthy of reprint:

"Nautical Drama, Paul Jones, The Pilot of the German Ocean.... First act, scene 1 will be on the coast of England. Scene 3rd will be the state cabin of the Ariel. Sixth scene will be the whole stage covered with water giving a correct idea of violently agitated ocean. An American frigate, full mann'd and rigg'd, sails all around the stage, presenting to the view of the audience a ship in a storm, as described by Mr. Cooper in his novel of the Pilot. The last scene is on the deck of the Alacrity. The frigate heaves in sight. Long Tom fights with his harpoon, kills the captain of the Alacrity and hoists the American colors, to the soul inspiring air of Hail Columbia."

Such a spectacular set having been constructed, it must have been felt that further use should be made of it.

So in the fairy drama of "Cherry and Fair Star," or the "Children of Cyprus," in addition to having a scene in which "the whole stage is covered with clouds which disperse, and present a view of the City of Cyprus," there is included a scene in which "the whole stage is covered with water" and "a full rigg'd ship appears to

1. Ibid., April 18 through April 25, 1832.
2. Ibid., April 27, 1832.
cross the stage -- tack, and return!"¹

In commenting on Brown's Mobile season Smith says that "a most disastrous season my friend Brown had of it, commencing as it did in February, and closing in the spring with a heavy loss, notwithstanding the attempts to retrieve the fortunes of the day by bringing on the field a large force of cavalry." Smith also says that Brown was unfitted for theatrical management but that he was a very capable circus manager. ²

I can find only one theatre advertisement of the plays with the "large field of cavalry" of which Smith speaks. After the regular season was closed on May 14th there is an advertisement announcing the presentation of the melodrama "El Hyder" with the following in the cast: Messrs. Heyl, King, Betts, Jones, Graham, Madden, Diamond, Mrs. Williams, and Mrs. Betts.³

If Brown's season was as unsuccessful as Smith would have us think, perhaps this fact might be accounted for in the fairly low calibre of his stock company members. One correspondent says in a very enlightening communication:

"...with the exception of Messrs. Heyl, McCafferty and Cabell (and their forte is a very limited line

¹. Ibid., May 9, 1832.
². Smith, op. cit., p. 76.
³. Mobile Commercial Register, May 18, 1832.
of comedy) there is not one actor that can be
called even tolerable. He later praises the
merits of Mr. Williams, especially in genteel
comedy. As a whole the present company would
suffer much in comparison with the small but
excellent little company of Old Sol. The
support which he received in this city, not-
withstanding the many disadvantages he had to
contend with, is proof enough that a good
company will be well supported here."

The Mobile Commercial Register of May 21 carries
an item to the effect that the Tyrolese Minstrels, who
had been playing at White's Assembly Room, had volun-
teered their services at the Royal Street Theatre on
that evening for the benefit of Mr. Heyl. I cannot
understand why the performance should be given at the
Royal Street Theatre (where Smith had played) unless
the St. Emanuel Street Theatre had been closed. But
even so, Heyl must have used Brown's company for his
benefit because the program included the melodrama
"Black Eyed Susan" and the farce "The Sleep Walker."
Announcement was also made that Noke's benefit was to
be on May 22nd. This is the last theatrical advertise-
ment that appears during this season.

1. Ibid., April 2, 1832.
The next December found J. Purdy Brown back in Mobile, ready to begin a long theatrical season. Epidemics of cholera had driven him from Cincinnati, Louisville, and Natchez, but hearing that the health of Mobile was unimpaired, he opened there on December 7th in the St. Emanuel Street Theatre with Diamond's "Foundling of the Forest" and "Lottery Ticket." We learn of the condition of the theatre and of the plans for the season in a letter Brown publishes in the paper:

"...I thought it advisable to leave the equestrian company there [in Natchez], and proceed direct here -- open the building for a few weeks, with the Theatrical company -- then have a vacation and finish the building -- put a ring in it, and reopen it as an Amphitheatre. Accordingly, I brought my company here. On my arrival, I learned that the building is in a bad condition, and that it would be unsafe to open it. I immediately had a committee of the following master builders to inspect it, viz: Messrs. Collins, Roper, Quigley, and Eliiston. -- They report that it can be made perfectly secure for the present season -- but to make it a permanent building, without the aid of extra support, it must be almost entirely rebuilt. This I have not the means to do -- and if I had perhaps it would not be advisable; as the great delay, with an expensive company, awaiting the same, would be almost ruinous. I have engaged Mr. Eliiston...to superintend the repairs that are necessary to render the building safe and secure....

"I have procured a good company, and of sufficient number to play pieces correctly. The most eminent performers in the country as stars, will appear during the season. For a few weeks a ring will be erected, and the best Equestrian
performances will be introduced. Many new pieces and several scenic spectacles will be brought forward....

From newspaper reports throughout the year we find that Mr. and Mrs. Lyons, Mr. and Mrs. Marks, Mr. and Mrs. Cabell, Miss Vos, Mrs. Graham, Mrs. Minnich, Charles Webb, Gilbert, MacCafferty, Walton, J. P. Baily, Farrell, Belcour, Madden, Heyl, Betts, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, and Stephens (the orchestra leader) comprised the stock company this season.

Once more many "stars" illumined the boards. During the months of December and January they almost ran rampant over them. Mrs. Alexander Drake played a long engagement, during which she appeared twice in "Evadne" in the title role, twice as Widow Cheerly in "Soldier's Daughter," twice as Mariette in "Therese," as Bianca in "Fazio," or "The Italian Wife," twice as Mrs. Haller in "Stranger," as Paul in "Wandering Boys," as Juliet, as Marian Ramsay, as Isabell in "Isabell" or "Fatal Marriage," as the romp in "The Romp," as Anette in "Maid and Magpie," as Miss Dorrillion in "Wives as They Were," as Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing," and as Victorine in the drama by that name and Florinda in "Apostate."  

1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, December 7, 1832.
2. Ibid., December 17 through January 3, 1833, and January 15 through January 25, 1833.
On alternate nights of Mrs. Drake's first engagement Mr. Forbes, a young American tragedian, played Sir Edward Mortimer, Stranger, Beverly in the "Gamester," Count de Croissy in "Wandering Boys" (to Mrs. Drake's Paul), and Romeo (to Mrs. Drake's Juliet). Both he and Mrs. Drake seem to have been well received.

During the engagements of Mr. Forbes and Mrs. Drake, the well known comedians Mr. and Mrs. Hilson (she was the former Ellen Johnson, and according to Weymss "the pride of the Park Theatre, New York" for several years) were engaged for eight nights. They played "School for Scandal" three times, "Fish Out of Water," "Paul Pry," "Clariss," "The Rent Day," "Ladies: Do Not Stay at Home," "'Tis All a Farce," "Is He Jealous?," "Fraternal Discord," "The Devil to Pay," "Blue Devils," "Miller's Maid," "Sprigs of Laurel," and "Ambrose Gwinett." 3

Mr. Hilson died during the next year (in 1834), and his wife died in 1837. 4

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1. Ibid., December 18, 1832, through December 29, 1832.
2. Weymss, Francis, Chronology of the American Stage from 1752 to 1852, p. 74.
While the Hilsons were still acting on the Mobile boards, Mr. Barton and Mrs. Mary Ann Duff were engaged to play on alternate nights. Mr. Barton is the same gentleman who had played in Mobile the previous season and who, according to Smith "had a weak voice caused by asthma, and a rather imperfect utterance, the result of bad teeth." Mrs. Duff was a well known tragedienne. The English poet Thomas Moore is supposed to have proposed marriage to her, but she refused him, and he married her sister Elizabeth. They played "Macbeth" (Mrs. Duff as Lady Macbeth, Barton as Macbeth), "Jane Shore" (Mrs. Duff in title role, Barton as Hastings), "Pizarro" (Mrs. Duff as Elvira, Barton as Rolla), "Venice Preserved" (Mrs. Duff as Belvidera, Barton as Pierre), "Adelgitha" (Mrs. Duff in title role), "King Lear" (Barton as Lear, Mrs. Duff as Cordelia).

Mr. Potter, a juggler, followed the tragedians, and performed feats of throwing three carving knives in the air, balancing three carriage wheels on his chin, and swallowing a sword twenty-two inches in length.

1. Smith, Sol, op. cit., p. 117.
4. Ibid., January 22 through January 26, 1833.
Mr. Minnich, a slack rope vaulter, appeared at the same time, climaxing his feats by "hanging himself by the neck." 1

Close upon the heels of these vaudeville performers there came Mons. Gouffe, the man monkey, and Mr. Fletcher, "the celebrated delineator of ancient statuary." These gentlemen had performed in New York, Odell reluctantly admits, in 1831. 2

Mons. Gouffe's chief repertory number was a sketch called "Jocko, the Brazilian Ape," in which

"...at the denouement of his act, he is seen in the last struggle and agonies of death, said by many to be the equal of the last scene of Booth's Richard. He also hangs by his neck from a bamboo tree with the rope in full swing." 3

Another one of his sketches was called "Jack Robinson and His Monkey," with Fletcher abandoning his statues to be Robinson and Gouffe as Mushapug, the monkey. 4

On February 4th the pugilist Samuel O'Rourke, was engaged to have a "Set-To with a scientific amateur." In the course of the evening O'Rourke was to "bend a large iron poker by one blow across his naked arm." This exhibition was to be so arranged "as to please,

1. Ibid., January 24, 1833.
4. Ibid., February 2, 1833.
without offending the most fastidious."¹

After this overdose of vaudevillism, the legitimate drama lovers were probably glad to welcome Mrs. Edward Knight, a well-known vocalist and actress. She was an Englishwoman, very popular in New York during the middle and late 1820's until she was eclipsed as a vocalist by Mrs. Austin and Mme. Feron. ² Mrs. Knight played Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer," Kate O'Brien in "Perfection," Diana Vernon in "Rob Roy," Victoire in "The Invincibles," Zulima in "Abon Hassan," Julia Mannering in "Guy Mannering," and the leading role in "Husband at Sight."³

On February 19th the theatre closed for a few nights in order to make preparations for the equestrian shows. So, on February 25th there appears an advertisement in the Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot under the caption "Theatre and Circus" that states that the "proprietor of the Mobile Theatre respectfully announces...that he is inserting in the Theatre a Circle for Equestrian performances -- erecting boxes, with Pit underneath." A parquette for "free people of color" was fitted up.

1. Ibid., February 4, 1833.
2. Odell, op. cit., III, p. 239.
3. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 6 through February 15, 1833.
Noah M. Ludlow made his first appearance in Mobile for several years on the opening night of the new combination theatre-circus. He, and later Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith and J. W. Wallack, supplied the legitimate drama that usually concluded the equestrian shows.

The first night bill was made up of the following attractions: Ludlow as Vapid in "The Dramatist," comic songs by the clown Creighton, grand entree of eight horses, displays of horsemanship by Yeaman and by North, exhibition of the horse Saladin by Purdy Brown, feats of tumbling by the company, and enactment of the scene "The Dying Moor" by North on horseback. Other bills were not so elaborate as this but were quite similar to it.


After the departure of Ludlow the equestrian melodrama "Massaniello, the Deliverer of Naples" was brought out with new scenery, decorations and dresses. This

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1. Ibid., February 25, 1833.
2. Ibid., February 26, 1833 through March 2, 1833.
piece was presented four times. After "El Hyder" had been given twice, regular farces and melodramas were given until the spectacle of "Timour the Tarter" was ready for presentation. This equestrian drama was replete with processions, combats, horses, and in the third act we learn that the "stage is in flames." "Timour" held the boards for five successive nights, yielding then to the grand equestrian melodrama, "Cataract of the Ganges," which played for three nights. This piece contained a "field of battle," "horses and men lying in confusion on the earth," and "the city of Yamona in flames," besides "a cataract of real water, and a hero dashing up the cataract on horseback." All this in one evening!

Other equestrian melodramas given were "Tekeli," "Blue Beard," "Mazeppa," and "Joan of Arc." In the latter spectacle "the piece concludes with a General Battle in the Market Place of Rouen -- Horses and men mingled in the conflict. The stage in Flames. Joan is rescued from the burning Statue, and restored to her father!"

1. Ibid., March 4, 1833 through March 9, 1833.
2. Ibid., March 7-8, 1833.
3. Ibid., March 21, 1833.
4. Ibid., March 27, 1833.
5. Ibid., April 4, 1833.

The Smiths were immediately followed by James William Wallack, the Elder, who, at the time, was one of the best known actors in America and England. He played two of his most famous roles: Rolla in "Pizarro," and Dick Dashall in "My Aunt," and also Richard III, Don Felix in "The Wonder," and Martin Heyward in "Rent Day."2

An editorial says that "Wallack was received rapturously," that the "performance was superb," and that the "audience at the end cheered with five distinct rounds of applause."3

1. Ibid., April 15 through April 25, 1833.
2. Ibid., April 25 through May 1, 1833.
3. Ibid., April 26, 1833.
The last performance of which there is any record was Farrell's benefit on May 4th, at which was given the "national drama" of "The Doomed Maiden," or "The Hero of the Prairie" by George Washington Custis, grandson of George Washington.

9. Season of 1833-1834

During the last months of 1833 a new theatrical manager appeared on the Mobile horizon for about seven weeks. He was none other than the celebrated entertainer George Holland, who had appeared in Mobile in 1829 under Ludlow and in 1832 under Brown. Holland fitted up as a theatre a room in the brick building situated on the east side of Royal Street (formerly occupied by the United States District Court), near Mr. White's Hotel, between Dauphin and St. Francis streets. An editorial in the Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot says that the room was very handsomely outfitted. The establishment was known as "The Little Theatre (Royal Street)."

There were apparently only four members of the company: Holland, Miss Coleman and Mr. Schoolcraft of

1. Ibid., May 4, 1833.
2. Winter, op. cit., p. 46.
3. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, November 22 and November 30, 1833.
the New Orleans theatre, and Mr. Hall of the Cincinnati theatre. After Christmas, the ranks were bolstered by the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Morton of the New Orleans theatre. Mr. Dimond also played with them for several nights.

Probably because of the limited numbers of the company, only very light farces and "petit comedies" were given. The programs seem to have assumed something of the air of a variety show. The opening program is a typical one:

John Howard Payne's play, "Love in Humble Life."
A song and guitar number, "Alice Grey," by Schoolcraft.

Interlude: "Lover's Quarrels."
Comical glee: "Old King Cole."
Negro extravaganza: "Old Zip Coon," by Hall.
Imitative burletta: "A Day After the Fair," by Holland.

The most popular pieces seem to have been "Love in Humble Life" (five times), "A Day After the Fair" (five times), "Whims of a Comedian" (five times), and "The Two Thompsons" (six times). Admittance to the theatre was,

1. Ibid., November 22, 1833.
2. Ibid., December 20-21, 1833.
3. Ibid., November 25, 1833.
as was customary, $1.00 for adults and 50 cents for children.

The last performance of Holland's Little Theatre took place on January 10. Schoolcraft and Hall joined Brown's theatre, which was to open in a few days, and Holland joined Sol Smith for a season in Montgomery.

J. Purdy Brown arrived to find his brick theatre untenable and unsafe for public attendance. He erected a temporary building "made of light material," but "well-braced" and perfectly safe," in which he planned to house his company until his new theatre should be completed. A correspondent says that the temporary building was comfortable but that the acoustics were poor. The theatre was situated on the lot adjoining Brown's old establishment.

Brown engaged "some of the best mechanics in the city to raze his present building, and erect a new and infinitely superior one in its stead" on the site of the old building. Mr. Elliston was the architect, Mr. Turner the building, Mr. Pannel the mason, Mr. Mondelli and Mr. MacCafferty the artists and Mr.

1. Smith, op. cit., p. 103.
3. Ibid.; January 20, 1834.
4. Ibid.; January 13, 1834.
McConkey and Mr. Harding the inside decorators.¹ Mr. J. P. Finlay lent Brown $2000 to help build the theatre.²

A fairly large stock company gave very representative plays and the stars of the season were prominent and numerous. As gleaned from the newspaper advertisements, the company consisted of Madden, Webb, H. Walton, William Walton, Morton, MacCafferty, Farrel, Schoolcraft, Hall, E. Davis, Minnich, McCabe, Walsh, Heyl, Lyne, John S. Findlay (or Finlay) as vocalist and Walsh as orchestra leader; Miss Vos, Mrs. Minnich, Mrs. Graham, and Mrs. Creighton. Mrs. Turner and her daughters Julia and Ellen, of the Chestnut Theatre, Philadelphia, stayed during most of the season. Miss Vos and William Walton played the leads on stock nights.

The statue poseur of last season, Mr. Fletcher, was the first "foreign" attraction. He stayed only five nights.³

There followed a week of good stock company programs before the arrival of the first real stars, Mr. and Mrs. George Barrett. They played "School for Scandal," "Romeo and Juliet," "Perfection," the new

¹. Ibid., January 13, 1834.
². Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, April 20, 1835.
³. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, January 21 through January 25, 1834.


Mr. James Thorne and Mrs. Austin, both well known vocalists popular in New York, were engaged in March to play on alternate nights with Miss Clara Fisher. Mr. Thorne and Mrs. Austin appeared in a number of musical plays: "Rob Roy," "Abon Hassan," "Guy Mannering," "The

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1. Ibid., February 3 through February 6, 1834.
2. Ibid., March 1 through March 6, 1834.
3. Ibid., February 11 through February 19, 1834.
4. Ibid., February 20 through February 22, 1834.

Before the engagements of Mr. Thorne, Miss Fisher, and Mrs. Austin closed, Miss Placide (probably Jane Placide, who was a favorite in New Orleans) played a four-night engagement, enacting Julia in "Hunchback" (supported by Thorne), Elvira in "Pizarro," and Belvidera in "Venice Preserved" to Thomas A. Cooper's Pierre. And now there was a perfect melange of stars on the stage boards. Mrs. Austin, Miss Fisher, Mr. Thorne and Miss Placide were joined by Cooper. He played Pierre in "Venice Preserved," Benedict in "Much

1. Ibid., March 13 through April 1, 1834.
2. Ibid., March 15 through April 11, 1834.
3. Ibid., March 31 through April 5, 1834.
Ado About Nothing," and Beverly in "Gamester." On his benefit night he appeared in the title role in "Virginia," supported by his daughter, Priscilla, in the role of Virginia. Priscilla was a novice at the time; she later married Robert Tyler, son of President Tyler, retired from the stage, and presided at the White House while Tyler was unmarried. There are several letters in the newspaper praising the merits of Cooper. He was fifty-seven years old, but his admirers still crowded the theatre, and one correspondent reports that "hundreds went away for the very good reason that they could not gain admittance" on the night of his benefit.

By April 14th all the stars had left, and on April 16th we find the regular stock company giving the first Mobile representation of "Rip Van Winkle."

On April 19th Mr. and Mrs. Coney (the former Miss Crampton) began an engagement at the theatre, and then it was announced that they would remain until the end of the season. However, some trouble arose between them and the management, and their engagement was

1. Ibid., April 4 through April 9, 1834.
3. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 9, 1834.
4. Ibid., April 28, 1834.
5. Ibid., May 25, 1834.
terminated. On their benefit night Mrs. Coney enacted the title role in "Richard III." A correspondent says that in Richard "Mrs. Coney displayed a nice conception of the character, and perfect knowledge of the business of the part...; -- physical power alone was wanting to render the character as interesting as the actress." Some theatre-goers have queer taste!

The next night after Mrs. Coney's Richard, the national drama, "American Smuggler," or "Love and Liberty," by James Davis, a Mobilian, was given. After the drama the author addressed the audience.

The new theatre was finally opened on April 28th with "School for Scandal" and "My Neighbor's Wife." We have reports from a correspondent that the structure was splendid looking with a rich interior. Cooper appeared on the second night after the opening as Damon, and this was followed on succeeding nights by "Bertram" and "Honeymoon."

A public meeting was held, and it was decided to give Cooper a public benefit as had been done in New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. The money derived from the benefit was to be put in a permanent fund for

1. Ibid., April 26, 1834.
2. Ibid., April 26, 1834.
3. Ibid., April 21, 1834.
4. Ibid., April 29 through May 1, 1834.
the education of his daughters. The benefit was a successful event of May 5. Cooper played Antony in the second and third acts of "Caesar" and Petruchio to his daughter's Catherine in "Catherine and Petruchio." Sol Smith and George Holland came down from Montgomery, Smith to sing a comic medley and Holland to appear in "The Secret." Actors, stagehands, manager, printers, etc., gave their services for the occasion and the benefit netted $1502.55.

Harry Langton, an actor who played the southern circuits and who, according to Smith, was very eccentric and a heavy drinker, and James H. Caldwell, Manager of the New Orleans theatre, played brief engagements during the early part of May.

Following the production of "Mazeppa," "Timour," and "El Hyder" with the horse Saladin, the actors began taking their benefits in anticipation of the closing of the season. Miss Coleman joined the company for the remainder of the period.

When Holland took a benefit on June 2nd, a correspondent asked that his benefit be supported because

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1. Ibid., May 2, 1834.
2. Ibid., May 5, 1834.
4. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, May 6 through May 9, 1834.
5. Ibid., May 14, 1834.
"his visit here dispelled the dullness which pervaded the atmosphere of our Theatre...." Apparently the audiences had not enjoyed the last weeks of entertainment.

The program for June 6th was announced as Mr. Brown's benefit and the last night of the season.

The Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot of June 7th carried this brief notice: "Died: This morning, after a short illness, Mr. J. P. Brown, Proprietor and Manager of the Mobile Theatre, aged about 32 years."

Smith attributes his death to eating a crab supper late at night. Ludlow suggests that the combination of crabs and poor box office receipts caused his death.

The numerous stars which flooded the theatre probably did keep Brown's treasury depleted. Illustrating this, Ludlow says that "in order to secure all the attractions possible in the dramatic way, it was said he engaged three 'stars' that happened to be passing through Mobile about the same time, agreeing to give each a third of the entire night's performance. The house was well filled each night, but he was greatly surprised and much vexed, after settling with his three 'stars' to find there was nothing of the receipts left

2. Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 343, 344.
for himself, and that he was minus his entire expenses for the term of their engagement."¹

Both Smith and Ludlow thought little of Brown as a theatre manager. Ludlow says that his audiences (especially at his equestrian shows) "were not the 'elite' of Mobile, and were at times very uproarious...."² Smith relates several stories of his want of managerial ability.³ A newspaper communication during the season notices many incidents of gross neglect of stage business, injudicious selection of pieces, poor casting of plays, and bad stage managing.⁴ Altogether, the season must have been a poor one for the deceased Mr. Brown.

The members of Brown's company were left stranded with no employment for the summer months. Many of them stayed in Mobile and gave plays in the theatre at intervals throughout June and July.⁵ The last theatrical advertisement for this extended season appears in the Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot of July 25.

¹. Ibid., pp. 343-4.
². Ibid., p. 427.
⁴. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 21, 1834.
⁵. Ibid., June 11 through July 25, 1834.
CHAPTER III

REGIME OF LUDLOW AND SMITH

1. Season of 1834-1835

We are pleased to learn from a card inserted by N. M. Ludlow in the Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot of August 22, 1834 that he has once more embarked in the managerial profession and that he intends to try to secure the Mobile theatre for the ensuing winter season.

But matters were not to work out so amiably and simply. Sol Smith says that he, learning of the theatre's vacancy, but "entertaining a foolish idea that the person who had established the drama in Mobile, and who had been driven from the field by fire and bad seasons [Ludlow], had a sort of pre-emption right to the city," wrote to Ludlow proposing that they engage and operate the theatre together. He further states that Ludlow agreed to his proposition and that they arranged a meeting in Mobile for October. Sickness in his family prevented Smith from reaching Mobile, but he sent his authorization for securing a joint lease on the theatre.¹

¹ Smith, op. cit., p. 116.
Ludlow maintains that Smith let his appointment with him go by default because he (Smith) foresaw that he would have a hard time "throwing overboard" his agreement to operate a theatre in Augusta, Georgia, with George Holland for the coming year. He says, too, that he did not conclude the agreement with Smith by letter, that he waited in Mobile for him until it was absolutely imperative for him to sign the lease, that Smith made no bitter charges against him until his book was published, and that he took the theatre by himself only after consulting with Thaddeus Sanford, editor of the newspaper, and a friend to both gentlemen concerned.¹

Ludlow and Smith seem to have had several other unpleasant differences,² and although they were partners in theatrical management for eighteen years, they seem to have harbored their resentment against each other until their death. Joseph Jefferson III, who played under them as a small boy in Mobile, says that they never exchanged a word except on business.³ This is probably an exaggeration, however. Mrs. W. N. Ludlow of Mobile, who knew her great grandfather, N. M.

². Ibid., pp. 419, 446.
Ludlow, when she was a small child, knows little of the quarrel between Smith and Ludlow, but thinks that their relationship was fairly amiable.

So, Ludlow took possession of the theatre in Mobile, and it was not until the next year that the partnership was consummated.

Shortly before Ludlow opened the theatre, a portion of the Mobile theatrical company "which was dispersed by the death of Brown, and who have been idle during the summer or engaged in equally unprofitable pilgrimages in the neighborhood" rented the theatre again for a few nights and gave several performances.

The newspaper records from November 29, 1834, through March 24, 1835, are missing, so we must refer to Ludlow for information on the first part of the season.

Ludlow closed his theatre in St. Louis (this was the first year of his Mobile-St. Louis circuit), and his performers opened in the St. Emanuel Street theatre on December 17, 1834. The company consisted of Ludlow, leading comedy and tragedy; John Herbert Sr., first comic old men; A. J. Marks, second old men;

1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, October 29, 1834.
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 422.
Lyne, second tragedy; John Madison Madden and Kelly, low comedy; Thompson, juvenile general business; N. Johnson, Read, Walton, Henry, Barclay, Coney, Walker, J. E. Watson, Yorkshiremen and dialect men; Mrs. Ludlow, Miss Vos, Mrs. Watson, Mrs. Minnich, Mrs. Coney, Miss Coney, Miss Ford, and Mrs. Graham.

Mrs. Pritchard (Mrs. Hartwig, Mrs. Tatnall) was the first star of the season, and her engagement was a profitable one. Charles Webb, a former Mobile stock company member who had achieved some encouragement in New York, played in support of Mrs. Pritchard. Another actor who had been playing in New York, John Jay Adams, stopped over in Mobile on his way to New Orleans, and played "Hamlet" and "Alexander the Great." Mrs. Alexander Drake, a favorite of former years, arrived on January 22, 1835, and played a seven night engagement.

Henry J. Finn commenced a four night engagement on February 4, but bad weather prevailed during his stay, and he was reengaged for three nights in March.

1. Ibid., p. 423.
2. Ibid., p. 425.
4. Ibid., III, p. 61.
6. Ibid., p. 426.
7. Ibid., pp. 426-7.
During this period he gave two plays that he wrote himself: "Kaspar Hauser" and "Removing the Deposites."  

Following the engagement of Mrs. Sharpe, her brother-in-law, J. H. Hackett, made the first of his many appearances in Mobile. He was soon to become one of the most important comedians on the American stage and one of the most famous Falstaffs in stage history. At this time his most popular role was Col. Wildfire in "The Kentuckian," a part he essayed on his opening night in Mobile. He also played "Jonathan in England," "Monsieur Tonson," "Rip Van Winkle," "Major Jack Downing," and did imitations of important stage personages in a piece called "Mad Actor." His engagement was a successful one.  

The brightest star of the season was Tyrone Power, the great delineator of Irish characters. He began his engagement on February 24, 1835, as Paudeen in "Born to Good Luck" and followed this with Dennis Brulgruddery in "John Bull," Sir Patrick in "Irish Ambassador," "Teddy the Tiler," and MoShane in "Nervous Man and Man of Nerves." Ludlow pronounces his engagement a brilliant one. In his own book, Impressions of America,

1. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 26 through March 31, 1835.  
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 430.  
3. Ibid., p. 431.
Power says that he had spent several days (December 30, 31, 1834, and January 1, 1835) in Mobile on his way to New Orleans and Natchez, but that he gave no performances until his return in February.

He pronounced Mobile "one of the most attractive spots I have visited south of the Potomac." Although he says nothing in his journal of the theatre or stock company, he tells of Mobile's growing commerce and industry.

An incident that occurred in the theatre while he was playing in Mobile lead him to deplore the chief drawback to living on the "frontier" -- the presence of idle ruffians.

Power says:

"During the last night I acted in Mobile, whilst on the stage, I heard a slight noise in the upper boxes; a rush was made to a particular point; then a moment's scuffle, and all was silent. The ladies in the dress-boxes had not moved, and very little sensation was communicated to the crowded pit: the whole thing, in fact, was over in as short a time as I have occupied in the telling of it.

"After the play I accompanied a party of ladies to the house of Mr. M___e to sup, and here, for the first time, learned, through an inquiry casually made, that during a slight scuffle a citizen had been killed by the blow of a knife, given by an intemperate ruffian named M'Crew, who had quietly descended the

2. Ibid., p. 134.
stairs afterwards, accompanied by his brother. These men were from the country, where known disturbers of the peace, and rarely made their appearance without bloodshed following.¹

Power was horrified to learn that the ruffian was released on bail and that within a month had atrociously murdered the child of a planter.²

J. M. Field played a starring engagement late in March, and A. F. Kean (or Keene), a singing actor, appeared early in April for four nights. During a short engagement, Charles Mason, nephew of John Philip Kemble, played the usual tragic roles: Sir Giles Overreach in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," Napoleon, Richard III, Sir Edward Mortimer in "Iron Chest," Martin Heyward in "Rent Day," and Werner in Byron's tragedy "Werner," or "The Inheritance."³

Then there began the visit of "Jim Crow" Rice, who was making his first appearance for six years in Mobile. Since Rice's days here as a novice under Ludlow he had achieved wide acclaim as a negro impersonator. The Mobile Mercantile Advertiser carries the New Orleans Bulletin's statement that Rice "out negrofies all Africa; he is certainly a stove coal disciple, a

¹. Ibid., pp. 138-9.
². Ibid.
⁴. Ibid., April 8 through April 13, 1835.
Rice played a successful engagement to full houses. He appeared in several plays and burlesque "Ethiopian operas," but his programs consisted mostly of humorous discussions of such topics as "Trip to Mobile," "Nigger Meeting in New York," "Philadelphia Nigger in Mobile," etc.

After Rice's departure, Mrs. Pritchard returned, and Mr. Parsloe, the pantomimist, played at the same time. Mrs. Pritchard's opening night role was Don Juan in the play of that name. Parsloe enacted the Monkey in a piece called "Cabin Boy and His Monkey," and the Chimpanzee in the popular pantomime "La Perouse," or "The Desolate Island."

The actors' benefits which began early in May were concluded with that of Miss Vos on the last night of the season. Everyone seemed anxious to make the occasion a gala one, and the benefit produced $2000. The editor says that the Vos benefit turned out the largest house ever assembled in the city. Miss Vos, although not a Mobilian by birth, had adopted it as her home,

1. Ibid., April 16, 1835.
2. Ibid., April 14 through April 19, 1835.
3. Ibid., April 22 through May 8, 1835.
4. Ibid., May 23, 1835.
5. Ibid., May 21, 1835.
and the townspeople seem to have been very attached to her. During the ensuing summer she played an engagement at the Park Theatre in New York and then played successfully at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia.

Before Ludlow closed the season of 1834-1835 in May, he had received a visit from Sol Smith sometime in the spring. Ludlow and Smith formed a partnership and agreed to rent the Mobile theatre for a number of years. Mr. Charles Gullum of Mobile purchased the theatre and its grounds for $35,000 at the administrator's sale of Brown's estate. From Sol Smith we learn that Gullum was to make all necessary repairs on the building and rent it to the partners for ten per cent of its cost. Ludlow and Smith announced at the same time their intention of partly rebuilding the establishment, of painting new scenery, and of securing a new wardrobe. We learn from an editorial that these plans were being carried out, for it tells of the work of the carpenters and of enlarging the vault at the back part of the stage so that extra light could be let in.

3. Some of the details of the drawing up of the partnership papers may be found in Carson, Theatre on the Frontier, p. 160-179.
7. Ibid., June 15, 1835.
2. Season of 1835-1836

Sol Smith reached Mobile in late October to supervise the final improvements being made in the theatre. Some alterations in the interior arrangement were made:

"...private boxes have been reserved adjoining the stage, in both tiers, and neatly furnished; there is a new handsome drop scene, the boxes in the first tier have been protected by a higher, more substantial partition, -- and in the parquette, a couple of rows of boxes to hold a single person each, secured by lock and key, have been divided off next to the orchestra."

The 1835-1836 season opened on November 9 with "The Hunchback." The part of Julia was taken by Miss Eliza Riddle, who had originally played the role in Philadelphia with the author, Sheridan Knowles. (James Murdoch says that during this time she was "one of the most beautiful and accomplished actresses of the American stage and a great favorite in Philadelphia.") Miss Riddle had been engaged as the leading stock lady for the season, it being understood that Miss Vos would remain in the east. But Miss Vos returned to play a starring engagement, and the Mobile public demanded that she be reinstated in the company. One audience

1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, October 20, 1835.
2. Ibid., November 10, 1835.
3. Ibid., November 7, 1835.
even went so far as to form a cabal and stage a riot when they felt that their favorite, Miss Vos, was being mildly castigated in a role that Miss Riddle was portraying. In order to appease the public, both young women were engaged for the season and shared the leading female parts.  

The first star, Mr. J. H. Barton, played to rather small houses. Mr. Barton had come over from New Orleans, where he was serving as Caldwell's stage manager at the St. Charles Theatre. It was during this season that he coached Charlotte Cushman and started her on the high path she was to tread.  

James E. Murdoch, who was playing in New Orleans this season and who was soon to become a very prominent figure on the American stage, acted in "Romeo and Juliet," "Wild Cats," "Douglas," "School for Scandal," "Raising the Wind," "Rent Day," and "Mountaineers" during a five-night engagement.  

The next attractions were Mr. and Mrs. Ternan (she was Fanny Jarman, a favorite on the English stage). They played a fairly long engagement, acting in

1. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 449.  
4. Ibid., p. 234.
"Gamester," "She Stoops to Conquer," "As You Like It,
"Much Ado about Nothing," "Merchant of Venice," "Macbeth,
and "Richard III," among other plays. Mrs. Ternan was praised as a high comedian but criticized as a trage­dienne. Mr. Ternan was pronounced respectable, but not excellent in anything. 2

Our old friend, John Still, returned for an eng­agement, appearing at the same time as Mr. Norton, "professor of the trumpet." 3

Smith says that "an engagement with M'dlle. Celeste was a very great one, eclipsing all other engagements of the season." 4 In a few short years Celeste had be­come, according to Odell, "an international figure in dance, pantomime, and drama." 5 She became the sensa­tion of New York when she returned there in 1834 after several years absence. 6 In Mobile she used only a very limited repertoire: she did several dances, and played in the pieces "French Spy," "Wizard Skiff," "Moorish Page," "Death Flank," and "Wept of Wish-Ton-

1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, December 14, 1835, through January 2, 1836.
2. Ibid., January 5, 1836.
3. Ibid., January 4 through January 7, 1836.
4. Smith, op. cit., p. 121.
Wish" (an adaptation of Cooper's novel), during a twelve night engagement. ¹

Smith says that Miss Lydia Phillips, from Drury Lane, played a good engagement, ² but from newspaper reports the houses seem to have been meager except on the nights of her playing Lady Macbeth.

Mr. Forbes, who had made a previous visit to Mobile, and who was playing now at the St. Charles in New Orleans, appeared on Miss Voss' benefit, on the benefit for "relief of the suffering Texans," and then took a benefit himself. ⁴

Yankee Hill played again in Mobile, performing his usual round of characters with the following additions of last season's bills: "Knight of the Golden Fleece," "Yankee Pedlar," Finn's "Kaspar Hauser," and "The Adventurer," or "The Yankee in Tripoli." ⁵

Mrs. Gibbs (formerly Miss Graddon), a vocalist from Drury Lane, played two engagements at different times. Her first engagement turned out rather poor houses, but her second visit evoked fine critical

¹. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, January 18 through January 30, 1836.
². Smith, op. cit., p. 120.
³. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 1 through February 10, 1836.
⁴. Ibid., February 12 through February 16, 1836.
⁵. Ibid., February 17 through February 24, 1836.
Jim Crow Rice gave his negro impersonations to fair houses.

Little Miss Meadows, an eight year old prodigy who was to make frequent visits to Mobile in the next years, appeared under the tutelage of Mrs. Frederick F. Brown and played a successful four nights and a benefit. Her roles included Little Pickle in "Spoiled Child," Kathleen in "Poor Soldier," Catherine to Ludlow's Petrouchio, Julia in the fourth act of "Hunchback," Vanilla in "Weathercock," and Young Norval in "Douglass." She also sang and danced on her programs.  

Mr. Charles Mason and his sister played a series of representative dramas, but according to Smith attracted very small houses. Mrs. James G. Maeder (formerly Miss Clara Fisher) played a round of comedy characters to good houses.

Miss Nelson (Mrs. Coppleston Hodges) played a brief engagement in April. We are to hear a great deal of her in the next few years. Odell says that she made her first appearance in New York in 1836 as the

1. Ibid., February 25 through March 7, and April 28 through May 4, 1836.
2. Ibid., March 8 through March 12, 1836.
3. Ibid., March 15 through March 19, 1836.
4. Ibid., March 21 through March 29, 1836.
5. Smith, op. cit., p. 121.
6. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 4 through April 9, 1836.
7. Ibid., April 11 through April 16, 1836.
fairy queen in "Cinderella," and that she tried unsuccessfully to manage the Richmond Hill Theatre during the same season.¹ We shall see in our discussion of the next season that she returned to Mobile, probably after the failure of her own theatre.

H. J. Finn wound up the star season; he played a round of comedy characters to good houses.²

The season closed with the benefits of the leading stock members. On the occasion of J. M. Field's benefit he gave his own adaptation of "Caesario" and his original burlesque sketch, "Tourists in America."³ In the years to come, Field was to give many of his plays on the Mobile boards.

Stock company members for the season just discussed included: Miss Eliza Riddle, J. M. Field, Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow, Matthew C. Field, Mrs. Minnich, Sol Smith, William Riddle (brother of Eliza), Mr. Boddy, Mr. Lamberg, Miss Emily Clarke, and Mrs. Groves.⁴ Ludlow also lists the names of Charles Green, Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard, Radcliffe, Walton, Kelly, Johnson, Markham, Jackson, Brace, Manly, Adams, Neale, Mrs.

¹. Odell, op. cit., p. 170.
². Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 18 through April 23, 1836.
³. Ibid., May 9, 1836.
⁴. Ibid., November 7, 1835, through May 20, 1836.
Smith, Mrs. Graham, and Miss Eliza Petrie. Mr. Schoolcraft took a benefit, but his name is not mentioned by Ludlow nor does it appear in the theatrical advertisements.

An editorial says that the "corps was burdened with some incapables." We do not know who these were, but we do know that the editor thought highly of the Field brothers, Miss Vos, Miss Riddle, and Miss Clarke, and urged that they be reengaged for the next season.

3. Season of 1836-1837

Once more "The Hunchback" was used to open the Mobile season on November 8, 1836. "Husband at Sight" was the afterpiece.

Ludlow and Smith had added new scenery and decoration; the interior had been repainted; the parquettes had been remodeled and divided into convenient boxes; the dress tier had been newly cushioned and lined; and

1. I am convinced that Ludlow is in error in regard to the presence of Miss Petrie, Green, and Hubbard. When they appear next season they are spoken of as new performers. And surely Miss Petrie, who played leads during the 1836-1837 season, would not have been entirely omitted from the advertisements of the 1835-1836 season.
3. Ibid., May 18, May 20, 1836.
4. Ibid., November 7, 1836.
new chandeliers had been hung. The boxes were painted a few weeks later, but no "wet paint" sign was posted on them. Several visitors ruined their clothing, and one sufferer wrote the editor to ask that damages be paid. 2

The stock company was of a good size, and probably of fairly good calibre, although several members were targets of derogatory statements from at least one theatre-goer. 3 Ludlow says that the company was considered a good one, 4 and Smith says that pieces given without stars were played admirably. Members composing the company were: Ludlow, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, J. M. Field, Matthew C. Field, Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard, C. L. Green, Brace, Anderson, Adams, Miss Eliza Riddle, Miss Eliza Petrie, Mrs. Salzman, Mrs. Kutz, Vincent de Camp, Jackson, Thomas Placide, and Larkin. 5 Ludlow also includes the names of Clarke, Anderton, Riley, Barker, Kelly, Thomas Pearson, James Thorpe, Newton, Sergeant, Jones, West, Chambers, Miss Clarke, Miss Voght, and Mr. Meyers as orchestra leader. J. R. Smith was the

1. Ibid., November 7, 1836.
2. Ibid., December 12, 1836.
3. Mobile Morning Chronicle, December 3, 1836.
5. Smith, op. cit., p. 123.
6. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, November 7 through November 29, 1836.
Mobile Morning Chronicle, November 30 through December 29, 1836.
Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 8 through July 21, 1836.
principal scenic artist.  

Vincent de Camp is one of the most interesting of these figures. After leaving England, where he was a favorite comedian, he operated theatres in Charleston, Augusta, Columbia, and Savannah. He is said by Weymss to have died in Mobile sometime later, "where, having retired from the stage, he kept a dairy farm." Ludlow, however, states that he died in Texas, July 27, 1839. Smith has several interesting stories to relate about de Camp.

The first star of the season was a favorite of former years, Mrs. Alexander Drake, who played to good audiences during a short engagement. She was followed by J. S. Balls, a minor English comedian. The latter must have attracted good houses, too, for his benefit night receipts amounted to $950. Mrs. Fritchard returned again for a few nights and played a round of melodramas.

1. Ludlow also includes the name of Miss Vos, but her name does not appear in the advertisements, so I feel sure that he is in error.
2. Murdock, op. cit., p. 202. (Murdock played with him on several occasions at these theatres.)
3. Weymss, op. cit., p. 47.
7. Ibid., November 29, 1836; Mobile Morning Chronicle, November 30 through December 9, 1836.
8. Mobile Morning Chronicle, December 13 through December 22, 1836.
After December 29, 1836, the newspapers are missing until March 8, 1837. We turn again to Ludlow and Smith for information regarding these several months.

James W. Wallack, Sr., had a good engagement, and Mobilians were particularly delighted with his Rolla in "Pizarro," Massoroni in "Brigand," Benedict in "Much Ado About Nothing," and Dick Dashall in "My Aunt." 1

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Keely drew crowded houses during their engagement, their favorite pieces being "Loan of a Lover," and "Swiss Cottage." 2 The editor says that this popular couple made about $2000 during their visit. 3

Other stars, about whose engagements we know little, included Master Burke, H. J. Finn, and Mrs. Lewis.

One of the chief events of the season was the presentation of the opera "Cinderella" in a very elaborate style. The music, costumes and scenery received particular attention, and the piece was rehearsed for

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1. Smith and Ludlow, however, are both very sketchy in their discussion of this season.
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 471.
two months. The editor pronounced this, the first opera given with any completeness in Mobile, a great success. It was repeated several times.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Barnes, long-time New York favorites, and their daughter Charlotte, played for several nights. The two women shared the female leads and "Old Jack" took old men's parts. Miss Barnes' original national drama "La Fitte, the Pirate of the Gulf," was presented for the first time here and drew large houses for three nights, in spite of bad weather.

Herr Cline, who was famous for his performances on the "elastic cord" was the next attraction. And a powerful attraction he must have been, for his benefit -- $1200 -- exceeded that of any of the previous stars.

Mlle. Celeste played the same pieces she had presented last season and with the same handsome success. The editor probably did not reflect popular sentiment when he wrote: "...but her pieces partake a great deal of the gag and humbug. We have tired of seeing them."
Following Celeste's visit, the juvenile prodigy, little Miss Meadows, returned again for a short engagement.

Miss Nelson also repeated her engagement of last season, playing her favorite piece "Mountain Sylph" on several occasions. This amiable woman was the target of considerable caustic comment from the editor's pen. At the conclusion of her engagement he remarks that "after the bombast, noise, and nonsense...which have necessarily attended the engagement of Miss Nelson (alias Mrs. Hodges) it is refreshing to turn once more to the legitimate drama." Miss Nelson's foremost attraction was her figure; it really must have been superb. The editor says: "...she is no actress except in form."

Augustus A. Addams, a well known New York actor, and a disciple of Forrest, played a round of tragic characters: Damon, Othello, William Tell, Brutus (in "Brutus," or "Fall of Tarquin"), King Lear, and Rolla. In the latter play Mrs. Addams, the former Miss Duff, appeared.

1. Ibid., April 18 through April 24, 1837.
2. Ibid., May 3, 1837.
3. Ibid., April 28, 1837.
4. Murdoch says that he would have been a great actor had he not tried to imitate Forrest: Murdoch, op. cit., p. 348.
5. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, May 2 through May 9, 1837.
Thomas R. Bishop, an English tenor, who, according to Weymss, was playing with Caldwell in 1836, played several singing roles during a brief engagement.  

Near the end of the season the tragedy "Aaron Burr" or "The Emperor of Mexico" was presented for the benefit of J. M. Field. The part of Burr was taken by the author, Mr. William Russell Smith of Mobile. Smith says that it was a good play but was performed only once afterward. Smith invites the author, if he should happen to read his book, to get in touch with him so that he can endeavor to have the play produced in one of the best theatres.  

The theatre was closed on May 30 with Sol Smith's benefit. Smith maintains it was the best season he ever played in Mobile.  

But now we find ourselves somewhat ahead of our story. Another theatre had opened in Mobile in May and was still giving performances when the St. Emanuel Street Theatre closed. So for the first time we find two "temples of Thespis" operating in Mobile at the same time.  

3. Smith, W. R., was a well-known Alabama writer and editor of the literary publication Bachelor Button.  
5. Ibid., p. 123.
The first knowledge we have of this new theatre is gathered from a notice in the Mobile Mercantile Advertiser of March 23, 1837, under the caption "Theatrical Instruction":

"Wanted -- by the undersigned, for the New Theatre, twelve Misses and as many Masters, of ages from ten to fourteen, to form a Corps de Ballet for the stage. They will be instructed by a finished Master, and then paid for their services."—L. and F. Ferry."

An editorial in the Mobile Mercantile Advertiser of April 29 announces that the new theatre "has been nicely fitted up," that the ceiling of the house and the front of the boxes are highly ornamented," and that the "drop curtain, painted by Charles Smith, a young artist, is one of the finest we've ever seen." There were seating accommodations for approximately five hundred people.

Craighead says that the Ferry brothers' theatre was a small house on Government Street between Jackson and Claiborne.  

It was announced that the establishment -- to be called the Eagle Theatre -- would be a combination theatre and garden and that the regular theatrical entertainments would not be given. Instead, novelties

and exhibitions, such as concerts, ventriloquists, etc., would be presented. Their bills, however, indicate that their programs were similar to those given in the legitimate theatres of the day.

The Eagle Theatre opened on May 2 to a large and brilliant audience. An opening address was delivered by Mrs. Janvier "of the New York and western theatres," and Mr. and Mrs. Bennie performed several dances. For several nights thereafter a "Grand Concert" was given with the following performers: Mrs. Morley, Mrs. Thielman, A. F. Keene, Mr. Morley, Mr. Archer, Mr. De Bar, and the Bennies. Light farces and dance numbers usually completed the program.

Miss Nelson, who had played at Ludlow's and Smith's theatre, was engaged and played one of her favorite dramas "The Deep Deep Sea" several times. From notices that follow we presume that she remained in the company for at least several weeks. Her husband, Mr. Hodges, also must have appeared on several occasions.

The concerts were abandoned entirely, and the names of Mr. and Mrs. Hunt (formerly Miss Lane), Mrs.

1. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 31, 1837.
2. Ibid., May 3 through May 8, 1837.
3. Ibid., May 11 through May 17, 1837.
4. Ibid., July 17, 1837.
Kinloch, Mr. and Mrs. Burke, all of the St. Charles Theatre, and Janvier, Archer, Sargent, Corri, Kelly, and Foster begin to appear in the advertisements. The Bennies continued their dancing.

A man by the name of Rice appeared "in his celebrated Imitations" on May 18 and as Crumbs on July 17. This was probably "Jim Crow" Rice.

Mrs. Cramer visited the theatre for several nights and was lauded by a correspondent for her roles in "Rent Day" and "Three Weeks After Marriage." The same writer also says "if she had appeared here under any other auspices than that of the Eagle Theatre, her reception would have been very flattering."

Are we to gather from this information that the Ferry theatre was a poor one, or perhaps that it was in disrepute? Smith says that the theatre "fizzled out," but he is known to have made a number of mis-statements, and it seems likely that if it were going to "fizzle out," such action would have occurred before July.

The Eagle theatre closed about the 19th or 20th of July. Some of the actors must have been desirous of continuing operations, for on July 21 a petition from

1. Ibid., July 17, 1837.
2. Smith, op. cit., p. 132.
Mr. Janvier and others was submitted to the mayor and aldermen asking that theatrical exhibitions be allowed without a license. However, nothing came of the petition; the aldermen voted "that the petitioners have leave to withdraw their petition." ¹

4. Season of 1837-1838

Several points concerning the Mobile theatrical season of 1837-1838 are hazy, and references in the books of Ludlow and Smith only add to the confusion.

Before Ludlow and Smith’s St. Emanuel Street Theatre opened on November 20, Louis Ferry, with his backer, Dick Wilkins, had opened the Government Street Theatre (the Eagle Theatre of last season) under the name of the American Theatre. Ludlow says that the Ferry establishment succeeded very well until the Emanuel Street concern began operations; then attendance fell off and the owners were unable to meet expenses; soon the treasury collapsed, the performers deserted, and the whole concern "suddenly subsided." ²

Smith says (and all these statements are corroborated by Ludlow) that after three weeks of competitive

¹ Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, July 21, 1837.
² Smith, op. cit., p. 132.
³ Ludlow, op. cit., p. 492.
operation, Wilkins offered to "turn over the whole Government Street concern and quit management forever if the engagements he had made with his company would be assumed by the management of the St. Emanuel."  

Ludlow and Smith relieved Ferry and Wilkins of their company members and sent them to St. Louis for a winter season.  

The gentlemen from whom we derive this information made no further mention of the American Theatre, and one is naturally led to believe that nothing more was heard from this establishment. But such is not the case. The last theatrical advertisement of the American Theatre for several months appears in the Mobile Commercial Register on December 9; and Matthew Field and Miss Petrie (both of whom went to St. Louis with the newly formed company) took farewell benefits at the St. Emanuel Street Theatre on December 20 and 21. We may presume, therefore, that this was the closing of the American Theatre described by Smith and Ludlow.

No further mention of the American Theatre is made until late in February. Then the theatre was reopened on February 26 with the Ravel family. Thereafter, 

2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 492.  
3. Mobile Morning Chronicle, February 24, 1838.
numerous advertisements appear indicating that the American operated almost continuously until May 31.

We are surprised to find, late in the season, that a number of the St. Emanuel Street company were playing in the Government Street Theatre. The names of T. Placide, Mr. and Mrs. Barker, Mrs. Hubbard, and several others, are discovered in casts of the plays at the American.

This situation may possibly be explained by an editorial appearing in the Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot of April 19, 1838:

"...The old Theatre is much out of the popular graces at present. The why and wherefore, it is not our business to inquire: the score is to be settled between the managers and the public. The stock actors, generally, are sans doute shockingly out of their element; but whatever may have been the first cause, it is rather hard to make Mr. Ludlow smart for it now, when six of his company (with good reason for ought we know) have taken French leave of him without 'notice to quit.' As the season is nearly closed, it is too late to replenish the stock. Next season, we have little doubt but that both the managers and the public will be benefited by the disagreement...."

The theatre really must have suffered a severe loss of public esteem, for even the popular favorite, J. M. Field, was slighted and abused on the night of his benefit.

1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 27, 1838.
On April 23 Thomas Placide announced that the term of the former lessee of the American Theatre having expired, he would manage the theatre for a short season. He did carry on the management until its closing on May 31.

Stars were numerous at both theatres during this season. G. H. Barrett was the first celebrity at Ludlow and Smith's establishment. His pieces were largely comic, but Ludlow says that his engagement was not outstanding because of his advanced age and declining powers.

During Barrett's engagement, the American theatre was featuring Mrs. Barker (not a star) in "Jewess." Mrs. Henry Lewis, supported by her husband and five year old daughter, "La Petite" Bertha, played for seven nights at the Emanuel Street Theatre. She not only enacted girlish roles, but danced and appeared as Richard III.

J. H. Hackett was the next star, appearing in his favorite roles of Colonel Wildfire, Solomon Swop, Monsieur Tonson, Rip Van Winkle, Dromeo of Ephesus,

1. Ibid., April 23, 1838.
2. Ibid., December 2 through December 4, 1827.
3. Ibid., op. cit., p. 493.
4. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, December 5 through December 9, 1837.
5. Ibid., December 12 through December 18, 1837.
Falstaff, and several others. Signor Vivalla, "professor of equilibrium who goes through feats of Balancing, Dancing plates, pipes, chairs, etc.," also performed at the same time.

Hackett's engagement was followed by the production of one of the season's most popular no-star plays, "Peter Wilkins," or "The Flying Islanders." This was given on five successive nights with Coppleston Hodges in the lead.

Then came the Ravel family, a group destined to become annual visitors to Mobile for many years. The troupe numbered only twelve members this season (sometimes it had forty or fifty), but it presented a wide variety of entertainment. The Ravels were pantomimists, gymnasts, rope-dancers, balletists, and contortionists, and their grace, skill and strength highly pleased their large audiences.

The chaste, refined, enchanting actress, Ellen Tree was the next star. She delighted her audiences as Julia in "Hunchback," Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing," Letitia Hardy in "Belle's Stratagem," Kate in "Perfection," Christine in "Youthful Queen," Rosalind

1. Ibid., December 22, 1837, through January 6, 1838.
2. Ibid., December 27, 1837, - January 5, 1838.
3. Ibid., January 9 - 13, 1838.
4. Ibid., January 15 - 25, 1838.
in "As You Like It," Mariana in "Wife," and Clarise in "Barrack Room."¹

She was followed by the bulky English vocalist, Mrs. John Watson, who played in the operas "Cinderella," "La Somnambula," "Barber of Seville," and "Marriage of Figaro."² Mrs. Watson's engagement was not very successful.

Miss Josephine Clifton, a tragic actress of the Forrest school who was to become widely known during the next decade, played the usual tragic roles: Julia in "Hunchback," Mrs. Haller in "Stranger," etc., and the title role in "Bianca Visconti" (its first presentation in Mobile).³ Her engagement was not profitable to the management.⁴

Playing at the same time as Miss Clifton were Mr. Coney, Mr. Blanchard, and their dog Hector.⁶ They created quite a stir in New York in 1835, but they caused considerably less of a sensation in Mobile.⁷

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¹. Ibid., January 29 through February 5, 1838.
². Ibid., February 5 through February 12, 1838.
³. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 495.
⁴. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 13 through February 20, 1838.
⁵. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 497.
⁶. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 10 through February 21, 1838.
⁷. Odell, op. cit., IV, p. 34.
The next visitors were Yankee Hill and J. R. Scott, who played on the same bills in different plays. Hill did his usual Yankee roles, and Scott appeared in "Brutus," "Tom Cringle," "Rent Day," "Virginius," etc.

During the engagement of these gentlemen, the American Theatre reopened, probably still under the management of Louis Ferry, for he took a benefit near the end of the season. The first bills presented the Ravel family and little Miss Meadows. They played an extended engagement, the Ravels doing their famous stunts and Miss Meadows singing, dancing, and acting in light numbers.

In March Miss Nelson and her husband, Mr. Hodges, were featured at the St. Emanuel Street Theatre. Miss Nelson, usually supported by Hodges, appeared in "Victorine," "Mountain Sylph," "Deep Deep Sea," "Massaniello," "Nature and Philosophy," and "Indian Girl."

Jim Crow Rice then appeared to good houses at the St. Emanuel Street Theatre.

1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 23 through March 3, 1838.
3. Ibid., February 24 through March 19, 1838.
5. Ibid., March 20 through March 24, 1838.
The next stars were Mr. and Mrs. Jack Barnes at the American and Mrs. Thomas Bailey (the former Miss Charlotte Watson and step-daughter of Mrs. John Watson) at the St. Emanuel. Mrs. Bailey played musical pieces, such as "Rob Roy," "Clari," "Swiss Cottage," and "Somnambula," and the Barnes family played both comedy and tragedy. On her benefit night Miss Charlotte Barnes gave her original play, "Octavia Brigaldi," and on her father's benefit night she gave her original "monodrama" called "Captive," "which is a scene in a Mad House, with music and pantomime action by the characters."²

Then Mrs. Stuart (formerly Mary Vos) at Ludlow and Smith's and Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Addams at the American vied for the favor of Mobile audiences. Mrs. Stuart played for only six nights, but Addams stayed for a long engagement, appearing in "Virginius," "Richard III," "Damon and Pythias," "Bertram," etc.

Then we see his name no more for several weeks, but his wife's name continues in the bills. He was re-engaged in the middle of May and stayed until the end of the season.

1. Ibid., March 26 through March 31, 1838.
2. Ibid., April 2, 1838.
3. Ibid., April 5, through April 14, 1838.
At the St. Emanuel Street, Master St. Luke, called the "Youthful Paganini," an eleven year old violin prodigy, played and acted in several pieces during the middle of April. Mrs. Gibbs, an English vocalist, fat, fair, and forty, appeared on many of the same programs. At the same time, Thomas Placide, who had already swapped alliances, was playing an engagement at the American.  

Then Master St. Luke and his father transferred to the American, and Mrs. Shaw played a starring engagement at the St. Emanuel.  

Ludlow and Smith began winding up the season, and it was brought to a close on May 5 with de Camp's benefit.

On April 23 Placide took over the American, and we soon notice the names of de Camp, Miss Hanker, Mr. Davis, Mr. and Miss De Bar, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Hubbard, Mr. and Mrs. Barker, Mrs. Thielman, Mrs. Addams, and Mr. Jackson in their advertisements.

Mrs. Shaw was engaged and aroused a great deal of favorable comment. Very representative plays were given until the American closed on May 31.

1. Ibid., April 11 through April 14, 1838.
2. Ibid., April 14, 1838.
3. Ibid., April 17 through April 24, 1838.
4. Ibid., May 18 through May 23, 1838.
5. Season of 1838-1839

During the season of 1838-1839 only one theatre was in operation in Mobile. However, there were usually other sources of entertainment; for instance, during the latter part of January, in addition to the theatre, there was a circus, a juggler, and illustrated lectures and portraits.¹

Ludlow and Smith opened the St. Emanuel Street theatre on November 10 with "Catching an Heiress," "Poor Soldier," "Swiss Cottage," and a dance by Mrs. Lewis.

Stock performers for this season included Mr. and Mrs. William Jones, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Field, Matthew Field, Vincent de Camp, Eliza Petrie, Ludlow, Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lewis and "La petite" Bertha, C. W. Hunt, Rice, Fenner, Schoolcraft, McBride, Mrs. Brown, Miss Hennings, and Miss Hamblin.

This company held forth, unaided by stars, until November 21. At three o'clock that morning the theatre caught on fire. The situation was not discovered until the entire roof was in flames. Ludlow says that the fire was caused by the explosion of some of the fire-works used to represent the blowing up of the mill in "The Miller and His Men."²

¹ Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 29, 1839.
² Ludlow, op. cit., p. 508.
Everything belonging to the theatre was lost -- wardrobe, music, properties, scenery, none of which was insured. The *Morning Advertiser* estimated the loss to be about $20,000. The building was not owned by Ludlow and Smith, but by "two or three citizens of Mobile."  

The managers were undaunted; in the same paper that carries an account of the fire there is an announcement that Ludlow and Smith planned to take over the theatre on Government Street (the old American) and to resume operations immediately. According to Smith, the American had fallen into their hands "by virtue of a sale under deed of trust and by compromise with Mr. Ferry, the builder and owner..." but Ludlow says that the theatre was for rent and the partners took it. But no matter under what terms they took the establishment, it was opened by them on December 1.

The tragedian, William Forbes, began a week's engagement on December 5 and gave "Lady of Lyons," "Othello," "Pizarro," "Macbeth," and "Coriolanus." He was immediately followed by Mrs. Stuart, who appeared

1. Mobile *Mercantile Advertiser*, November 22, 1838.
2. Ibid.
5. Mobile *Mercantile Advertiser*, December 5, through December 12, 1838.

Following these weeks of standard plays, there came to the theatre the Yankee impersonator, Dan Marble. He played the usual pieces: "Forest Rose," "Who Wants a Guinea?" "Luke the Laborer," "Sam Patch," "Vermont Wool Dealer," "Black-Eyed Susan," etc. He also made some "Terrific Leaps" from the entire height of the theatre (supposedly down Niagara Falls) "which have astonished the natives of the 'Universal Yankee Nation!'"

The next visiting attraction was Miss Clifton, who had appeared in Mobile for the first time last season. She played Pauline in "Lady of Lyons," Bianca Visconti, Mariana in "Wife," Anne Boleyn, and Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing."

After Miss Clifton's visit had expired, Mr. Waterman's stud of horses and Mr. Llewellyn's horse Timour were engaged, and the equestrian dramas "Timour," "El Hyder," "Mazeppa," "Canoncheotah," or "The Indian's
...War Horse," were presented. These events were followed by a series of benefits.

Then in February Allen Tree began her second Mobile engagement. Tickets for boxes and good parquette seats were so greatly in demand that the managers sold them at auction to the highest bidder. Miss Tree appeared as Julia in "Hunchback," Constance in "Love Chase," Rosalind in "As You Like It," Pauline in "Lady of Lyons," Ion in the play by that name, Letitia Hardy in "Belle's Stratagem," Clarisse in "Barrack Room," Hero in "Woman's Wit," Viola in "Twelfth Night," and Christine in "Youthful Queen." Ludlow says that her engagement was successful but not as sensational as her previous one had been. Mobilians seemed to like her best as Ion and Rosalind.

And now Mobile theatre-goers were destined for a real treat: Edwin Forrest followed immediately by Junius Brutus Booth. Booth's daughter says that her father visited the Mobile theatre during the season of 1833-1834, but this is the first record we have of his appearing in Mobile.

1. Ibid., January 15 through January 24, 1839.
2. Ibid., February 4, 1839.
3. Ibid., February 4 through February 16, 1839.
5. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, February 14, February 16, 1839.
Forrest opened his engagement on February 19, playing "Othello" to a crowded house. This was followed by "Damon and Pythias," "King Lear," and "Gladiator" (this for his benefit). His benefit amounted to $1071.50, and $500 more could have been taken, but seats and standing room were sold out. During the second week of his engagement Forrest essayed "Hamlet," "Metamora" (twice), Rolla in "Pizarro," "Richard III," "Brutus," "William Tell," and Carwin in "Therese."

When the "eccentric" Booth arrived, the following editorial of warning appeared in the Mercantile Advertiser of March 7:

"We would remark, en passant, that while the citizens are ever ready to render the meed of homage to genuine talent, which Booth possesses, no community would be less likely than ours, to tolerate...those foibles which have, at times, marked the course of that gentleman in other cities."

Although the warning was apparently not heeded, for Ludlow says that Booth "got into one of his insane or drunken frolics and ruined his engagement," the newspapers made no comment on it.

Booth played Sir Giles Overreach in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," Sir Edward Mortimer in "Iron Chest," Richard III, Escara in "Apostate" (twice), King Lear,

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1. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, February 27, 1839.
Hamlet, and Pierre in "Venice Preserved." He received high editorial praise for his performances in "Hamlet" and "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," and critics amused themselves debating as to which was the better actor, Booth or Forrest.

After a series of actors' benefits, Young Master Burke played his violin and several Irish roles during a successful three night engagement. Then he was followed by a troupe of men calling themselves the Bedouin Arabs who performed exercises "as exhibited at the Emperor of Morocco's court." They engaged in "feats of ability, dancing, skill, proofs of strength, and elasticity and gymnastics."


Little Miss Jean M. Davenport, a juvenile actress, and daughter of the former manager of the Strand Theatre

1. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 8 through March 16, 1839.
3. Ibid., March 25 through April 2, 1839.
4. Ibid., April 9, 1839.
5. Ibid., April 8 through April 20, 1839.
in London, appeared as Richard III, Shylock, Sir Peter Teazle, the actress in "Actress of All Work," Young Norval, as six characters in "Paul Pry in Petticoats," and in a piece written especially for her, "Dumb Boy of Manchester." Miss Davenport and her father were supposedly the originals of the "phenomenon and Grummles" of Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby. She was later to visit Mobile as a well-known adult actress, but at this time the press complained that she was too big for juvenile parts.

Miss Meadows next had a short engagement and appeared on the benefits of several stock members. During the season several stock nights were featured by the presentation of two of J. M. Field's plays: an interlude, "Abolition," or "Southern Visitors," and a satirical farce, "Victoria," or "The Lion and the Kiss." In the latter play Field portrayed James Gordon Bennett of the "Herald;" Matt Field, Prince John Kinderhook; Miss Petrie, Queen Victoria; Rice, Lord Melbourne; and Mrs. Brown, Duchess of Kent. On one occasion Miss Meadows played the part of Victoria.

1. Ibid., April 23, 1839.
2. Ibid., April 22 through April 27, 1839.
3. Ibid., April 29, 1839.
5. Ibid., January 3, 1839.
6. Ibid., March 20, 1839.
The season was concluded with the visit of His Excellency Governor Bagby and suite of Alabama and General Houston and suite on May 3, and with the complimentary tendered Mrs. Field on May 7, the last night of the season.

6. Season of 1839-1840

After the conclusion of the season of 1838-1839, Ludlow remained in Mobile to obtain subscriptions for the erection of a new theatre, for the size and capacity of the Government Street Theatre had proved inadequate.

But this was destined to be a tedious, unsuccessful theatrical year. Fires destroyed almost one-third of the town, including the old Government Street Theatre. Then the yellow fever menace attacked the population. Business was bad, and times were very hard. Ludlow confesses to have wanted to abandon the attempt to make a season in Mobile during 1839-1840, but contracts with stars and stock members had been drawn, and it was necessary to secure a building.¹

Ludlow found a deserted warehouse in the midst of other cotton warehouses, on the corner of State and

¹. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 511.
Magnolia Streets, a section five squares from the post-office and beyond reach of paved sidewalks. In order to secure the building he had to buy it and the ground on which it stood. Smith, who had no part in the selection of the site, derisively calls it the "Swamp Theatre" because it was so inaccessible that several bridges had to be built to enable the people to reach it.

Ludlow describes the theatre as having an auditorium, built of wood, sixty feet deep, with seats rising in ampitheatre style on an inclined plane. The seats were covered with colored cotton, and the walls and ceiling were covered with white cotton. (All the good plasterers had deserted the town because of the yellow fever). The stage was of brick, with a depth of fifty feet.

The brick dressing room of the theatre is still standing today. The stone pathway on the Bay Front Road home of Mr. and Mrs. W. N. Ludlow of Mobile is made from bricks that composed the stage.

Stage equipment consisted of four scenes and three wings, painted by young Joe Cowell. The Advertiser

2. Smith, op. cit., p. 144.
4. Ibid.
and Chronicle tells us that the pillars supporting the
gallery obstructed the stage view of many of the spec-
tators. From the same source we learn that a coffee
and oyster room was attached to the establishment in-
stead of "the annoying liquor saloons which have hith-
erto prevented many from attending the theatre...."

Although Smith estimates the cost of the building
to have been $12,000, Ludlow, who undertook its con-
struction, says that it cost only $4,000.

The new theatre opened on December 31, 1839, to
a house of $72.50. This must have indicated to the
managers what a wretched season it was to be.

Names of stock performers gleaned from the news-
papers include Smith, Ludlow, Joe Cowell, Mr. and Mrs.
George Percey Farren, Miss Amelia Fisher, Mr. and Mrs.
Bateman (the were the parents of the later famous
Bateman children; Mrs. Bateman was the former Miss
Sidney Cowell, daughter of Joe Cowell), Smyth, Larkin,
Marsh, Johnson, Miss Morgan, and Miss Stannard.

Early in the season the press declared the company
was the best Mobile had had for ten years. The orches-
tra was said to be small but excellent.

1. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, January 8, 1840.
2. Smith, op. cit., p. 158.
4. Ibid., p. 515.
5. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, January 8, 1840.
J. S. Balls came to play a six night engagement of comic roles, and Dan Marble, the "Sam Patch of Yankee-land," and Charles Mason, the tragedian, played on alternate nights. On Marble's benefit program he appeared in "Born to Good Luck" (an Irish favorite of Tyrone Power), "Sam Patch in France," and "Black Eyed Susan," and Mason contributed his services in "Parricide" or "The Robbers."3

The next visitors were Madame Le Compte (or Lecomte) and her troupe of dancers. They attracted full houses and apparently thoroughly delighted their audiences. One of the favorite dance numbers was the "Masked Ball of Gustavus" by the whole troupe; Madame Le Compte's favorite dance was "La Bayadere," a piece done many times by many dancers in Mobile.4

E. S. Conner, who was to make many subsequent visits to Mobile, played several nights and took a benefit. He was followed by Herr Cline on the tight rope.5

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1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, January 10 through January 20, 1840; Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, January 11 through January 16, 1840.
3. Ludlow says that only the Ravels and Madame turned out good houses: Ludlow, op. cit., p. 515.
5. Ibid.; January 30 through February 6, 1840.
6. Ibid.; February 3 through February 8, 1840.
Then came the ever popular Ravel's. This season, in addition to their usual wide routine, they featured a "grand fairy tale of enchantment," "The Green Monster," or "The Dream Accomplished." Their long engagement aroused great interest and enthusiasm.

After a series of actors' benefits, Ludlow and Smith announced the closing of the winter season and the experimental opening of a short spring season at reduced prices. Admission to the boxes, parquette, and the quadroon gallery was to be fifty cents, and to the upper gallery for servants, twenty-five cents.

Ludlow and Smith bicker in their respective books as to who was responsible for the decision to make this unsuccessful spring season. Ludlow says that Smith wanted to accord a favor to his friends the Barnes, who were attempting to give their daughter stock experience before her New York debut; Smith implies that it was at Ludlow's suggestion that the theatre was kept open and that he was forced to operate the establishment (Ludlow had gone to St. Louis) with a company composed mostly of amateurs.

In the meantime the Alhambra Theatre had been

1. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, February 10 through February 20, 1840, and Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 11 through February 26, 1840.
opened by the famous Chapman family. This family had operated a show boat on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers for many years.\(^1\) The two most colorful members of the clan, Caroline and William B., were great favorites in California during the 1850's.\(^2\)

The Alhambra was a large ballroom, according to Smith, and a drinking saloon with a large room above for billiard tables, according to Ludlow.\(^3\) Ludlow says that he had tried to rent it at the beginning of the season from its proprietor, Burling Brown, but that he was unable to get in touch with the gentleman before it was promised to the Chapmans.\(^4\)

Ludlow also says that the "Chapmans opened early in December, and closed shortly after we opened our theatre, the business not paying them."\(^5\) This is an incorrect statement, for theatre advertisements and editorial comments clearly indicate that the Alhambra was opened during the first week of March and played until the middle of May.

The Chapmans had a small company composed (so far as we can learn) of Mr. and Mrs. George Chapman, William Chapman, T. Chapman, Miss Therese Chapman, Miss Caroline

\(^1\) Odell, \textit{op. cit.}, V, p. 150; Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 89.
\(^3\) Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 144.
\(^4\) Ludlow, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 515.
\(^5\) \textit{Ibid.}
Chapman, Mr. C. Chapman, H. S. Chapman, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. Branson, Hamil, H. Curfew, McKibbin, and McDougall.

John Sinclair (father of Mrs. Edwin Forrest) was the first "foreign" attraction at the Alhambra. He played in musical pieces such as "Guy Mannering," "No Song No Supper," and "Rob Roy."¹

The "Swamp" Theatre had reopened with a series of light pieces,² in which Smith took most of the leads. The Barnes family arrived on March 21 and stayed until the 28th, which was announced as the last night of the season. Smith tells heart-wringing tales of the poor houses they had.³ He estimated the debt of the season to be $12,000.⁴ Ludlow scoffs at this statement and maintains the loss could not have exceeded $2,000.⁵

Competing with the Barnes at the State Street Theatre was J. M. Field at the Alhambra.⁶ Field played a series of comedies, and after being joined by his wife, gave several serious dramas, such as "Lucille," and "Romeo and Juliet."

¹ Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, March 9 through March 24, 1840.  
² Ibid., March 19, 1840.  
³ Smith, op. cit., p. 148.  
⁴ Ibid., p. 148.  
⁵ Ludlow, op. cit., p. 518.  
⁶ Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, March 19 through March 30, 1840.
Mr. and Miss Barnes then moved over to the Alhambra for a few days after the close of the State Street Theatre. There they appeared in "Merchant of Venice," "Romeo and Juliet," "Wedding Day," "Honeymoon," "Sprigs of Laurel," "Family Jars," and "Love."¹

A group of four Hungarian singers² were followed by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis and "La Petite" Bertha, who played for several nights. The performances of Bertha elicited high editorial praise.

The actors took benefits, and the Alhambra probably closed its season on or around May 7. The last theatrical advertisement for the season appears in the Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot of May 7, 1840.

7. Season of 1840-1841

The season of 1840-1841 was a very active one. W. B. Chapman operated the Alhambra for about six weeks; Ludlow and Smith opened the State Street Theatre for two or three weeks; and a large new theatre was built and operated by James H. Caldwell during the entire winter and spring season. This new theatre was to be the center of dramatic activity in Mobile for twenty years.

1. Ibid.; March 31 through April 3, 1840.
2. Ibid.; April 6 through April 9, 1840.
3. Ibid.; April 10 through April 20, 1840.
The Alhambra was opened on November 16 by William B. Chapman with a stock company that included Mrs. Frederick Brown, Madame Thielman, Miss Hamblin, Miss E. Mathieu, Miss C. Mathieu, and Messrs. Raphael, Armstrong, Hamill, W. C. Smith, Ewing, Sullivan, McDougal, and Chambers. C. L. Green was the acting manager.

The theatre seemed to have had rough sailing. After the first night attendance was slim. But the indefatigable Mr. Chapman, undaunted by the apparent lack of interest in his endeavor, reduced admission prices, a move that brought him larger audiences. He seemed to have won the esteem of Mobile for his perseverance and for his own and the good acting of his company.

Mrs. Stuart, C. Raffile, and Frederick Brown are not listed as members of the stock company, but they played leads during the greater part of the season. An actor named Keppel also played on several occasions. Fitzgerald Tasistro, a tragedian who had been playing in New Orleans, was engaged for six nights. He enacted Othello, Shylock, Beyerly, John ("John of Arcida"), and Rolla.

1. Ibid., November 16, 1840.
2. Ibid., November 18, 25, 30, 1840.
3. Ibid., December 16, 1840.
4. Ibid., December 14 through December 22, 1840.
5. Ibid., December 16 through December 23, 1840.
The last record we have of Chapman's theatre is an advertisement in the *Advertiser and Chronicle* of December 25. It must have closed then or shortly thereafter, for when the new theatre was opened on January 11 several members of the old Alhambra (including Chapman) are seen to have joined forces with Caldwell.

J. H. Caldwell, manager of the St. Charles Theatre in New Orleans, president of the gas company in that city and in Mobile, and early theatrical pioneer in the South and West, had decided to build a theatre in Mobile. He interested some citizens in the venture, (Smith implies that Caldwell could secure no financial aid from the citizens, but notices to stockholders in the public press lead us to believe that Smith was in error) and construction of the theatre was begun in September.

The site selected was that formerly intended for the St. Michael Street Hotel, on the west side of Royal Street, the town's principal business thoroughfare. A space 70 feet by 130 feet was allotted for the building.

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1. He had built theatres in Petersburg, New Orleans (two), Nashville, and Cincinnati, and had finished or carried on theatres in thirteen states.
An impressive ceremony was held on September 17 when the cornerstone of the building was laid. The State Artillery made a "dashing parade" and then fired "their elegant new pieces of cannon that have...been exciting so much admiration," when the silver-topped metal box containing records and news of the present day was covered up with dirt. Before the cornerstone was laid, Caldwell made an "interesting and poetic address to the assembled multitude on the subject and tendency of the theatre generally...." Finally the new theatre was completed and opened on January 11, 1841. The loving cup awarded to the author of the "prize address" to be delivered on the opening night was won by Matthew C. Field, a former member of the Mobile company. The cup is now in the possession of Mrs. W. N. Ludlow of Mobile. (Field married one of Ludlow's daughters.)

Stock actors engaged for the season were: Messrs. J. S. Browne, J. Sloman, William B. Chapman, L. Pickering, M. Phillips, C. L. Green, Ewing, Gilbert, Sullivan, Pacand, McDougall, R. L. Stickie, Chambers, Nugent, and Mesdames Sloman, Stuart, Frederick Brown, and Misses Morgan, Hamblin, Mowbray, and Smith. J. H. Barton,

1. Ibid., September 15, 1840.
2. Ibid., September 19, 1840.
whom we remember as a visitor from past seasons, acted as Caldwell's manager and representative. The Royal Street Theatre was to be associated with the St. Charles in New Orleans, the two establishments receiving the same stars and occasionally swapping stock members. ¹

After several successful stock nights, Tyrone Power made his second and last appearance in Mobile. He gave some of his favorite plays: "Irishman's Fortune," "Irish Tutor," "The Irish Attorney," "The Irish Lion," and "Irish Ambassador." The press reports that Power drew "overflowing houses" and that the theatre was crowded...almost to suffocation."²

Tasistro, who had only recently played at the Alhambra, acted for two nights at Caldwell's and took a benefit. He was followed by Dan Marble, who did his usual round of Yankee characters.³ Because of the bad weather that prevailed during Marble's engagement, we probably may infer that he did not attract very large houses.

The next visitor was the comedian E. Ranger, who, although heretofore unknown to Mobilians, seemed to be popular with them. Several of the plays he appeared

¹. Ibid., January 7, 1841.
². Ibid., January 15 through January 18, 1841.
³. Ibid., January 25, 1841.

Charles Eaton, an American tragedian, (being an American always worked against an actor, says the editor, for theatre-goers seem to think you have to have Drury Lane attached to your name to be any good) appeared for several nights in the regular tragic roles: Richard III, Sir Giles Overreach, Hamlet, Sir Edward Mortimer, Pierre ("Venice Preserved"), Othello, and Brutus. On the night of his benefit he gave imitations of Forrest as Metamora and Spartacus, Booth as Richard and Iago, A. Addams as Virginius, Cooper as Damon, Vandenhoff as Stranger, Charles Mason as St. Pierre, Marble as Jonathan Floughboy, Jack Barnes as Governor Heartall, Kemble as Hamlet, and Mrs. Fitzwilliam as Jacky Wiggins. During March Eaton was reengaged for six nights.

Then came the thirteen year old Master Diamond, who, according to the editor, was pronounced "by far the best delineator of Ethiopian character, and the

1. Ibid., February 2 through February 12, 1841.
2. Ibid., March 10 through March 15, 1841.
3. Ibid., February 18, 1841.
4. Ibid., February 13 through February 20, 1841; March 9 through March 20, 1841.
best dancer living." He had performed for fifteen nights at the St. Charles, and on the tenth night had drawn over $2000. Master Diamond's specialties were an "Ethiopian extravaganza" called "Jim-a-long-Josey," and dances called "Old Verginny Breakdown," "Five Miles out of Town," and "Smoke House." A particular favorite was the "Bayadere" dance done in imitation of Fanny Ellsler, the most famous dancer on the stage at that time. Diamond attracted large audiences.

During Diamond's engagement, Ludlow and Smith re-opened the State Street Theatre for two weeks in order to present Fanny Fitzwilliam, who had just scored a big hit in New Orleans. Ludlow and Smith had deserted Mobile and were operating the St. Francis Street Theatre in the Crescent City. Their brief season in Mobile was apparently very successful, for there are several comments on the large, fashionable houses.

Accompanying Mrs. Fitzwilliam was a delegation from the St. Francis Street Theatre that included Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, Ludlow, and E. S. Conner.

Mrs. Fitzwilliam's favorite pieces during her Mobile engagement were "Irish Widow," "Widow Wiggins"

(in which she sustained six characters), a nautical farce, "Middy Ashore," "Country Girl," and "Foreign Airs and Native Graces," each of which she gave several times. On the night of her farewell benefit J. B. Buckstone, the famous London comedian and dramatist, appeared in "Lottery Ticket" and with Mrs. Fitzwilliam in "My Friend and My Wife."\(^1\)

To compete with Fanny Fitz (as she was familiarly called) at the State Street Theatre, Caldwell came over from New Orleans and played several comic roles. Mr. Welden, a magician, and Master Chambers, a contortionist, also appeared for several nights.\(^2\)

At the expiration of Mrs. Fitzwilliam's engagement at the State Street Theatre, E. S. Conner was given a benefit. One of the pieces given was an operatic burletta called "G. A. G." or "The Starring System," by J. M. Field.\(^3\)

Upon being joined by the equestrian company from the American Theatre in New Orleans, the State Street presented "Timour the Tarter" for three nights.\(^4\) Then the managers closed and dismantled the establishment;

1. Ibid., February 22 through March 6, 1841.
2. Ibid., March 1 through 2, 1841.
3. Ibid., March 4 and 5, 1841.
4. Ibid., March 8, 1841.
5. Ibid., March 11 through March 13, 1841.
it was never to open as a theatre again. It was entirely destroyed by fire on the morning of November 13, 1842.

Meanwhile, at the Royal Street Theatre, Caldwell had been given a complimentary benefit on March 12 "as a token of appreciation for his efforts in promoting the drama and extending the gas works in Mobile." 2

The next attraction at the Royal Street was Mr. Llewellen and his horse Timour, who were engaged to play "Mazeppa" for four nights. The last scheduled visitor was George H. Barrett, who was a member of the St. Charles company this season. He appeared in "Gambler's Fate," "Lady of Lyons," "The Dramatist," and "The Rivals." F. H. Clarkson and a Mr. Carville, tragedians, stopped for one night on their way to New Orleans and gave "Douglass." 4

The season closed (although Mrs. Frederick Brown took a benefit late in May with the aid of Mrs. Stuart and some amateurs) on May 8 with Barton's benefit. 5

Favorite plays of the season were "Bottle Imp," "My Young Wife and Old Umbrella," "Robert Macaire," and "Alladin." "Bottle Imp" was a "musical romantic drama"

1. Ibid., November 14, 1842.
2. Ibid., March 10, 1841.
3. Ibid., April 12 through April 17, 1841.
4. Ibid., April 20, 1841.
5. Ibid., May 8, 1841.
that was given six times. "My Young Wife and Old Umbrella" was a favorite of J. O. Browne (we shall see that he gave it frequently in the years to come); it was given six times this season. Another specialty of Browne's, "Robert Magaire," was given six times. "Aladdin," with Mrs. Stuart in the title role, was presented for twelve successive nights and was then repeated on four other occasions. It was a "grand romantic eastern spectacle with new scenery, machinery, props, etc."\(^1\)

We know nothing of the financial results of the season. Smith says that the new theatre "did not pay its way this season\(^2\) but he is admittedly prejudiced against Caldwell, and I do not feel that we can completely accept his word in the matter.

8. Season of 1841-1842

On November 6, 1841, the Royal Street Theatre was opened under the administration of last season, Caldwell as proprietor, J. H. Barton as manager, and James Foster as treasurer. The opening night selection was "Lady of Lyons," with H. G. Pearson as Claude Melnotte,

\(^1\) Ibid., March 22, 1841.
\(^2\) Smith, op. cit., p. 157.
William B. Chapman as Colonel Damas, and Mrs. Richardson as Pauline. ¹

Mrs. Richardson was formerly Mrs. H. S. Chapman, a favorite of the Baltimore and New York theatres for several years. Before her first marriage she was Elizabeth Jefferson, daughter of the elder Joe Jefferson, and sister of Joe Jefferson II. She was reputedly very pretty, with a graceful person and a sweet voice. She soon became a great favorite, especially in comedy, with Mobilians, and was connected with the theatre there for many years (later as Mrs. Charles Fisher).

Other stock members included: H. G. Pearson, William Chapman, C. L. Green, Morton, Ewing, Mrs. Durie, Mrs. Caulfield, Miss Hamblin (Mrs. Ewing), Radcliff, Nelson, Heckle, Miss Jones (dancer), and Chambers (dancer). Mr. Jonas was leader of the orchestra.

The season of 1841-1842 seems to have been a successful one. The theatre opened to large fashionable houses,² and not a word of adverse criticism appears in the press during the entire period.

The first visitors were the Swiss family, who performed "tableaux vivants," gladiatorial groupings,

¹ Ibid., November 6, 1841.
² Ibid., November 11, 1840.
classic poses, comic dances, and tumbling feats. A child called "La Petite" Carline, who did classical dances, accompanied them. They stayed for about ten days and returned in December for a reengagement. Herr Cline was at the theatre for several days during both the engagements of the Swiss Family and "La Petite" Carline. This season Cline featured a wooden shoe dance on the elastic cord, and an ascension from the "stage to the extreme height of the theatre propelling a wheelbarrow." On Cline's benefit night during his December engagement his grandmother performed a comic "pas de deux" with him on the elastic cord.

Mrs. Stuart played some of her favorite roles during a brief visit: Julia in "Hunchback," Bianca in "Fazio," Widow Cheerly in "Soldier's Daughter," Pauline in "Lady of Lyons," Mrs. Beverly in "Gamester," Countess in "Love," and King Charles in "Will is Power." She also appeared for a few nights during the latter part of the season.

Mrs. Stuart was immediately followed by Mr. Wood, "melodramatic actor," Master Wood, "Infant Prodigy."

1. Ibid., November 15 through November 24, 1841.
2. Ibid., December 23 through 30, 1841.
3. Ibid., November 27, 1841.
4. Ibid., December 30, 1841.
5. Ibid., November 29 through December 4, 1841.
6. Ibid., March 15, 1842.
and their dog Bruin. The Woods appeared in a series of second rate melodramas and animal plays. Master Wood performed numerous dances.¹

J. H. Hackett played for six nights, appearing as Falstaff in both "Henry IV" and "Merry Wives of Windsor," Solomon Swap, Monsieur Mallet, Rip Van Winkle, Colonel Wildfire, and O'Callaghan in "His Last Legs."²

Appearing at the same time with Hackett was Blanche Kemble. Although billed as a coming star at the beginning of the season, she did not play star roles, and there is no mention of her taking a benefit. Her name appears in the theatre casts from December 17 through January 10.

Master Diamond, who had won popular acclaim in Mobile last year for his negro dancing, accompanied by Mr. Sanford of the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, appeared in songs and breakdowns.³

Miss Rock, Joe Cawell, G. H. Barrett, and J. W. Browne had joined the company for a short period,⁴ so it was with a very powerful cast that the first presentation of "London Assurance" in Mobile was given. Perhaps the cast may be of interest:

1. Ibid., December 6 through December 20, 1841.
2. Ibid., December 16 through December 22, 1841.
3. Ibid., January 12 through January 18, 1842.
4. Ibid., January 17, January 19, 1842.
Barrett as Sir Harcourt Courtley, Browne as Dazzle, John Greene as Harkaway, Cowell as Meddle, Chapman as Spanker, Ewing as Courtley, Morton as Cool, Mrs. John Greene as Lady Gay Spanker, Miss Rock as Grace Harkaway, Miss Hamblin as Pert. The play was given for ten successive nights. One night Miss Nelson, who was at the theatre for a couple of weeks, took the part of Grace Harkaway, and on the last night Browne and Barrett exchanged roles.

Hackett returned on February 2 to play Falstaff and Monsieur Mallet for one night only. Then Barrett and Browne took benefits and returned to New Orleans. At Barrett's benefit "London Assurance" was repeated, and Browne's farce, "Forty and Fifty," was given with the author in the cast.  

For some unexplained reason, these benefits were followed by benefits of three members of the Fogg and Stickney circus troupe that was performing in Mobile.

Mobilians were next treated to a short opera season. Mr. and Mrs. Seguin and Mr. Manvers were the principal singers; they were supported by Mr. Brunton, Madame Thielman, Mrs. Richardson, Mr. Hodges and Mr.

1. Ibid., January 19 through January 29, 1842.
2. Ibid., February 5, 1842.
3. Ibid., February 7 through February 9, 1842.
Archer. The operas "Norma", Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra," or "Maid and Magpie," and Herold's "Zampa," or "The Marble Bride," were each given three times, Auber's "Fra Diavolo" was given twice, and "Barber of Seville" was given for Mrs. Richardson's benefit.

On alternate nights during the time the vocalists were taking their benefits, T. D. ("Jim Crow") Rice appeared at the theatre after an absence of several years. He gave such pieces as "Sarcophagus," "Jumbo Jum and Foreign Prince," "Jim Crow in London," and the "Ethiopian grand opera," "Bone Squash Diablo."\(^1\)

The next attraction was the dancer Madame Arraline, who appeared on her first night in the grand ballet opera by Auber, "La Bayadere," or "Maid of Cashmere." Other cast members included Hodges, Archer, Farrenberg, Gaulfield, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Brunton, and Miss Jones. "La Bayadere" was repeated for two successive nights.\(^2\) Several days later Madame Arraline was joined by Monsieur Frederick, and the two remained until the end of the season.

Samuel Butler, a tragic actor who was on his way to the Park Theatre, New York, gave "Hamlet," "Macbeth,"

\(^1\) Ibid., February 10 through March 2, 1842.  
\(^2\) Ibid., February 24 through March 4, 1842.  
\(^3\) Ibid., March 7, 1842.
"Stranger," "Sleep Walker," and "Merchant of Venice" during a brief stop-over in Mobile. He also delivered a lecture on drama with illustrations from Shakespeare.1

Fanny Fitzwilliam and J. B. Buckstone were then engaged for six nights. Several of Buckstone's pieces were presented by the pair: "Kiss in the Dark," "Widow Wiggins," "Our Mary Anne," "The Ladies' Club," and the comic opera, "The Pet of the Petticoats." They seem to have been enthusiastically received.2

As their engagement was drawing to a close, a tragedy was enacted at the theatre. The press describes it as follows:

"...After the curtain had dropped at the conclusion of the first act of the first piece "My Old Woman" with Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Buckstone, Miss Hamblin, and Ewing, a quarrel ensued behind the scene between Mr. Ewing and Miss Hamblin...in which that latter plunged a dagger to the heart of Mr. Ewing, which caused almost instant death. After the perpetration of the awful deed, Miss Hamblin made her escape by jumping out at the window, and at 12 o'clock last night had not been arrested. She left in her theatrical attire dressed as a page."3

Craighead reports that Judge Edwin Tardy, who was present at the theatre on the night of the tragedy, told him that he (Tardy) saw and heard Ewing and Miss Hamblin

1. Ibid., March 14 through March 18, 1842.
2. Ibid., March 19 through March 28, 1842.
3. Ibid., March 26, 1842.
quarrelling on their way to the theatre. Tardy gathered that Miss Hamblin (or Mrs. Ewing) was jealous of his supposed attention to another member of the company.¹

Craighead also says that she remained hidden in a house on Jackson Street for three months.² She was finally discovered and brought to trial on November 28.

From the Advertiser and Chronicle of November 29, 1842, we learn that:

"The trial of Miss Hamblin for the murder of Mr. Ewing...took place before the Circuit Court of this county, Judge Bragg presiding. The prosecution was conducted solely by Percy Walker, solicitor, and the defense by Messrs. William D. Dunn, Daniel Chandler, and J. W. L. Childers. The arguments were closed and the case submitted to the jury at about 8:00 last evening. After having been out about ten minutes, the jury returned with a verdict of Not Guilty."

Craighead says that "the physicians attending Ewing testified that he died of aneurism of the heart, superinduced by the quarrel, and that the wound inflicted by the dagger was not of a mortal nature."³

The theatre schedule went on uninterrupted in spite of the tragedy, and the actors began a series of

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¹ Craighead, Erwin, Mobile: Fact and Tradition, p. 360.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
benefits. The last night of the season was announced for April 4, on which occasion Barton took his benefit.

Then a short spring season was held under the management of James Foster, theatre treasurer. The after-season commenced under very favorable conditions with the presence of ex-president Martin Van Buren at the theatre. According to the press, Van Buren

"...came punctually at the rise of the curtain and sat with evident pleasure to see the whole performance of "Robert Macaire" by that capital comedian, James Browne. Indeed we hear that the honorable gentleman expressed an opinion that 'Browne deserves a patent for Macaire, as an original invention, and his sole property...'. The house was elegantly decorated in evergreens. A large crowd was in attendance."

Browne proved himself very popular with Mobilians on this visit, and the press pronounced him "one of the best actors living."2

The last visitor was Signora Romanini, a dancer and slack wire performer, who appeared for several nights.

On the next to the last night of the season, "Gustavus III of Sweden," or "The Masked Ball" was given. In the third act of the drama, where a ball takes place, the stage was transformed into a ballroom, and a real

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1. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, April 11, 1842.
2. Ibid., April 18, 1842.
3. Ibid., April 19, 1842.
invitation ball was held with the spectators taking part. The theatre band played waltzes and gallopades, and the City Cotillion band played the cotillions. 1

The season was closed on April 29.

9. Season of 1842-1843

Caldwell leased the Mobile Royal Street Theatre for the season of 1842-1843 to E. De Vendel and Jules Dumas, two Mobilians inexperienced in theatrical management. De Vendel was Caldwell's agent serving as president pro tem of the Mobile gas company. 2 Dumas was, according to Joe Cowell (a member of the company this season), "a celebrated restauranteur, who, having made a supposed fortune by keeping an eating house and opening oysters, thought to easily increase it by opening a theatre." 3 His only theatrical experience had been as a sort of prompter and interpreter for a brief period with the Ravels. 4

De Vendel withdrew from the partnership before the season opened, 5 but not until he had delegated Charles

1. Ibid., April 28, 1842.
2. Ibid., May 13, 1842.
3. Cowell, Joe, Thirty Years Passed Among the Actors and Actresses in England and America, p. 97. We feel that Cowell's information is good, for his book was published a few months after this season was concluded.
4. Ibid.
5. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, Nov. 11, 1842.
Fisher, secretary of the Mobile Gas company, and brother of Clara Fisher Maeder, to select the stock members for the season. ¹

Cowell says that Fisher, anxious to show his friendship for the Jefferson family (he soon married Mrs. Richardson, the former Elizabeth Jefferson) "engaged all the immediate descendants of the 'old man' now alive, and as many of the collateral branches as were in want of situations."² So among the company we find Mrs. Richardson, her two sisters, Mrs. McKenzie and Mrs. Wright and their husbands; her brother, Joseph Jefferson II and his two children, Joseph III and Cornelia; her niece, Mrs. Germon, and Mr. Germon.

Other company members included Mrs. Stuart, Mrs. Paige, Mrs. Hodges, Mason, Jemmy Thorne, H. Chapman, Jewell, Cowell, Anderton, Radcliffe, Bridges, Morton, and Wolfe. Jonas was orchestra leader; Jefferson II was principal artist; Hodges was the stage manager.³

Cowell says that Hodges was one of the very best educated tenor singers on the continent, but was too lazy to assert the fact, and that as a stage manager was totally inexperienced and incompetent.⁴

¹ Cowell, op. cit., p. 97.
² Ibid.
³ Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, Nov. 11, 1842.
⁴ Cowell, op. cit., p. 98.
During the summer the theatre had been cleaned and painted, and an entire new stock of scenery had been added by Jefferson, who had arrived in October to paint the pieces.

Directly across from the theatre Dumas had a neat-looking saloon. A servant from this establishment was always back-stage ready to procure drinks for the actors. Next door to the tavern Dumas had erected "a spacious assembly-room, where, two or three times a week, a ball was given, where 'ladies that have their toes unplagued with corns' could dance, and drink iced-punch, and sip hot coffee free of all expense; and gentlemen in character or without character, or disguised in any way, even in liquor..., by paying only one dollar for a ticket, could jig away a harmless night to the ear-piercing noise of a negro band, and fancy themselves in heaven or Wapping, Paris, or a lunatic asylum, without any extra charge." 2

The theatre opened on November 14 with "Simpson and Co.," "The Green Eyed Monster," and "Family Jars." On November 28 William B. Chapman secured the theatre for a farewell benefit previous to his departure for New

2. Cowell, op. cit., p. 98.
Orleans. His sister, Caroline, appeared with him in "Husband at Sight" and sustained the leading role in "French Spy."

At midnight, November 24, Joseph Jefferson II, aged thirty-eight, died of yellow fever, and was buried in Mobile. Cowell says that because so many members of the company were related to him it was necessary to close the theatre for two nights. ¹

Jefferson and his wife and two children had occupied a house on the west side of Conception, second door south of St. Michael. Although additions have been made to it, the house is still standing today, and has been marked by the Mobile Historical Society as the one-time home of Joseph Jefferson III.

Joseph III and Cornelia had been engaged to act children's parts and to do fancy dances and comic duets. In addition to this little Joseph also ground colors in the paint room. For his labors he received $6.00 a week. ²

After her husband's death, Mrs. Jefferson decided to run a boarding house for actors. But according to Joe, the theatrical season was bad, and the actors could not pay their board. ³

¹ Cowell, op. cit., p. 97.
² Jefferson, op. cit., p. 34.
³ Ibid.
Near the end of the season, Madame Le Vert, the social leader of Mobile, having heard of the destitute state of the Jeffersons, arranged a complimentary benefit for the two children. Jefferson says, "The belle of Mobile aroused the enthusiasm of her many friends, the public caught fire, and the benefit was a success."  

Regular stock performances were given until the arrival of Mrs. Sefton, who, according to Cowell, was "the very best general actress on the continent," and E. S. Conner, according to Cowell, "a very gentleman-like specimen of well-dressed mediocrity." They opened in "Lady of Lyons," and on the second night Mrs. Sefton played Romeo to Mrs. Richardson's Juliet and Conner's Mercutio. After Mrs. Sefton concluded her engagement, Conner continued his stay for a more extended period.  

J. H. Hackett began his engagement as Falstaff in "Henry IV." After appearing in his usual roles, he essayed Richard III to Conner's Richmond. But Hackett was to have a hard time on his Richard night, for it was on this night that the second near-

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1. Mobile Register and Journal, May 23, 1843.  
2. Jefferson, op. cit., p. 34.  
4. Ibid.  
5. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, January 3 through January 14, 1843.
riot over Miss Vos (Mrs. Stuart) took place. Dumas or Fisher had made the mistake or engaging three ladies—Mrs. Hodges (Miss Nelson), Mrs. Richardson, and Mrs. Stuart— to perform the same line of business—leading females. Mrs. Hodges and Mrs. Richardson had been given the leading roles all during the season, and Mrs. Stuart had been neglected. Dumas tried to get rid of her by somewhat unfair means, and the Mobile public rose up once more in defence of their favorite, now a widow with two small children. So a mighty row ensued on January 25, the night that Hackett had chosen to appear as Richard. As soon as the doors were opened, a huge crowd rushed in without paying, "made a prodigious noise, broke some benches and gas-fixings, and demanded a free benefit for Mrs. Stuart, and the whole of her salary be paid for ten weeks, the period of her engagement—all which Dumas was obliged to agree to. The mayor made a speech, and the row was over...."1

On the next night Mrs. Stuart was accorded a benefit, which she announced as her last appearance that season.2

Young George Vandenhoff, son of John Vandenhoff, a prominent English actor, began an engagement late in

January and played Hamlet, Claude Melnotte ("Lady of Lyons"), Macbeth, Charles Surface ("School for Scandal"), Master Walter ("Hunchback"), and Don Felix ("Wonder").

In his reminiscences, Vandenhoff writes:

"I next played six nights at Mobile, of which I need only remark that the company was shockingly bad; and the manager having got into a snarl with the public by discharging a popular favorite, Mrs. Stuart, I had to suffer the penalty of his obstinacy; there being a very general league of absence from the theatre till she should be restored."

On the night of February 3 Henry Clay visited the theatre for a little while. He and his party occupied prominent boxes which were decorated with flags and banners. The plays were "Tempest" and "Loan of a Lover," given for the benefit of the Protestant and Catholic orphans. J. H. Barton was also visiting in Mobile and took a farewell benefit on February 4 before leaving for Europe. Cowell says that his benefit lost money. He was never to appear in Mobile again.

Next the boards were graced by the charming American dancer, Mary Ann Lee and the old favorite, J. M. Field, who were playing this season with Ludlow and Smith at their new St. Charles Theatre in New Orleans.

1. Ibid., January 30 through February 1, 1843.
2. Vandenhoff, George, Leaves from an Actor's Notebook, p. 213.
They were soon joined by Dan Marble. These three luminaries provided a series of lively, gay, entertainment for about ten nights.\(^1\) Marble stayed on for several more weeks and appeared in "Water Witch" with G. W. Jones.

Field and Miss Lee returned the latter part of March, he to give several comedies, and she to dance the ballet operas, "La Sylphide" and "La Bayadere" and a burlesque on "La Bayadere" called "Buy It Dear, 'Tis Made of Cashmere."

J. H. Kirby, a tragedian, and W. G. (or G. W.) Jones, "the celebrated delineator of American sailors," were the next attractions after the first engagement of Field and Miss Lee. Jones and Marble, as previously mentioned, appeared in "Water Witch," a piece that proved popular and was repeated six times.\(^4\)

During Jones' engagement Monsieur Guillot, the "Lion Hero," who performed "Heroulean wonders, displaying feats of human strength never heard of" paid a visit to the theatre. According to Cowell, he was the biggest attraction of the season,\(^5\) and according to

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1. Ibid., February 6 through February 16, 1843.
2. Ibid., February 26 through March 8, 1843.
3. Ibid., March 27 through April 1, 1843.
4. Ibid., February 21 through March 8, 1843.
the press, his benefit drew the fullest house of the
season. 1

Sol Smith came over from New Orleans for a week's
engagement and played at the same time as John Sinclair,
the vocalist. 2 Cowell says that "Sinclair was mixed up
with Sol Smith so that it was hard to tell who kept the
money out of the house." 3 Smith says that he had a
"full and fashionable house on my benefit night, which
was stormy." 4

Also engaged at the same time were John Smith,
"delineator of American negro character" and R. Nash,
"the original banjo player and author of the Virginia
Banjo Melodies." They appeared in a series of "negro
eccentricities." 5

On the occasion of Mrs. Richardson's benefit, Mr.
Charles J. B. Fisher, the gentleman who was fancied a
dramatic critic and who had selected the stock company
for the season, appeared as Dazzle in "London Assurance." 6
Cowell says that he did not draw as full a house as one
would expect of a man who was a Mason, an Odd Fellow,

1. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, March 8, 1843.
2. Ibid., March 9 through March 18, 1843.
5. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, March 13
   through March 24, 1843; Mobile Register and Journal,
   March 22, 1843.
secretary of the Jockey Club, private in the volunteers, a fireman, a Cowbellian, member of the Can't-get-away-Club, and secretary of the Gas Company.

Cowell further says that Fisher,

"...suffering from great nervous embarrassment and his natural timidity increased by the knowledge of how much was expected of him by the overwrought anticipations of his friends, who had long looked up to him as the sole dramatic oracle for the State of Alabama, he became perfectly bewildered, and certainly did make a sad mess of poor Dazzle. No allowance was made for stage fright. A highly-finished, experienced performance was fully expected from a critic...and his devotees were actually angry with him because he was not himself all that he had explained to them, in print and private, a good player ought to be....""2

The season closed on April 1 with J. M. Field's benefit, but was reopened on April 3 for a spring season under the management of Mrs. Richardson. Noah M. Ludlow played for several nights, appearing in some of his best roles: Aranza ("Honey Moon"), Dorincourt ("Belle's Stratagem"), Dr. Pangloss ("Heir at Law"), Dazzle, Young Marlowe ("She Stoops to Conquer"), Scamper ("Promissory Note"), and St. Pierre ("Wife").4

Here it may be interesting to insert a few comments that Cowell makes on Ludlow and Smith at the

2. Ibid.
3. Mobile Register and Journal, April 3, 1843.
4. Ibid., April 12, 1843.
time of their Mobile engagement this season.

"They are both remarkably good-looking men; but Ludlow, as the saying is, 'is no chicken,' and though he is most abstentious in his habits, particularly in eating, he is getting a little clumsy for light comedy, especially about the legs. What a change a few years will make in a man! I remember him a perfect he-sylph in appearance. Now Smith still retains his figure, and the same fine, frank, joyous, elegant yet playful deportment that he has ever had. But, then, he is extremely particular about his personal appearance on or off the stage. I don't believe he either pads or laces, but he might be suspected of doing both; proud of his hair, his nails — I mean his fingernails — and when he laughs, you can count every tooth he has in his head...."

After Ludlow's last appearance, Dr. Lardner began a series of lectures at the theatre on the moon, the sun, the superior plants, etc. Lardner was accompanied by our old friend, George Holland, who presented a "series of transparent views and optical illusions."

At the conclusion of the engagement, Holland appeared in several of his favorite pieces: "Whims of a Comedian," "Secret," "Love in Humble Life," and "A Day After the Fair."

The first night of Lardner's and Holland's engagement at the Royal Street Theatre saw the opening of a new theatre called the New American. It was operated,

2. Mobile Register and Journal, April 13 through April 22, 1843.
according to Cowell, by the steward (the Mobile Register and Journal of April 15 gives his name as J. S. Haskell) of the steamboat "Southerner," and was located in a large room over the Corinthian, a splendid grogshop. 1

The first attractions at the new theatre were Monsieur Paul, who exhibited feats of strength, La Petite Carline, the dancer, and Jemerson, who did "negro extravaganza" numbers. Mr. and Mrs. Hodges, Sinclair, and Jemmy Thorne were also engaged as stars. 2

But the venture was short-lived. Cowell says that the steward who was managing the theatre "indulged himself by giving his conception of Richard III, and got hissed so heartily that he advertised his retirement from dramatic life at the end of the week..." 3

Following the New American's advertisement of Thorne, Jemerson, Mrs. Hodges, Monsieur Paul, and "La Petite" Carline in the Register and Journal of April 24, there is a notice in the paper of the 25th stating that Miss Clarendon would take over the management on April 26.

The comedian, C. A. Logan, and his daughter Eliza were engaged as stars, but the theatre failed to open.

2. Mobile Register and Journal, April 13 through April 24, 1843.
The Register and Journal of May 3 says that "Miss Clarendon expected to run the New American Theatre at the Corinthian, but circumstances beyond her control have prevented this."

At the Royal Street establishment a big production, "Carpenter of Rouen," was given, with J. H. Kirby as the carpenter. This play was repeated for six nights.¹

A group of pantomimists was then engaged, and "La Petite" Carline, Mons. Paul, Jeemerson, the Logans, and Miss Clarendon transferred from the New American when it closed.² William Chapman and Benedict De Bar were also engaged.³

The theatre closed on May 27 with the benefit of the manager, Mrs. Richardson.

As to profits and success of the season, Smith says that "Mr. Dumas, keeper of a restaurant, cooked up the drama in various style -- boiled, fried, roasted, broiled, or on the half-shell -- involving a loss of whatever ready money he may have been possessed of -- in fact, breaking him up."⁴ Cowell, too, speaks of the season as if it were a losing proposition.⁵

¹ Mobile Register and Journal, April 24 through May 1, 1843.
² Ibid., April 24 through May 12, 1843.
³ Ibid., May 15 through May 27, 1843.
⁴ Smith, op. cit., p. 166.
Times were bad in Mobile; Dumas suffered from the Stuart incident although the press vindicated him;\(^1\) Noise and rowdiness were frequently caused by ruffians in the theatre.\(^2\)

From all these things, we can only believe that the season must have been unsuccessful.

10. Season of 1843-1844

In June, N. M. Ludlow, who was supervising his summer season in St. Louis, received an offer from Caldwell to lease the Mobile theatre to him and his partner, Smith, for the sum of $3000 a year.\(^3\) Terms were reached, and it was agreed that Ludlow should manage the Mobile theatre (he had established his home and family in Mobile) and that Smith should manage the New Orleans theatre.\(^4\)


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1. Mobile Advertiser and Chronicle, February 14, 1843.
2. Ibid., February 1, February 25, 1843.
4. Ibid., p. 580.
H. Smith (the former Sarah Riddle), Mrs. Eddy, Mrs. Newton, Miss Cornelia Jefferson, Miss Eliza Logan, Miss Chapman; and late in the season E. Dean and his daughter Julia joined the company.

Neafie played male leads, and Mrs. Stuart and Mrs. W. H. Smith shared female leads on stock nights. Mrs. Smith began the season as a "demi-star," that is, her engagement was announced as a star's engagement, and she was given a benefit after her first six nights, but she stayed on throughout the entire season.

Early in the season the press announced that the present company was "the most talented and effective that has graced our boards in many years." During Macready's engagement, however, he deplored the want 2 of a good supporting cast, although assistants were brought from New Orleans; and during Forrest's engagement a correspondent to the Mobile Register and Journal complained of "the lamentable deficiency in most of the minor characters."

Mr. and Mrs. Brougham were the first visiting attractions at the theatre. They both played comedy, and Mr. Brougham, who was said to have assumed the cape of

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1. Mobile Register and Journal, November 27, 1843.  
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 593.  
4. Ibid.
Power, specialized in Irish numbers. Also playing during their engagement was a man named Lennox, who represented Scotch characters, such as Sock Howison in "Glamond Brig," Nichol Jarvie in "Rob Roy," and Donald in "Falls of Clyde."  

In the middle of December the American Theatre over the Corinthian was once again opened, this time under the management of Place and Mueller, managers of the American Theatre, New Orleans. They sent a group of players from New Orleans, with Sloman as stage manager, to support W. E. Burton, the noted American comedian, who was their first star. 

While Burton was giving such comedies as "Sweethearts and Wives," "John Jones of the War Office," "The Scapegoat," "The Mummy," "Farmer's Daughter," "State Secrets," "Blue Devils," "Mesmerism," "Begone Dull Care," Henry Placide, an equally famous comedian, was engaged to play at the Royal Street Theatre. Placide played several roles that he was to repeat many times in coming seasons to Mobile audiences: Sam Hobbs in "Nabob for an Hour," the title role in "Grandfather Whitehead," Michael Perin in "Secret Service," Pierre Boncoeur in "Village Doctor," and Dulcimer Pipes in "Double Bedded..." 

1. Ibid., December 4 through December 15, 1843.  
2. Ibid., December 6 through December 16, 1843.  
3. Ibid., December 14, 1843.  
4. Ibid., December 14 through December 28, 1843.
The press reported that Placide's first benefit was a triumph and that he turned out the largest and most brilliant audience of the season.

During Placide's reengagement at the Royal Street concern, Christy's band, the Virginia Minstrels, was secured to complement his programs. At the American, Miss Emma Ince, dancer, was engaged.

When the Seguin opera troupe composed of Mr. and Mrs. Seguin, Mr. Shrival, Mr. Archer, and Mrs. Richardson, as principals, and the Misses Verity, Jones, Warner, Hall, and Mrs. Bowman, and Messrs. Van Pragg, Solomon, A'Beckett, Walters, Bowers, Milto, Bowman, and Signor Paladine, was engaged to play at the American.

J. S. Silsbee, the Herculéan brothers, Miss Mary Ann Lee, and Miss E. Randolph were engaged to play at the Royal Street Theatre.

Silsbee was another Yankee impersonator, and his first appearance was in a piece called "Yankee Land," written by C. A. Logan, a stock member of the Mobile company. Miss Lee executed her dances and the Herculéan brothers performed feats of strength and assumed classical poses.

1. Ibid., December 25, 1843.
2. Ibid., December 27, 1843.
3. Ibid., January 3, 1844.
4. Ibid., January 3 through January 16, 1844.
5. Ibid., January 3, 1844.

On January 15 James W. Wallack began an engagement at Ludlow and Smith's establishment. His roles included Hamlet, Holla, Dick Dashall, Macbeth, Richard III, Shylock, Martin Heyward ("Rent Day"), Benedict ("Much Ado About Nothing"). In his reminiscences, Joe Jefferson says that he played a small role in one of these plays and that he remembers Wallack for his great kindness.1

The American Theatre had closed on January 18 with the announcement that it would reopen shortly upon the arrival of Yankee Hill. But the theatre was not to be reopened again until late in the season; then it was under a different management. Ludlow says that the venture had proved a failure.2

Following Wallack's visit, Placide and Silsbee returned for reengagements. Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Field, who were playing this season in New Orleans, were also engaged at this time and stayed for several weeks.

The next attraction was a Mr. Schaffer and his lions, tigers and leopards. Featured on this bill were

3. Mobile Register and Journal, January 30 through March 10, 1844.
"a terrific attack of a Royal Brazilian tiger on the open stage," the appearance of a young lady in the lion's den, and the piece "Mungo Park," with Schaffer and the animals. ¹

The grand opera company that had sung at the American Theatre before its closing, moved over to Royal Street for a few nights, and gave "Massaniello," "Marriage of Figaro," and "Cinderella," in addition to the pieces it had previously given. ²

J. H. Hackett came back this season for a four-night engagement to play Rip Van Winkle, Colonel Wildfire, Falstaff, Sir Pertinax Macsycophani in "Man of the World," and Monsieur Mallet.

Thomas Placide, making his first Mobile visit in four years, joined the company ranks late in February and played leading comic business for the remainder of the season. Brougham returned for a reengagement and played until the coming of Macready.

Henry Clay arrived in town on February 25 for a visit at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Le Vert (she is the same gracious lady who had arranged a benefit for the little Jefferson). He was at the theatre on the night

¹. Ibid., February 7 through February 13, 1844.
². Ibid., February 14 through February 20, 1844.
³. Ibid., February 21 through February 24, 1844.
of February 26 and on March 4 when Macready was playing "Hamlet."  


Jefferson tells an amusing anecdote of how he singed Macready's wig while playing a minor part in "Werner" with him during this engagement.

Edwin Forrest, the great American tragedian, followed close upon Macready's heels. Forrest essayed Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Metamora (twice), Damon, Richard III, Jack Cade (twice), Spartacus in "Gladiator" (twice), and Richelieu. In the middle of his engagement the press announced that "Forrest is winning golden opinions from the largest and most fashionable audiences."

After a series of benefits, the theatre was closed on April 15. Ludlow says that the season was a losing one and that he had to borrow money to pay his performers.

1. Ludlow devotes several pages to the bad disposition displayed by Macready and to the scene he created upon seeing that he, Macready, had been forced to share the theatre bill on March 4 with Clay.  


5. Ibid., March 21, 1844.

After several weeks of no theatrical entertainment, it was announced that John S. Potter, who had operated a theatre in Tuscaloosa during the winter, would open the American Theatre for a short summer season. (For a vivid account of Potter's amazing theatrical activities, the reader is referred to Sol Smith's Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years, pages 230 through 232.)

Among the company members were Morton, Pacuad, Rowley Marks, Gaulfield, Duffie, Woolfe, Bingham, Mrs. Gaulfield, Mrs. Shea (Blanche Kemble), Miss Fanny Hubbard, Miss Clare Gaulfield, Mr. and Mrs. Potter and Mr. Naber.

J. M. Friend, a falsetto vocalist, appeared for several nights; J. Proctor, a tragedian, played several roles; and Herr Alexander, a magician, performed for two nights.

The last advertisement of this theatre is found in the Register and Journal of April 30. The establishment was probably closed on or about this date, and its members wandered away.

1. Mobile Register and Journal, January 9, 1844.
2. Ibid., April 19, 1844.
11. Season of 1844-1845

The season of 1844-1845 in Mobile under Ludlow and Smith was far from spectacular. Little of unusual interest happened, and none of the visiting personages was of the first magnitude.

The Royal Street Theatre was opened by Ludlow (Smith was again in New Orleans) on November 25 with his favorite first-nighter, "Hunchback," the farce, "Ladies' Man," and a dance by "La Petite" Cerito.

Stock players seen on the boards this season included: Miss Eliza Petrie (her first appearance here in five years), Mrs. Mary Stuart, Miss Coad, Mr. and Mrs. Fister, C. L. Green, Mr. and Mrs. Lovel, P. F. Williams, Mrs. Vernon (Jane Marchant Fisher), Gargill, Clark, Ludlow, Russell, La Petite Cerito, Miss Cornelia Jefferson, Master Joseph Jefferson. Mrs. Kore joined the company late in the season.

The first important play was J. M. Weston's adaptation of "Lucrezia Borgia." The press reports that the play created quite a sensation and that Mrs. Stuart, who played the title role, was "toweringly great in some of the scenes...." It was repeated several times during the season.

2. Ibid., November 29, 1844.
The first visitors were J. M. Scott and W. J. Smith. On their opening program they presented the "grand equestrian drama, founded on events of the Revolution," "Putnam, the Iron-Armed Son of '76." This piece was highly lauded and was given five times during Scott's and Smith's visit.

When their engagement was concluded, the play, "Bohemians," or "The Rogues of Paris" was brought out. This, too, was well received and was given for five successive nights. The old favorite, "Cherry and Fair Star," was next produced for six successive nights with new scenery and decorations. "Mary Tudor," or "The Queen and the Mechanic" (translated from the French of Hugo), was given four times in January.

Late in January another group of visitors, the Hughes family, gave several concerts of vocal and instrumental music at the theatre. This family consisted of Master Hughes, aged nine, violinist; little Miss Hughes, aged five, small harpist and songstress.

The Hughes children were followed by the Ethiopian Serenaders, a group of five black-faced singers. Another musical group appeared in the persons of the

1. Mobile Register and Journal, December 16, 1844.
2. Ibid., December 23 through December 30, 1844.
3. Ibid., January 1 through January 7, 1845.
4. Ibid., January 27 through January 29, 1845.
5. Ibid., January 29 through February 5, 1845.
Campanologians, or Swiss bell ringers. This troupe had been very popular in New York during the season of 1843-1844.

Henry Placide played a short engagement in the middle of February. On the boards at the same time was his brother, Thomas Placide, who had been engaged (as a demi-star) for a period that was to last about five weeks.

J. A. J. Neafie and Miss Sylvia, both of the New Orleans theatre, joined the company ranks for a short time in February. After Neafie gave "Don Caesar de Bazan" three times and took a benefit, he stayed on in support of James R. Anderson, the next star.

Anderson was a young tragedian of the Macready school; his benefit brought out the largest crowd of the season. His roles included Claude Melnotte ("Lady of Lyons"), Benedict, Shylock, Macbeth, Romeo, Coriolanus, Othello, Richard III, Monmouth ("Patrician's Daughter and the Citizen's Son"), and Delaval ("Matrimony").

1. Ibid., February 10 through February 15, 1845.
3. Mobile Register and Journal, February 17 through February 26, 1845.
4. Ibid., February 6 through March 13, 1845.
5. Ibid., February 24 through March 1, 1845.
6. Ibid., March 3 through March 17, 1845.
The Seguin opera troupe, with the Seguins, Mr. Frazer and Mr. Andrews, and complemented with Miss Goad, a chorus, and a strengthened orchestra, was the next attraction. They presented "Postillion of Lonjumeau" (twice), "La Somnambula," "Guy Mannering" (with Sol Smith making his first and only appearance of the season), "Bohemian Girl" (four times), "Cinderella," and "Fra Diavolo."¹

A Mr. Baily then appeared in models of ancient statuary for one evening.² On the next evening the Infant Sisters, Eliza and Emma Kilmiste, appeared in a comic burletta, and Wattie Ferguson, the Scottish piper, performed in full uniform.³ The infants were six and four years old, respectively; one displayed "an astonishing degree of perfection in dancing,"⁴ and the other had a very nice singing voice.

The old favorite, Charles Webb, who had not performed in Mobile for ten years, appeared for several nights in tragic roles.⁵ Mrs. Kent of the New Orleans theatre played leads during the last week of the season.

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1. Ibid., March 19 through April 1, 1845.
2. Ibid., April 3, 1845.
3. Ibid., April 4, 1845.
4. Ibid., April 10, 1845.
5. Ibid., April 7 through April 12, 1845.
On April 21 a free benefit was given to the Jefferson children. In addition to the regular company, Mrs. Kent, Mrs. Richardson, and Mr. Barton, a flutist, also contributed their services.

On April 22 the theatre closed its doors with the benefit of Charles J. B. Fisher.

On June 25 a funeral celebration in honor of the memory of General Andrew Jackson was held, and the parade culminated in a service at the theatre.

Ludlow says that as a financial investment, this season was disastrous. 1

12. Season of 1844-1845

Ludlow returned to Mobile on November 19, 1845, and opened the theatre on the 25th with Mrs. Stuart, Charles Webb, and J. B. Roberts as the leading stock performers. Other stock members included: Richard Russell, Jr., Tuthill, E. S. Conner, Rowley Marks, Thomas Placide, W. H. Chippendale, G. Roberts, William H. C. King, W. M. Fleming, Miss Sylvia, Miss Cecilia McBride, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Field, and Mr. and Mrs. George Skerrett. A. J. (or H. J.) Conway served as stage manager and Charles J. B. Fisher as treasurer.

1. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 617.
Ludlow says that stock performers were engaged to act either in Mobile or New Orleans, "at the option of the management, their traveling expenses paid, and salaries not suspended."\(^1\) Placide, Conner, the Skerretts, and Fields seem to have been in New Orleans more often than in Mobile.

Mrs. Field and Miss McBride opened the season with a series of good comedies and tragedies. Mr. Hardy, a ventriloquist, appeared for one night,\(^2\) and then Mr. and Mrs. Skerrett "of London, and recently of the Park Theatre, New York," joined the company ranks for a short visit.\(^3\) The press proclaimed Mrs. Skerrett to be "a beautiful woman and a most sprightly and lady-like actress" and her husband to be "particularly at home in low comedy."\(^4\)

On the night of the Skerrett's third appearance, Junius Brutus Booth opened his engagement as Sir Edward Mortimer in "Iron Chest." The press reported that "we never saw him act better. He played with all the vigor of his youth -- gave the part of Sir Edward with a freshness that delighted a numerous and respectable audience. At the end of the play he was loudly called for."\(^5\)

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1. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 645.
2. Mobile Register and Journal, November 29, 1845.
3. Ibid., December 2, 1845.
4. Ibid., December 4, 1845.
5. Ibid., December 5, 1845.
Booth followed his Sir Edward with Iago, Sir Giles Overreach, Richard III, Bertram, King Lear, Pescara ("Apostate") and Octavian ("Mountaineers"); for his benefit he played Hamlet to a fine house.¹


Miss Clara Ellis of the English and recently of the Park Theatre, New York, and who the press predicted was to become "the Siddons of her time,"³ was the next visitor. E. S. Conner was also here for a limited period.⁴ Three days later they were joined by the Sable Harmonists, a black-faced singing group under the direction of Mr. Archer, formerly with the Seguin opera troupe.⁵

¹. Ibid., December 5 through December 13, 1845.
². Ibid., December 13 through December 23, 1845.
³. Ibid., January 7, 1846.
⁴. Ibid., December 24, 1845.
⁵. Ibid., December 27, 1845.
On the 29th W. H. Chippendale began an engagement; so for several nights there was a large assemblage of bright lights on the boards. During this period Bouicault's new play, "Old Heads and Young Hearts," with Conner, Chippendale, and Miss Ellis, was given three times. 1

The brothers Henry and Thomas Placide opened a joint engagement on January 8, the former playing Grandfather Whitehead and the latter Mr. White in "Mr. and Mrs. White." A brilliant conclusion to the evening's performance was "a grand Pyrotechnic Display, in which the Hero of New Orleans will appear encircled in a Glory of Firewords." 2 Another feature of their visit was their three appearances as the Dromios in "Comedy of Errors." "London Assurance" was revived for Henry Placide's benefit. 3

J. M. Field, E. S. Conner, and Mr. and Mrs. Skerrett came over from New Orleans for a few nights, and J. H. Hackett, who had been on a European tour, began an engagement on January 19. 4 On his first night "Henry IV" was given with Hackett as Falstaff, Conner as Hotspur, Field as Prince Hal, Skerrett, as Francis,

1. Ibid., December 29 through January 3, 1846.
2. Ibid., January 8, 1846.
3. Ibid., January 15, 1846.
4. Ibid., January 19, 1846.
Ludlow as Poius, Webb as King Henry IV, and Mrs. Stuart as Lady Percy. A Boucicault farce, "Love by Proxy," completed this program. The editor lauded this as "the best cast ever assembled in Mobile,"¹ and in spite of a storm that night, the house was crowded.²

During the remainder of his stay, Hackett gave his familiar repertoire.

After Mrs. Field took a benefit with the presentation of two of her husband's plays, "Gabrielle" and "Oregon,"³ Henry Placide returned for a five night engagement. One of his performances was unexpectedly featured by a bat that appeared in the audience and completely stopped the play for a while. Finally a gentleman in the pit struck it down, and the play was resumed.⁴

Hackett also returned for a reengagement,⁵ and the press commended the "admirably selected and well represented" fine standard plays that had been given for the last several weeks.⁶

Chippendale turned up again,⁷ and Miss Julia Turnbull, an American dancer, began a six night engagement.⁸

¹. Ibid., January 19, 1846.
². Ibid., January 21, 1846.
³. Ibid., January 23, 1846.
⁴. Ibid., February 2, 1846.
⁵. Ibid., February 6, 1846.
⁶. Ibid., February 7, 1846.
⁷. Ibid., February 12 through March 2, 1846.
⁸. Ibid., February 13, 1846.
They were shortly joined by Sol Smith. Chippendale and Smith gave a round of light comedies, and Miss Turnbull executed a number of dances.

After Smith and Miss Turnbull had left, the Acrobat Family, which included Thomas Nunn, the Herculean; Honey Nunn, the Daring; Walker Nunn, the Active; and Steward Nunn, the Flexible, performed for several nights. 1 W. A. Barnes, pantomimist, joined them to give several pantomimic sketches. 2


Chippendale and Thomas Placide rejoined the theatre company, 4 the former to stay for a few nights and the latter until the end of the season.

1. Ibid., February 21, 1846.
2. Ibid., February 26, 1846.
3. Ibid., March 2 through March 17, 1846.
4. Ibid., March 13-14, 1846.
After several stock members' benefits, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean (the former Ellen Tree) arrived at the theatre. Their bills included "Gamester," "Hunchback," "Macbeth," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Merchant of Venice," "As You Like It," "Ion," and "Lady of Lyons." "Gamester" and "Follies of a Night" were given for Mrs. Kean's benefit, and "Stranger" and "Wonder" for Mr. Kean's benefit. On Mrs. Kean's farewell benefit, they appeared in "Ion" and in a compressed version of "Honeymoon." Sol Smith, who was in Mobile for a brief visit, played the Mock Duke in "Honeymoon" on this occasion.1

During the last week of the season Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" had its Mobile premier. The authoress was supposed to have returned to be in it, but she was ill, and Miss Eliza Petrie was engaged for Mrs. Mowatt's role.2 The play was given three times during this week.

The season closed with a benefit to the theatre treasurer, Charles J. B. Fisher, and one to Chippendale. On Fisher's benefit program, his new wife, the former Mrs. Richardson of the Mobile theatre, appeared for the first time in two years.3

1. Ibid., March 23 through April 4, 1846.
2. Ibid., April 7-8, 1846.
3. Ibid., April 13, 1846.
In a burst of enthusiasm during the Keans' engagement, the *Register and Journal* pronounced this season as one of the very best ever held in Mobile.\(^1\)

Ludlow says that the season was very profitable to the management.\(^2\)

On June 2 the Italian Opera company began an engagement at the Royal Street Theatre. Their company was composed of Signora Amalia Majocchi, C. Girartegin, Luigi Perozzi, Attilio Nallettina, Luigi Martinelli, chorus, and orchestra. They gave "Romeo and Juliet" twice, "Lucia Di Lammermoor" twice, and "Norma" once.\(^3\)

13. Season of 1846-1847

Ludlow and Smith opened the theatre for the winter season on November 28, 1846, with "Bold Stroke for a Husband" and "Ladies' Man." Admission had been reduced to seventy-five cents for private boxes, fifty cents for dress circle and parquette seats, and twenty-five cents for second and third tier and gallery seats.\(^4\)

Names of stock company members appearing in the newspaper theatrical advertisements include: Wright,
Uhl, Grierson, George Thorpe, Richard Russell, W. Wharam, Johnson, Mrs. Charles J. B. Fisher (formerly Mrs. Richardson), Mrs. Richard Russell (formerly Miss Sylvia), Mrs. Cantor, Mrs. Pottle, Mrs. Stuart, Miss Emily Coad, and Mr. and Mrs. Merryfield (these last two for only a short while). J. M. Weston was acting manager, and N. B. Clarke was stage manager. 1

Mr. and Mrs. James Wallack (he was nephew of the more important J. W. Wallack, and she was the former Mrs. W. Sefton, or Ann Waring) were engaged by Ludlow and Smith to play in either Mobile or New Orleans. 2 They came to Mobile for the first time on December 5 for a week's visit. Mrs. Wallack took a benefit in "Merchant of Venice" and "Honeymoon," and Mr. Wallack gave "Richard III" and "Bamboozling" on his benefit night. 3

Julia Turnbull, the popular dancer of last season, was the first prominent attraction. At the same time, the comedian, Lovell, a stock favorite of two years ago, was engaged for several nights. Lovell appeared twice in the comedy "Robert Macaire," the piece made famous

1. A complete list of players engaged by Ludlow and Smith to play in their New Orleans and Mobile theatres is found in Ludlow, op. cit., p. 660.
in Paris by Lemaitre and popularized here by J. S. Browne, and in several other light comedies. Miss Turnbull received praise for her dancing of the "pas Styrien," "el Bolero," and "la Venetiana."²

The day after Miss Turnbull's departure, another dancer, Miss Mary Ann Lee, was engaged to grace the boards. She was accompanied by her dancing partner, G. W. Smith. Playing at the same time with these two were the James Wallacks.³

After Miss Lee's stay was over, Dan Marble was engaged. The Wallacks remained, playing on the same bills, in different pieces, with Marble. On Wallack's benefit night, for instance, he and Mrs. Wallack appeared in "Macbeth," and Marble appeared in "Wool Dealer."⁴

But the interest of the audience, or the management, in the dance seemed to be insatiable, so on January 11, Mlle. Blangy "danseuse of the Royal Academy of Music and Grand Opera of Paris and Vienna and Berlin Theatres,"⁵ her two principal assistants, Mlle Valle and Monsieur Bouxary, and a ballet corps, were engaged.

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1. Ibid., December 14, 1846.
2. Ibid., December 14 through December 19, 1846.
3. Ibid., December 22, 1846, through January 8, 1847.
4. Ibid., January 5, 1847.
5. Ibid., January 11, 1847.
They gave the ballet "La Giselle" four times, a new ballet, "La Chatte" three times, and the principal dancers gave solos and "pas de deux." The press remarked that "for ease, elasticity, and grace in all her movement, she [Mlle Blangy] is unrivalled."

James E. Murdoch began a six night engagement on January 18 with "Hamlet." He followed this with "Lady of Lyons," "Gamester" (twice), "Money," "Wild Cats," and "Inconstant." ²


James W. Wallack, the Elder, supported by his nephew, James Wallack, and Mrs. Wallack, played for several nights, ⁴ alternating with the Ravel family, who returned after an absence of many seasons. The Ravels were still under the direction of Gabriel Ravel, and

1. Ibid., January 16, 1847.
2. Ibid., January 18 through January 23, 1847.
3. Ibid., January 25 through February 6, 1847.
4. Ibid., February 8 through February 22, 1847.
their corps was composed of sixteen members. They performed comic pantomimes and ballets, classic groupings, tight rope feats, etc.

Mrs. Mowatt and Davenport returned, Wallack, the Elder, stayed on, and these three gave a series of well-known plays, such as "Merchant of Venice," "Hunchback," "Pizarro," "Ion," and "Othello."¹

The tragedian, James R. Anderson, having recently returned from England, was engaged early in March. He played in "Hamlet," "Lady of Lyons," "King of the Commons," "Robbers" (twice), "Richard III," "Money," and "Elder Brother."²

In the midst of a series of stock members' benefits, the Ravels returned before their anticipated trip to France. Their program included their usual wide range of variety entertainment.


¹ Ibid., February 23 through March 2, 1847.
² Ibid., March 4 through March 12, 1847.
³ Ibid., March 15 through March 23, 1847.
also made an appearance for the benefit of the Irish relief fund.

The season was closed with Ludlow's benefit, on which occasion was presented "Circumstantial Evidence," "No Song No Supper," and a new national drama, "Palo Alto." Ludlow says that his season was highly profitable to the management.

14. Season of 1847-1848

The season of 1847-1848 was the last that Ludlow and Smith ever made in Mobile. In the spring of the year they had formed a combination for conducting the St. Charles and the American Theatres of New Orleans and the Mobile theatre under one management. Under terms of the agreement, a board of directors was created, consisting of Ludlow, Smith, and Stickney (of the American). The board was to decide on all important matters and the manager of each theatre was to carry out the details. Ludlow was once more assigned to manage the Mobile theatre.

This season was an erratic one, with the theatre opened and closed several times. It was probably also

1. Ibid., March 24 through April 6, 1847.
2. Ibid., April 9, 1847.
a poor one, for in the autumn of 1848, when the new management was being praised (that of Deering), mention is made of the "old and rotten state" of the theatre of the past season.

Stock company members whose names appear in the newspaper theatrical advertisements include: N. B. Clarke, Watson, James S. Wright, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Russell, Mrs. Stuart, Mrs. Charles J. B. Fisher. Mrs. Louisa Hunt and W. H. Chippendale were engaged the middle of January and performed almost continuously until the end of the season.

Mlle Fanny Dimier and her troupe of dancers, including Monsieur Schmidt and Mlle. Fanny Martin, opened the theatre to a good house on December 13, 1847. They stayed a week, performing "pas seuls," pastoral ballets, and grand ballets.

They were immediately followed by Mlle. Blangy and her dancers, this year including Monsieur Bouxary, Mlle. Vallee and Mons. Wisthoff. Their selections included several of those given the previous year and several given by Mlle. Dimier's troupe.

A theatrical advertisement of "Hunting a Turtle," with Mrs. Stuart, "Idiot Witness," with N. B. Clarke,  

1. Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 14, 1848.  
2. Mobile Register and Journal, December 13 through December 20, 1847.  
3. Ibid., December 21 through December 29, 1847.
and "Lady and the Devil," with Richard Russell and Mrs. Stuart, appears in the Register and Journal of December 31. There are no further notices until the announcement in the Register and Journal of January 19, 1848, that the theatre would reopen on that night with Professor Risley and his sons John and Henry, and the comedians, Mrs. Hunt and Chippendale.

The Risleys, aerialists and dancers, immediately won high favor with their audiences.¹ Chippendale was a favorite of last season, and Mrs. Hunt, according to a press notice, "got an enthusiastic curtain call at the close of the comedy ["Eton Boy"]-- a compliment never before paid in Mobile to any performer on any opening night."² Chippendale and Mrs. Hunt shared almost all the leading business throughout the season. Consequently, since they were both comedians, most of the pieces were comedies.

The next satellites were a group of forty-eight little girl dancers from the ages of six to twelve called "Les Danseuses Viennoises." They were under the direction of Madame Josephine Weiss, "Maitresse de Ballet de Theatre Impersieux", and had appeared in numerous European theatres before their American tour.

¹. Ibid., January 21, 1848.
². Ibid., January 21, 1848.
During their engagement the theatre was crowded, and the audiences were highly pleased with these extraordinary children.¹

After the benefit of the Viennoise children, Mrs. Hunt took a benefit as Satan in the new drama, "Satan in Paris," and as Christine in "Youthful Queen."² She was then absent from the theatre for about twelve days.

In the meantime, John Collins, the Irish comedian and vocalist of last season, returned in his usual repertoire of Irish pieces.³ Collins and Chippendale appeared on the same bills, occasionally playing in the same pieces, and the editor remarked that the combination of Chippendale and Collins was a very happy one.⁴

The Risleys returned for a brief visit, and Mrs. Hunt rejoined the company to appear as Marion in "Pride of the Market," a new play that had just been received from London, where it had been successfully enacted by Madame Vestris.⁵

The dramatic season under Ludlow and Smith was closed with the benefit of Mrs. Fisher on Saturday, March 4.

¹ Ibid., January 26 through February 10, 1848.
² Ibid., February 11, 1848.
³ Ibid., February 14 through February 21, 1848.
⁴ Ibid., February 17, 1848.
⁵ Ibid., February 29, 1848.
On Monday, March 6, the theatre was reopened with the opera troupe under the direction of Madame Anna Bishop, an English singer of the Italian style, who had created a sensation during her New York debut the previous summer.  

Madame Bishop's company consisted of herself, Mlle. Koreinski, W. H. Reeves, Vatellina, Brough, and Bennett, with Boschsa as musical director. Some of their pieces were given in English, others in Italian. The selections included: "La Somnambula" (three times), "Norma" (twice), "Linda of Chamonni," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Love Spell." The last night brought forth the third act of "Anna Bolina," first act of "Linda," second act of "Lucrezia Borgia," the vivandier scene from "La Figlia del Regimento," and the song, "Last Rose of Summer." The troupe spent fifteen days in Mobile.  

Once more, on April 11th, Ludlow and Smith reopened the theatre, this time with "Dr. Collyer's original and celebrated troupe of Model Artists" who demonstrated "their living embodiment of the works of the great masters in sculpture and painting." These tableaux were  

accompanied by appropriate music and illuminated by fine drummond lights."

This group remained until April 24th, after which the theatre was closed and was never again opened under the management of Ludlow and Smith.

Ludlow says that Forrest, the Ravel family, Miss Julia Dean, and Mrs. Farren played in Mobile this season, but the newspapers contain no mention of their names. He admits, however, that his diary and playbills for the season were lost and that he is writing purely from memory. It is probable that these performers of whom he speaks played in his New Orleans or St. Louis theatres.

1. Ibid., April 11, 1848.
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 673.
CHAPTER IV
LATÉR DAYS

1. Season of 1848-1849

In the Mobile Register and Journal of May 23, 1848, we find that J. H. Caldwell's Mobile agent, E. De Vendel, advertises the Royal Street Theatre for rent. In the Mobile Daily Advertiser of November 25, 1848, we learn that Mr. W. Deering, former manager of the Olympic Theatre, New Orleans, has leased and will open the Mobile theatre that night.

Deering brought with him a company of players, few of whom had been seen before by Mobile audiences. His pieces and plays, too, showed considerable difference from those produced during the regime of Ludlow and Smith.

Admission prices continued low: dress circle and parquette, seventy-five cents; second and third tiers, fifty cents; gallery, twenty-five cents; colored gallery, twenty-five cents.¹

Names of stock players gleaned from the theatrical advertisements in the press include: Mr. and Mrs. W. Deering, Misses Fanny Deering (dancer), E. Deering, M.

¹ Mobile Daily Advertiser, November 25, 1848.
Deering, Messrs. Hart, Hicknott, Page, Rowley Marks, Naylor (stage manager at beginning of season), W. C. Thompson (stage manager during latter part of season), Mrs. Lamar, Mr. Duffy, W. P. Smith, and Miss Meadows (perhaps the "little Miss Meadows" of some years ago). Mrs. Thompson seems to have been engaged as a "demi-star" for at least part of the season.

The opening night saw the presentation of the domestic drama, "Shakespeare's Early Days," with Hicknott as Shakespeare and Miss Kate Meadows as Queen Elizabeth; a dance by Miss Fanny Deering; and a burlesque opera, "The Sleeping Beauty," with Miss Meadows in the title role and Mrs. Deering as Fairy Baneful. It is presumed that the "Hackett" who played Shakespeare is James H. Hackett, although he is not billed as a star in the advertisement. He made no further appearances.

After several nights of musical plays, during which the Appollonian Melodists also appeared, George Jamieson, tragedian, began a ten night engagement. He opened with "Richelieu;" later in the week he gave "Lady of Lyons," "Stranger," "Damon and Pythias," "Virginius," "Macbeth" (with the original music), "Richard

1. Ibid., November 27, 1848.
In all these plays he was supported by Mrs. Thompson.

An operatic group composed of Miss Eliza Brienti, Mr. Manvers, and Mr. Brough was the next attraction.
The singers gave three performances of "La Somnambula" and "Guy Mannering," and two of "Fra Diavolo." On Miss Brienti's benefit they gave "Postillion of Lon-jumeau" and the last act of "La Somnambula," in addition to the farce, "Catching an Heiress" by the stock members.

After one stock night, Madame Augusta, assisted by M'lle. Valle and Mons. Bouxary, dancers, were engaged for a few nights.

This group was followed by Charles Dibdin Pitt, tragedian of Covent Garden, accompanied by his wife, who played in the after-pieces. "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Lady of Lyons," "Richard III," and "Taming of the Shrew," were among the plays given by Pitt. During this engagement he was supported by Mrs. Mary Stuart, who was playing this season with Ludlow and Smith in New Orleans.

1. Ibid., November 22 through December 9, 1848.
2. Ibid., December 14 through December 20, 1848.
3. Ibid., December 22 through December 25, 1848.
4. Ibid., December 27 through December 30, 1848; Mobile Advertiser Weekly (for the country) Jan. 17, 1849.
With the Mobile Daily Advertiser of December 30, there is an end to the daily newspaper records for several months. We have access only to the incomplete files of the Mobile Advertiser Weekly. From this we are able to glean a slight smattering of the theatrical activity for the remainder of the season.

J. H. Hackett appeared for one night, January 22nd.\(^1\) J. B. Booth arrived on January 24th and began an engagement as Sir Edward Mortimer in "Iron Chest."\(^2\)

In March we read in an editorial that "entertainments at the Theatre are still attracting the most popular regard. The management is excellent."\(^3\)

In the same paper we read that the Monplaiser French Ballet company is making its fourth appearance. The program included the new grand ballet, "Azelia: The Syrian Slave," with Mlle. A. Monplaiser, Mons. Monplaiser, Mr. Grossi, Mr. Corby; and the ballet "American Sailor," with Monplaiser, Grossi, Corby, Cornet, Deering, Mrs. Deering, Mlle. Bulan, Mlle. St. Clair. The dancers' visit lasted at least ten nights.\(^4\)

Herr Alexander, the magician, was also at the theatre in March.\(^5\) Later in the month the Heron family,

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1. Mobile Advertiser Weekly, January 24, 1849.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., March 12, 1849.
4. Ibid., March 20, 1849.
5. Ibid.
composed of Mr. and Mrs. Heron, and daughters Kathleen, Matilda, Fanny, and Agnes, "took the town by storm."\(^1\)

The only two selections we know they gave are "An Irishman's Fortune" and "A Day in Paris." Matilda Heron was to create a much greater sensation a decade later when she represented "Camille" for the first time in Mobile.

No further information on the season can be secured. It is likely that the theatre was closed in April.

Nothing is known of the financial results of Dearing's first and only Mobile venture. If the season had been successful, it seems that he would have operated the theatre during the next year. On the other hand, all the press and editorial notices are very favorable, high in praise of the management and of the company.

2. Season of 1849-1850

Both Ludlow and Smith incorrectly aver that R. L. Place died before the opening of his American theatre, New Orleans, for the 1849-1850 season.\(^2\) This misstatement is amended by the announcement in the Mobile Daily Advertiser of December 12, 1849, that R. L. Place would open the Mobile theatre on December 15 in conjunction with his New Orleans theatre. The possibility of his

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1. Ibid., April 3, 1849.
2. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 668; Smith, op. cit., p. 221.
having died during the season cannot be admitted, for his benefit on March 30th, 1850, closed the Mobile sea-
son.

W. M. Foster served as acting manager, and Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, old favorites, returned for the sea-
son. Mrs. Charles Fisher's name appears in the adver-
tisements until the 21st of December, but then her name appears no more. Other stock members included: Eytinge, Duffy, Spear, Grierson, Charles, Moroney, Mrs. Caul-
field, Mrs. Sabeman, Miss Bowen. Sallie St. Clair danced on nearly every program. Mrs. Coleman Pope was engaged for several weeks late in the season, and George Jamieson played several long engagements.

Jamieson and Julia Dean opened the theatre on December 15 as Ludovico and Evadne in "Evadne." Miss Dean and her father had been attached to Ludlow and Smith's Mobile company in 1844. At that time, Miss Dean was playing only small juvenile parts, but in the years that followed she had developed into a good ac-
tress; she was fast becoming one of the most popular figures on the American stage.

Among the other plays given during the visit of Miss Dean and Jamieson were "Lady of Lyons" (twice), "Hunchback," "Stranger," "Love's Sacrifice," "Lucrezia

1. Mobile Daily Register, March 30, 1850.
Borgia" (twice), "Romeo and Juliet," "Honeymoon" (twice), "Wife," "Pizarro," "Wrecker's Daughter," and "Love Chase."¹ In several of these plays Mr. E. Dean, Julia's father, had important roles.

Immediately following Miss Dean's departure, the boards were enlivened by the presence of T. G. Booth, a light comedian and formerly a member of the Ethiopian minstrels;² Frank S. Chanfrau, popular comedian and former manager of the Chatham theatre in New York;³ and Miss Eliza Petrie, now Mrs. R. L. Place, wife of the Mobile manager, and a popular stock performer here during the management of Ludlow and Smith.

Chanfrau appeared in his famous character of Mose in "New York As It Is" twice, as Mose in "Mose in California" three times, as Pygmalion in "Model of a Wife," twice, and as Big Mose in "Three Years After" twice. He also appeared as William in "Black Eyed Susan" (to Miss Petrie's Susan), as Carwin in "Therese" (to the Lavigne of Booth and the Therese of Miss Petrie), as Blueskin in "Jack Sheppard" (to the Jack of Miss Petrie and the Mendez of Booth), and as Caesar in "Don Caesar

¹. Mobile DailyAdvertiser, December 16, 1849, through December 30, 1849; Mobile DailyRegister, January 1, 1850.
². Odell, op. cit., V, p. 29.
³. Ibid., p. 381.
On the night of Booth's benefit the old favorite, "Dead Shot," was given, with Booth as Timid and Miss Petrie as Louise. After comic songs by Booth, Chanfrau gave a scene from "Widow's Victims," in which he did imitations of Forrest, J. B. Booth, J. R. Scott, Kean, Burton, and Rice. Then Ben Jennings and his son appeared in "graceful poses" and Chanfrau and Master Murray gave "Three Years After."  

The Heron family returned again this season for a few nights with several Irish pieces, "musical olios," and farces.  

They were followed by Junius Brutus Booth in what was destined to be his last visit to Mobile before his death. Mrs. Stuart was engaged to play with him. He opened in "Bertram" and followed this with "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," "Iron Chest," "Merchant of Venice," "Apostate," and "Richard III," all of which he played to crowded houses. The next week Booth was reengaged, and George Jamieson was brought over to help Mrs. Stuart in support of him. This week he gave "Othello" (with Jamieson and Booth as Othello and Iago, respectively), "Venice Preserved," "Othello" (with Booth as

1. Mobile Daily Register, January 3 through January 12, 1850.
2. Ibid., January 11, 1850.
3. Ibid., January 14 through January 19, 1850.
4. Ibid., January 21 through January 26, 1850.
Iago and Jamieson as Othello), "Apostate," "Richard III," and "King Lear." The last named play was given for Mrs. Stuart's benefit.

On February 4th a young lady who had appeared in Mobile as an overgrown juvenile actress some years before, returned as a young tragic actress, Jean M. Davenport. A few years later she was to be New York's first Camille. Jamieson stayed on through Miss Davenport's engagement, and the name of Mrs. Coleman Pope was added to the list of distinguished visitors.

Miss Davenport played the Countess in "Love" (to the Catherine of Mrs. Pope and the Huron of Jamieson) three times, Juliet (to Jamieson's Romeo), Evadne (to Jamieson's Ludovico), and Pauline in "Lady of Lyons." When she was reengaged for several nights, the old Mobile favorite, Charles Webb, was also engaged. He appeared with her in Sheridan Knowle's new play, "Maid of Mariendorpt" on two occasions and in "Virginia" (adapted for Miss Davenport from Rachel's tragedy). With Jamieson she appeared in "Stranger" (twice), "Hunchback," and "Honeymoon." 3

1. Ibid., January 28 through February 4, 1850.
2. O'dell, op. cit., VI, p. 280.
3. Mobile Daily Register, February 4 through February 18, 1850, and Mobile Daily Advertiser, February 11 through February 13, 1850.
Hackett returned after an absence of several years to play his usual repertoire: Falstaff in "Henry IV" and "Merry Wives of Windsor," Solomon Swap, O'Callaghan ("His Last Legs"), Colonel Wildfire ("The Kentuckian"), Mons. Mallet, and Rip Van Winkle.¹

Mrs. Pope remained until the middle of March, appearing in both comedy and tragedy. Jamieson went to New Orleans for a few days but returned at the end of Hackett's engagement. He and Mrs. Pope appeared together in "Damon and Pythias" (twice), "Rent Day," "Richelieu," "Ion" (twice), "Richard III," and "Virginius."²

On March 6th a ballet group composed of Mlle. Oceana, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Bennie, and Miss St. Clair began a series of "ballet divertissements" for a short period.³

More good stock performances featured the March nights with Jamieson and Mrs. Pope in the leading roles. March 16th saw the last of the current visitors when "La Belle" Oceana took a benefit. This was advertised as the last night of Jamieson and the dancers. Mrs. Pope had made her last appearance the night before.

¹. Mobile Daily Register, February 18 through February 23, 1850.
². Ibid., February 25 through March 7, 1850.
³. Ibid., March 6 through March 16, 1850.
Mr. Jennings and son also performed on this benefit program.

On Monday, March 18, Charlotte Cushman, assisted by Charles W. Cockerdock and Miss Eliza Petrie, began what was announced as her farewell engagement. Cockerdock played her supporting leads, and Miss Petrie appeared in the afterpieces and in second female leads. Miss Cushman opened as Lady Macbeth to a crowded house and excellent press notices. Then she portrayed Julia in "Hunchback," Mrs. Haller in "Stranger," Rosalind in "As You Like It," and Meg Merrilies in "Guy Mannering."

On her first benefit she repeated "Macbeth" and appeared as Mrs. Simpson in "Simpson and Co." During her reengagement she acted Meg Merrilies, Ion, Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing," and Katherine in "King Henry VIII." For her farewell benefit she appeared as Mrs. Haller and as Julianna in "Honeymoon.""  

March 30th was announced to be for R. L. Place's benefit and the last night of the season. On this occasion Miss Cushman appeared as Rosalind in "As You Like It," and Miss Petrie as Dulia Dalton in the burletta, "One Hour."  

1. Ibid., March 16, 1850.
2. Ibid., March 20, 1850.
3. Ibid., March 25 through March 29, 1850.
4. Ibid., March 30, 1850.
The next night the theatre was reopened for a complimentary benefit to Foster, the stage manager. A large bill was presented: a revival of "London Assurance," "Miser of Marseilles," "Dead Shot," a dance by Miss St. Clair, a song by Mr. Warwick, and classic scenes by Jennings and son. A silver goblet was presented to Foster from the company as a climax to the evening's affairs.

At the volunteer benefit given to Ben Jennings the following night, Ambrose Gwinett was presented, and the New Orleans brass band gave a concert. Except for two musical soirees given by artists of the New Orleans opera company and a lecture on Hamlet by John Gaisford, theatre prompter, the Jennings benefit concluded the activities for the season.

3. Season of 1850-1851

J. M. Field, long a favorite player with Mobile audiences, returned in a different capacity for the season 1850-1851 — that of manager and sole lessee of the Royal Street Theatre.

Under the direction of Charles J. B. Fisher, the establishment had been renovated in the autumn. We read:

1. Ibid., April 1, 1850.
2. Mobile Advertiser, June 8, 1850.
3. Ibid., June 16, 1850.
"...the dress boxes and parquette have been connected together. The whole of the first circle has been supplied with chairs, and thoroughly new carpeting. The parquette has been raised so as to make the view better. Seats have been newly cushioned and backed, and the entire floor has been thickly and warmly matted."

"The new orchestra is now below the line of the nearest spectator. A range of private boxes has been fitted up in the center of the house."

"A new and elegant Art Drop has been painted by Mr. Samuel B. Stockwell. The stage has been improved, under the direction of carpenter John J. Ireland."

It was announced at the beginning of the season that the regular company was to be composed of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Field, Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, Mr. and Mrs. Rynar, Mr. and Mrs. Caulfield, Tyler, Kent, Welch, Hickmott, Edwin, Sylvia, Marc Smith, Mrs. Fisher, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Amelie, and Mrs. Watkins. John Gaisford was prompter, P. Gass was orchestra leader, S. B. Stockwell was scenic artist, and J. J. Ireland was machinist.

At the conclusion of the season, the names of the following company members signed a letter written to the Mobile Daily Register requesting that a complimentary benefit be given Field: Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. B. Fisher, Josiah Rennick, A. Pennoyer, J. E. Fuller, Marcus Smith, John Greene, Anna Greene, Alexander F.

1. Mobile Daily Register, November 26, 1850.
2. Ibid.
Welsh, H. L. Clarke, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Rynar, Grace E. Clarke, Elizabeth Watkins, F. Mallett, George Gaulfield, F. M. Gaulfield, Samuel B. Stockwell, C. N. Tyler, John Hickmott, and Frederick L. Kent. 1

The theatre opened under the new management on November 27 with "Wild Cats" and "My Aunt," with Field playing Rover in the former and Dick Dashall in the latter.

After several stock nights Mrs. George P. Farren, accompanied by her husband, began an engagement. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Russell, once well known in New York, 2 and probably the sister of Richard Russell, who had been connected with the Mobile company under Ludlow and Smith. Mrs. Farren's selections were those leading ladies almost invariably chose: "Hunchback," "Gamester," "Tour de Nelse," "Lucrezia Borgia," 3 etc.

The Farrens were succeeded by the Bateman children, Ellen, five, and Kate, seven, assisted by their father, H. L. Bateman. These children were the granddaughters of Joe Cowell, their mother having been

1. Ibid., March 24, 1851.
3. Mobile Daily Register, December 2 through December 11, 1850; Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 7 through December 12, 1850.
Sidney Cowell before her marriage to Bateman. Cowell, and Mr. and Mrs. Bateman, had been a member of the Mobile company during the 1842-1843 season.

In "Merchant of Venice," Ellen Bateman played Shylock to her sister's Portia. On the same bill was given "Spoiled Child," with Kate as Little Pickle and Ellen as Tag, and "Hunter of the Alps," with Mr. Bateman as Felix, Kate as Florio, and Ellen as Julio. Other plays in their repertoire included "Macbeth" (Kate as the thane and Ellen as Lady Macbeth), "Four Mowbrays," "A Day After the Fair," "Napoleon's Old Guard," "Sweethearts and Wives," "Did You Ever Send Your Wife Across the Bay?" "Paul Pry," "Bombastes Furioso," and the fifth act of "Richard III" (Kate as Richmond, Ellen as Richard).

The comedian, Benedict De Bar, who was serving as stage manager for Ludlow and Smith in New Orleans, paid a brief visit to the theatre, appearing every night as Aminadab Sleek in "Serious Family." As afterpieces he also gave "Aton Boy," "Jack Sheppard," "Robert Macaire," "Telemachus," and "Artful Dodger."

1. Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 14, 1850.
2. Mobile Daily Register, December 17 through December 19, 1850; Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 14 through December 16, 1850.
4. Mobile Daily Register, December 20 through December 23, 1850; Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 21 through December 24, 1850.
Christmas night saw the return of the delightful Julia Dean in "Hunchback." This night, too, saw the first Mobile presentation of the farce, "Jenny Lind," with Mrs. Fisher as Jenny, Marc Smith as Beevy, and Fuller as Granby Gag. The whole country was abuzz with the Jenny Lind craze, and she was soon expected in New Orleans. Numerous plays and satires about the famous songstress were to be given at the Mobile theatre.


On January 17th there was a break in Miss Dean's engagement for the benefit performance of Marc Smith. On this occasion Sol Smith appeared as Old Delph to his son's Young Delph in "Family Jars."

On January 20th the Mobile premier of Field's new comedy, "Married An Actress," was given, with Mr. and Mrs. Field and Mr. and Mrs. Greene. It was repeated twice on the following nights and on subsequent occasions thereafter.

2. Mobile Daily Register, December 27, 1850, through January 18, 1851.
3. Mobile Daily Register, January 17, 1851.
4. Ibid., January 20, 1851.
In the meanwhile, the dancer, Miss St. Clair and the comedian, Charles W. Hunt, had joined the company for several nights and remained throughout the engagement of John Collins, Mrs. Stuart and McKean Buchanan. Collins stayed only two nights; then his place was taken by Buchanan and Mrs. Stuart. These two appeared together in the popular tragedies: "Othello," "King Lear," "Hamlet," "Lady of Lyons," and "Iron Chest." On these bills Hunt appeared in farces and light comedies.

After the departure of Hunt and the tragedians, the dance was brought to the fore by Miss Ludlam, Mr. Zavystowski, and Miss St. Clair (who had been engaged again). They remained until another troupe took their place.

Although last season had been announced as her farewell tour, February saw Charlotte Cushman playing a six night engagement at the Mobile theatre. She opened as Lady Macbeth (to Field's Macbeth), and the next night appeared as Claude Melnotte in "Lady of Lyons" (to Mrs. Field's Pauline). After giving "Guy Mannering," she played Romeo in "Romeo and Juliet."

1. Ibid., January 22-23, 1851.
2. Ibid., January 24 through January 30, 1851.
3. Ibid., February 6 through February 26, 1851.
For her benefit she acted Mrs. Haller in "Stranger" and Lady Gay Spanker in the third, fourth and fifth acts of "London Assurance." On her last appearance she portrayed Meg Merrilies in "Guy Mannering" again.¹

After a week of the tragedy of Miss Cushman, Mobilians were probably glad to welcome the comedy of Henry and Thomas Placide. They opened as Sir Peter Teazle and Crabtree, respectively, in "School for Scandal," and as Sam Hobbs and Dick Dumpy in "A Nabob for an Hour." They enacted the Dromios in "Comedy of Errors" for three nights and several other pieces together and separately.²

On February 25th, at which time Jenny Lind was in New Orleans and soon expected in Mobile (she never came), a new "Masque Phrenologique or Lindomaniac Rhapsody" called "Nightingale," written by Field, was presented. Samuel Stockwell constructed a spectacular view of the ruins of the St. Charles Hotel after its recent conflagration. Against this background was given "a rhapsodiacal and grotesque representation of thoughts and incidents connected with the anticipated visit of Jenny Lind to Mobile." Among the play's ingredients were a drunken poet and the figments of his imagination—angels, dancing girls, dandies, musicians, General

¹. Ibid., February 10 through February 15, 1851.
². Ibid., February 17 through February 24, 1851.
Zachary Taylor, and the Black Prince. Terminating the play was a "brilliant tableau exhibition of Jenny Lind, in the presence of Apollo and the muses." ¹

We cannot discover the reason for Miss Lind's cancellation of her plans to visit Mobile.

As soon as the dancers, Miss Ludlam and Mr. Zavystowski took their departure, Mlle. Celestine Franck's group, composed of herself, Mons. Leon Espinosa, and a ballet troupe, took their places. They evidently enjoyed considerable popularity.

The dancers were succeeded by the comedian Charles Burke, half-brother of Joseph Jefferson III. He gave a series of comedies including "Ole Bull," "Grandfather Whitehead," and "Rip Van Winkle," on the benefit nights of several stock company members. ²

Then a tragedy, "Raphael," written by B. A. Reynolds, "a gentleman of Mobile" was given. The press reported that it was played "with distinguished success." The piece was repeated the next night for the author's benefit. ³

Featuring two bills in the late season were the farce "World's Fair," by Field, with Field as Barnum,

¹. Ibid., February 27, 1851.
². Ibid., February 27 through March 8, 1851.
³. Ibid., March 10 through March 15, 1851.
⁴. Ibid., March 18, 1851.
and one act of "Guy Manners," with Marc Smith as Meg Merrilies, in imitation of Charlotte Cushman. 1

The season closed on March 26 with a complimentary benefit to Field. The next day Field and his wife left for Nashville to fulfill an engagement at the Nashville theatre under the management of his recent employee in Mobile, John Greene. 2

4. Season of 1851-1852

The Mobile theatre began its winter season on November 17 under the management of Joe Field. Listed among the regular company members this year were: J. B. Fuller, Henry Sedley, John Huntley, F. Chippendale, W. Fredericks, C. A. Hunt, S. B. Leaman, Alexander Welsh, H. Schoolcraft, A. Pennoyer, Field, J. Wright, W. Marony, J. A. Veitch, J. Sylvia, Mrs. Mary Stuart, Mrs. Chippendale, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Maclosky, Mrs. Charles Fisher, Mrs. Caulfield, Mrs. Field, Misses M. Hull, Maclosky, S. Bennett, Schoolcraft, J. Bennett. The orchestra leader was Theodore Verron.

The opening bill presented "All That Glitters is Not Gold!" for the first time in Mobile and a revival of the old favorite farce, "Raising the Wind." 4

1. Ibid., March 21, 24, 1851.
2. Ibid., March 28, 1851.
4. Ibid.
The first visitors of the season, G. H. Barrett and his daughter Georgianna (later Mrs. Warren) came early. They opened as Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, respectively, in "School for Scandal" and followed this with performances of "London Assurance," "Lady of Lyons," "All that Glitters is Not Gold," "Ladies' Battle," and "Grist to the Mill." Barrett also appeared twice in "His Last Legs."  

Eliza Logan, who had appeared on the Mobile boards when her father, C. A. Logan, was a member of Ludlow and Smith's company, returned this season as a star. She was accompanied by her father, who appeared in the after pieces on her programs. She essayed Evadne, Juliet, Julia ("Hunchback"), Pauline ("Lady of Lyons"), Lucrezia Borgia, Beatrice, Mrs. Haller ("Stranger"), Bianca, and the leading roles in "Astarte" and "Jealous Wife." Also presented four times during the Logan's visit was Logan's comedy "Chloroform," or "Mobile 100 Years Hence."

The Logans were succeeded by Julia Bennett (later prominent as Julia Bennett Barrow), an excellent English actress who had made her New York debut only last season. She acted in "Belle's Stratagem," "Wonder," "As

1. Ibid., November 19 through November 29, 1851.
2. Ibid., December 2 through December 13, 1851.
You Like It" (twice), "Time Tries All," "All That Glit-
ters is Not Gold," "A Roland for an Oliver," and "Love
Chase." The weather being severe during Miss Bennett's
engagement, she probably did not attract very large
houses.

December 23rd, a stock night, saw the first Mobile
presentation of "Actress of Padua," with Mrs. Stuart
and Mr. and Mrs. Field. The next night Benedict De
Bar came over from New Orleans to play a series of
comic characters. With Fuller he gave "Robert Macaire"
and "Slasher and Crasher" several times; with Field
and Welsh he gave "Peter Wilkins" five times; he also
appeared in "Jack Sheppard," a burlesque of "Lady of
Lyons," "Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday," and "The
Mountain Devil."²

At this point in the season we can, again, gather
our information only from the Mobile Weekly Advertiser,
a news organ which contains but slight mention of the­
atrical affairs.

The Weekly Advertiser of January 17, 1852 furnishes
several bits of theatrical news. We learn that Julia
Bennett had returned to play "Something Else" and "Honey-
moon" during a reengagement. Duke Aranza in "Honeymoon"

1. Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 14 through
December 21, 1851.
2. Ibid., December 24 through December 31, 1851.
was played by the circus clown, W. F. Wallett, who also executed classic postures on the same program.

From this same source, we learn that thus far in the season attendance at the theatre had been slim because of unpleasant weather and that the treasurer's statement showed the theatre to be in "the red."

Announcement is also made of Field's benefit, at which a Mr. Vicker was featured in "Wool Dealer."

In January J. A. J. Neafie returned after an absence of several years to play the Prophet in the Forrest prize play, "Mohammed." On his benefit he played "Don Caesar de Bazan." 1

In February a ballet troupe of which Espinosa was a member, played an engagement of dances and tight rope feats. 2

Late in March, Teresa Parodi, the brilliant opera singer, appeared in a series of concerts before splendid and appreciative audiences. 3

In the middle of May we again refer to the Mobile Daily Register for theatrical news.

Evidently the official theatrical season had been closed when C. G. Chesley, acting manager for J. M. Field

2. Ibid., February 7, 1852.
3. Ibid., March 27, 1852.
announced that he had engaged the Ravel family, forty in number, for two weeks.¹

They attracted large crowds, one of their most popular pieces being the old favorite pantomime, "Tocko."²

During the summer, an amateur group, the Histrionics, with Mrs. Stuart of the Mobile theatres as leading lady, and J. B. Fuller, also of the stock company, as comedian, presented several plays: "Venice Preserved," "Hamlet," "Maid of Croissey," "School for Scandal," and "Romeo and Juliet."

5. Season of 1852-1853

The season of 1852-1853 presented a brilliant array of visiting talent and a stock company said to be the equal of any in the country.⁴ The Register pronounced manager Field to be "indeed the very manager of all managers. Crummels was nothing to him."⁵

Regular company members included: Field, Mr. and Mrs. Duffiel, J. B. Fuller, Wright, Schoolcraft, Morrison, Linden, Hield, Veitch, W. H. Chippendale, Mr. and Mrs. George Saulfield, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Welsch, Mrs. Stuart, Mrs. Fisher, and Miss Hill.

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¹ Mobile Daily Register, May 13, 1852.
² Ibid., May 24, 1852.
³ Ibid., May 31, June 26, 1852; Mobile Weekly Advertiser, June 3, July 31, August 14, 1852.
⁴ Mobile Daily Register, January 27, 1853.
⁵ Ibid., January 22, 1853.
Before the season opened a verandah opposite the theatre was erected so that ladies could escape the rain. The press also suggested that the second row of seats in the dress boxes be anchored to a wooden board so that the "discomfort and inconvenience" suffered by ladies on the front row when the second row slid forward, would be relieved. It is not known if this suggestion was carried out.

Mrs. Charles Howard of Placide's Varieties, New Orleans, opened Field's third Mobile season and stayed until the former establishment began operating again. She appeared in numerous genteel comedies and light musical pieces. Features of these first weeks included the production of "School for Scandal" and "Twelfth Night" with an excellent cast, and Field's new comedy, "Job and his Children," with Chippendale and Mrs. Stuart.

The first important visitors were Eliza and Cornelius A. Logan. Miss Logan played the usual lady-like roles, and took an unsuccessful benefit in "Ion." On her second benefit she introduced the new play "Ingomer, the Barbarian." Partly because of her plain features, she evidently did not meet with much success in Mobile.

1. Ibid., October 25, 1852.
3. Ibid., November 20 through December 5, 1852.
4. Ibid., December 5 through December 18, 1852.
The next week the town was set afame by "the danseuse, the politician and theologian, the terror of the Jesuits, the favorite of an Emperor, and the cynosure of all eyes" -- Lola Montes. She opened on December 21st to an immense audience in a "grand characteristic" dance. (Her dances were usually accompanied by a couple of farces by the stock members.) The following night she executed the "Spider dance." On her third and fourth nights she presented the frank expose written for and about herself, "Lola Montes in Bavaria," with "new scenes of the Montes palace and library of the King of Bavaria." The next night she gave "the historical drama" written for her by J. S. Conway, "Maid of Saragossa." On her benefit and last appearance she repeated "Lola Montes in Bavaria" and danced the "Sevigliana." 

The fiery Lola was succeeded by the hearty Irish comedian and Yankee gal, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams. They met with instant success, and the press pronounced Mrs. Williams a fine actress and Mr. Williams the best impersonator of Irish characters seen here in ten years.

1. Ibid., December 19, 1852.
2. Ibid., December 21 through December 25, 1852; Mobile Daily Register, December 29, 1852.
On the first night Barney appeared in "Born to Good Luck" and "Limerick Boy," and Mrs. Williams appeared in "In and Out of Place." To this piece she added the farces "Our Gal" and "It's the Custom of the Country," and Williams appeared in a wide variety of comic Irish pieces. During their second week they presented "Ireland As It Is" on four successive nights. The press commented that "Mr. and Mrs. Williams wear well. Novelty in their pieces, and excellence in their acting, keeping their popularity in full freshness...."

They remained from December 29th through January 15, 1853.

The popular Julia Dean was engaged in January and played to large enthusiastic houses. She opened in her favorite role of Julia in "Hunchback" and then appeared in the inevitable round of characters that one might expect: Evadne, Constance ("Love Chase"), Countess ("Love"), Marianna ("Wife"), Bianca ("Italian Wife"), Pauline ("Lady of Lyons"), Lucrezia Borgia, Mrs. Haller ("Stranger"), Parthenia ("Ingomar"), Juliet, Duchess ("Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady"), etc.

1. Ibid., December 29, 1852.
2. Ibid., January 12, 1853.
3. Ibid., January 18 through February 7, 1853.
After several stock members’ benefits, a complimentary benefit was given to W. H. Chippendale, who planned to return to London after his present engagement. On Chippendale's benefit, John Smith, a retired circus comedian now living in Mobile, volunteered to appear as Jim Along Josey in "Yankee in London." We shall hear more of Smith later.

The next night a new tragedy, "Queen Elizabeth," by B. A. Reynolds, the author of "Raphael," was given. Mrs. Stuart, for whom the play was written, acted the title role. The piece was pronounced faulty in some points but on the whole well sustained and interesting.

The following week brought Mrs. Anna Cora Mowatt. Her first role was Rosalind; later in the week she played Parthenia, Ion, Viola ("Twelfth Night"), and Martha Gibbs ("All That Glitters is Not Gold"). For her first benefit she acted Blanche in her own play, "Armand," or "The Peer and the Peasant."

Mrs. Mowatt also appeared twice in her play, "Fashion." During her engagement a complimentary benefit was tendered Field, who left for St. Louis to open

1. Ibid., February 8, 1853.
2. Ibid., February 11, 1853.
3. Ibid., February 14, 1853.
4. Ibid., February 14 through February 21, 1853.
his new theatre there. 1 At his benefit Mrs. Mowatt appeared in "Twelfth Night." John Smith executed an "extravaganza" and Mrs. Stuart, Field, and several members of the Mobile Histrionic society appeared in "Honeymoon." 2

After Mrs. Mowatt's departure, the singing star, Madame Anna Thillon, and the Irish comedian and vocalist, James Hudson, were engaged for a week. Madame Thillon played La Catavina in "Crown Diamond" twice, Marie in "Daughter of the Regiment" twice, and Mrs. Chillington in "A Morning Call." Hudson appeared in the usual Irish selections. 3 Madame Thillon was pronounced by the press "completely fascinating....There is none but her! She is herself alone!" 4

The Ravels -- almost fifty strong -- returned again this season. In addition to the Ravel brothers, Gabriel, Antoine, Jerome, and Francois, the Martinetti family, and a corps de ballet. Their bills, consisting of tight rope performances, comic ballets, ballet pantomimes, poses, feats of agility and strength, and farces by the stock members, attracted large houses. 5

1. Ibid., February 21, 1853.
2. Ibid., February 22, 1853.
3. Ibid., February 28 through March 5, 1853.
4. Ibid., March 3, 1853.
5. Ibid., March 8 through March 21, 1853.
The last visitors were the Bateman children, who opened in the comedy, "Young Couple" and the vaudeville, "Why Don't She Marry?" But not content with light comedy, they also enacted, as of last season, scenes from "Macbeth," "Richard III," and "Merchant of Venice."

Their favorite piece seems to have been "Young Couple," which they played five times.¹

John Smith appeared on several programs during the last week and was permitted a benefit on March 31st. The season closed with Fuller's benefit on April 1st, 1853.

During the summer the Histrionic society was again active. Among their plays were "Money" for the benefit of Mrs. Stuart; and "Vow of the Golden Cross," "Mr. and Mrs. Strap," and "The Maniac" for the benefit of Mr. Fuller.²

This is the last record obtainable of a public performance of Mrs. Mary Stuart. Ever since her first appearance in Mobile as a little girl in 1822 Mobilians had lavished their interest and affection on her. She died in 1855 and is buried in Magnolia cemetery, Mobile.³

An increased feeling had been growing that the Mobile theatre was unequal to the demands made upon it.

¹ Ibid., March 22 through March 28, 1853.
² Ibid., August 3, 1853.
³ Craighead, Fact and Tradition, p. 362.
The press complained that it was behind times "in style, appliances, lighting, and ventilation," and that although the building was large enough, the seating arrangement was very poor.

After the Histrionic season closed in August, the heavy brick walls backing the dress circle of boxes was torn out and replaced by iron columns. This enabled the dress circle to accommodate 150 more people than it had previously. ²

The alterations were interrupted by the death from yellow fever of Colonel Hope H. Slatter, proprietor of the theatre. ³ Although work was resumed late in September, probably little real renovation was done.

6. Season of 1853-1854


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1. Mobile Daily Register, May 21, 1853.
2. Ibid., October 11, 1853.
3. Ibid., September 16, 1853.
During the next ten days stock bills were enlivened by the dances of Senorita Soto and G. W. Smith. Before their engagement terminated, that of Eliza Logan began. She gave "Fazio," "Jealous Wife," "Soldier's Daughter," "Ingomar," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Much Ado About Nothing," and "Iolo."^2

The Bateman children returned for seven nights with several light pieces and selections from "Richard III" and "Hamlet."^3

When the prodigies took their leave, the stock company brought out Field's new burlesque, "Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Mrs. Harriet Screecher Blow." John Smith played Uncle Tom; Mrs. Caulfield, Mrs. Screecher, Mrs. Field, Mrs. Longscrew; Miss Cruise, Miss Fairfight; Welsh, Mr. Squeely; Fuller, Brother Crow; Wright, Solon Yankeedo; and Veitch, Topsy. This piece met with public favor and was repeated on several occasions.

The Mobile Daily Advertiser of January 1, 1854, carries a long article about the New Year's Eve festivities. Of particular interest to us is the description of the activities of the Cowbellian society, Mobile's first mystic organization, for part of its annual

1. Ibid., December 5 through December 15, 1853.
2. Ibid., December 11 through December 21, 1853.
3. Ibid., December 22 through December 29, 1853.
4. Ibid., December 30, 1853.
celebration took place in the theatre. In the Daily Advertiser we read:

"The society of Cowbellian de-Rakin appeared in the streets a little before eight and had a parade... The procession wound its way to the theatre, which, as usual, had been especially fitted up for their entertainment. Here the Cowbellians were greeted by a crowded, but select and fashionable audience, as none but invited guests could obtain tickets of admittance. This is a feature of their arrangements from which no departure is allowed and no amount of money can purchase a card of entrance... There was a programme and dancing and then at eleven they withdrew to the Battle House for the annual banquet given them by the mayor of the city. When the clock struck twelve they seemed to magically disappear."

The popular Barney Williamses, who scored a hit last season, returned in early January for a long engagement. Included in their large repertoire were:


1. Ibid., January 4 through 21, 1854.
The Irish comedian and Yankee gal were succeeded by Julia Dean and George Jamieson. In addition to Miss Dean's usual pieces, the pair appeared in the play made famous by Rachel, "Adrienne the Actress," "Macbeth," "The Duke's Wager," and "Artist's Wife." At the complimentary benefit given to Miss Dean by "the young men of the city," she gave "Lady of Lyons," and both she and Jamieson appeared in his new original farce, "There's No Such Word as Fail." In "Lady of Lyons," H. E. Requier, a Mobilian who planned to become an actor, made his professional debut.

Following this session of legitimate drama, the Ravel troupe, including the Marttinetti family, M'lle. Zoe and her ballet corps, presented their round of feats and dances.

Then the splendid singer, Madame Henrietta Sontag, and the entire Italian opera company, consisting of forty members, with a double orchestra and full chorus, regaled Mobilians with song for a week. Sontag was the prima donna, and Madame Rosa De Vries (or Devries) sang second leads. Secured dress circle admission tickets were advanced to $3.00, and unsecured dress circle tickets were placed at $2.00.

1. Ibid., January 24 through February 13, 1854.
2. Ibid., February 13 through February 25, 1854.
The operatic troupe opened with "La Somnambule" and followed this with "Norma" (Devries in title role) and "Barber of Seville" (Sontag as Rosina). On their last night Devries sang the lead in the first and second acts of "Lucia de Lammermoor," and Sontag sang Maria in the second act of "Child of the Regiment."¹

Early March brought James R. Anderson in his first appearance here in seven years. He essayed Hamlet, Richard III, Macbeth, Claude Melnotte, Charles ("Elder Brother"), Damon (twice), Charles de Moor ("The Robbers"), Ingomar (as originally acted by him in London), Hercules Huron ("Civilization"), and Petruchio. During his first week his audiences were slim.²

As soon as the once highly popular J. S. Browne was engaged, the actors began taking their benefits. Browne appeared in several of his favorite roles: Dazzle ("London Assurance"), Gregory Grizzle ("My New Wife and Old Umbrella"), Sergeant Austerlitz ("Maid of Groissey"), and Robert Macaire; he also played for the benefits of stock members.³

S. B. Stockwell's benefit was notable for the presentation of a "grand historic military spectacle," "Napoleon Crossing the Alps." The piece contained new

¹. Ibid., February 26 through March 4, 1854.
². Ibid., March 5 through March 17, 1854.
³. Ibid., March 18 through March 28, 1854.
scenery and properties, Napolson's ascent of the mountains, snow storm, and battles. It was repeated for four successive nights. 1

The last visitor was the Yankee comedian, Joshua Silsbee, who played a series of his well-known characters. Milliard Fillmore and suite attended the theatre the last night Silsbee appeared. Several nights previous to this,

"...the professional musical talent, under the leadership of Waldauer, of the Theatre orchestra, gave a serenade to Mr. Fillmore.... There was a very large crowd present...and Mr. Fillmore responded briefly and happily to the compliment, intimating, however, that it was probably intended for some of the fair ladies domiciled in the Battle House..." 2

On April 12, the last night of the season, a complimentary benefit was given to the retired circus performer, John Smith, who had made infrequent appearances on the Mobile stage since his residence here. He was now proprietor of the Half-Way House on the shell road, an establishment widely patronized by Mobilians. During the yellow fever epidemic last summer, Smith and Duffield had given concerts throughout the state, proceeds of which were given to the Can't Get Away Club. 3 (This was an organization of Mobilians who had to endure yellow fever-ridden Mobile summers.

1. Ibid., March 29 through April 2, 1854.
2. Ibid., April 11, 1854.
3. Ibid., April 12, 1854.
The press commented that the theatre had been well attended at the beginning of the season, but that houses had been very slim during the latter part.¹

Stock members for the season just discussed included: Mr. and Mrs. Field, Mr. and Mrs. Hield, J. B. Fuller, Wright, D. R. Allen, Alex Welsh, Schoolcraft, Veitch, Mrs. Gaulfield, Mrs. Waldauer, and Miss Anna Cruise. The name of Cowell (probably the younger Joe Cowell) appeared during the first two weeks, but then dropped from the advertisements.

7. Season of 1854-1855

Although we read in the Mobile Daily Evening News that the theatre seats had been recovered, the interior painted, and the gilding renewed in preparation for Field's opening,² the complaint at the end of the season was that the theatre was so gloomy and dirty that there was little pleasure in attending performances. It was said that the filthy seats often soiled the dresses of the few ladies who came.³ Altogether, it must have been an unprofitable season for the management.

¹. Ibid., April 14, 1854.
². Mobile Daily Evening News, November 18, 1854.
³. Ibid., April 25, 1855.
Stock performers included: Mr. and Mrs. Field, D. R. Allen, Mrs. Charles Fisher, Mrs. Cullen, Mrs. Caulfield, Mrs. Smith, Miss Sellie St. Clair, Marcus Smith, Hunt, and Emmett. John Smith appeared frequently, and the names of Mr. and Mrs. Hickok appear once in the theatrical advertisement. John Huntley was stage manager. William A. Hamblin, son of the late T. S. Hamblin, manager of the Bowery Theatre, New York, for many years, and a Mr. Blakely played most of the season. A Mr. McMillan was engaged during the last week.

The season began on November 20, 1854, with the engagement of the old favorite, George Holland. He played several well-remembered pieces: "Paul Pry," "The Secret" (twice), "Sweethearts and Wives," "Married Life" (twice), and "A Day After the Fair." He also gave "Cut for a Holiday," "Phenomenon," "To Oblige Benson," and "The Serious Family."¹

During Holland's visit, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hill of Placide's Varieties, New Orleans, played an uninteresting engagement.²

The section of the Ravel troupe under the direction of Francois Ravel, aided by the brilliant Russian

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1. Ibid., November 20 through November 27, 1854.
2. Ibid., November 26 through December 11, 1854.
dancer, Yrcia Mathias, and Victorine Franck, attracted large houses during its engagement.\footnote{Ibid., November 28 through December 6, 1854.}

On December 7th the company was joined by J. S. Browne, T. Blakely (or Blakeley), William Hamblin, M'lle. Adeline, and M'lle. Lonsdale, all of the recently destroyed Placide's Varieties. With these additions to the dramatic corps, a series of representative plays was given. Blakely and Hamblin remained throughout the season; the others took their departure after a couple of weeks. \textit{School for Scandal} was given by them on December 7th to an audience that included Senators Stephen A. Douglas, Rusk, and Herschell V. Johnson.\footnote{Ibid., December 7, 1854.}

During this period, John Smith, who had just appeared in one of his favorite pieces, \textit{Stage Struck Nigger}, suffered an attack from the editor of the \textit{Evening News}. The latter gentleman declared that

"...we have heartily enjoyed his \textit{Stage Struck Nigger}'s\footnote{Ibid., December 11, 1854.} eccentricities when confined to the circus ring, and are willing to award him there the full meed of praise to which he is justly entitled; yet we cannot but regard his introduction on the boards of the Theatre as a prostitution of the legitimate drama, and as having a tendency to give the public mind a distaste for standard plays...."

This attack, needless to say, did not deter Mr. Smith from continuing his appearances in the theatre.
The next attractions were Miss Louisa Howard and Henry Farren, son of the London comedian, William Farren. Their visit seems undistinguished except for the first Mobile presentation of "Esmeralda," or "Hunchback of Notre Dame." The press conceded Miss Howard to be very lovely and Farren to be very versatile.  

Thomas Placide, proprietor of the recently burned Varieties in New Orleans, was warmly welcomed when he began an engagement while the young stars were still on the boards. He remained for several weeks.  

Then the lovely Agnes Robertson, whom the Evening News declared to be the "most faultless and agreeable actress we have ever had on the Mobile boards," and her husband, Dion Boucicault, prominent actor and playwright, began a very successful engagement. Miss Robertson opened in "Milly" or "The Maid with the Milking Pail," and "The Young Actress."  

These pieces were followed with Boucicault's "Andy Blake" and a repetition of "Young Actress." On succeeding nights she repeated "Milly," "Andy Blake," and "Young Actress," and also gave "Fairy Star" (four times), "Bob Nettles" (three times), and "Margery" or

1. Ibid., December 23, 1854.  
2. Ibid., December 28, 1854, through January 17, 1855.  
3. Ibid., January 6, 1855.  
4. Ibid., January 5, 1855.
"The Rough Diamond," "Swiss Cottage," Boucicault's "Love and Money," and "The Devil's In It" (all these twice). 1

Boucicault's first appearance was in "Swiss Cottage" at Miss Robertson's first benefit. Thereafter he made frequent appearances in the plays in which she starred.

Johnson Jones Hooper, editor of the Montgomery Mail, happened to be staying at the Battle House in Mobile on the occasion of Miss Robertson's and Boucicault's visit to the theatre. He writes, in a report to the Montgomery Mail of January 22, 1855, a very interesting account of his acquaintance with the famous couple:

"Dion Boucicault, Esq., author of "London Assurance" and the husband of Miss Robertson, whose fame as an actress now reaches into the utmost regions where the English tongue is spoken, was among the guests at the Battle House. Some of our readers may recollect that, last week, in a letter from Mobile, we noticed rather disparagingly, a light, dramatic piece ("The Fairy Star") written by this gentleman. Besides, we remarked that Miss Robertson's acting in it did not impress us with a very favorable idea of her capabilities. The piece itself we characterized as "trash unworthy etc." As to all this we have not changed our opinion, but subsequently witnessing repeatedly the performances of the lady and her husband, in different plays written by him, they gained so rapidly and largely upon our regards, that we fain would blot out what we wrote, possibly, in an unappreciative mood. Mr. Boucicault is one of the most unassuming, pleasant little gentlemen in the world, and as a dramatic actor,

1. Ibid., January 5 through January 20, 1855.
in a certain line at least, he cannot be excelled. His delineation of the aged, decayed French gentleman, Mr. Tourbillon in "Bob Nettles," is the most consummate acting we have ever seen. The very air of the poor old gentleman appeals to the heart, with a pathos so subdued, so simple and so touching, that the tears will come, do what we may. In the same play, Miss Robertson gives way with absolute perfection, the rollicking, larking, but fool-hearted, school-boy Bob Nettles. Her rendering of this character -- and of all such -- leaves no room for improvement. Archness, piquancy, simple pathos unite with a petite style of beauty to give her the power of "bewitching 'em," and the longer we look, the more we are bewitched. The truth is, she and her husband are twin gems, of rare and beautiful brilliance. We were delighted to learn from Mr. B. himself, that in the course of a month or two, we shall probably have them in Montgomery. Mr. B. professes to give, in the South, a series of what we may call "Evenings", in which his wife and himself (and by themselves) will illustrate some of the peculiarities of English society, in dramatic sketches written by himself. It will, we feel sure, be the most successful thing of the sort ever produced in the Southern States."

With the departure of Miss Robertson and Boucicault, the American actor, J. B. Roberts essayed a round of classic characters to slim houses. His selections were "Richard III," "Richelieu," "Hamlet," Boucicault's "Willow Jopse" (twice), "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," and "Merchant of Venice."

1. Kelly, Marion, The Life and Writings of Johnson Jones Hooper, pp. 93-5.
After a return engagement by Louisa Howard and Henry Farren, the legitimate drama was side-tracked during the visit of the French Giant. He appeared three times in the piece, "The Giant of Palestine," and twice in "Terror of the Mountains." The program for February 10th is an odd mixture: "Terror of the Mountains," with the giant, fancy dance by Adeline, and a Scotch dance by Miss St. Clair.

The section of the Ravel troupe under the direction of Gabriel Ravel, with the Martinette family, Mlle. Celestine Franck, and a large "corps de ballet" arrived in the middle of February. The press was again high in its praise of the entire troupe. The favorite piece this season seemed to be the spectacle, "Green Monster." After a session of stock nights, the Ravel troupe returned for a brief reengagement.

Following more stock nights and actors' benefits, the Irish comedians, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence (she was a sister of Mrs. Barney Williams) began a round of comic pieces. Their repertoire included "Irish Assur-

1. Ibid., January 29 through February 6, 1855.
2. Ibid., February 15, 1855.
3. Ibid., March 19 through March 24, 1855.
Nothing," "Ireland As It Is," and "Florence Schottische." ¹

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Howard followed the Florencees. ²

She appeared in several singing roles, and he lent his
wife support in comedies. The season closed on April
21st with Mrs. Howard's benefit.

8. Season of 1855-1856

From caustic press comments in the Daily Evening
News, we presume that the 1855-1856 season marked a low
ebb in Mobile's theatrical history. Seering attacks
on the stock company members, many of the visiting stars,
the management, and the condition of the theatre itself,
were delivered from the editorial section of the News
throughout the entire season. We have suspected some
editors of stooping to "puff" certain performances and
stars, but the editor of the News could never be charged
with such action. With but few exceptions, he branded
the stock members as putrid.

The occasion of a false alarm of fire in the the-
atre provoked another tirade from this irate gentleman.
We learn that in the theatre building

"...there is one narrow little hole in the wall
called a door, so hard to find that the experi-
enced is compelled to search for it....Through

¹. Ibid., April 2 through April 6, 1855.
². Ibid., April 9 through 21, 1855.
this small hole the audience has ingress and egress. The other twin door is kept fastened.... The whole interior and exterior needs, nay, absolutely requires, remodelling.... It wants a capital stock company, polite ushers, new paint, new accommodations, more comfort, convenience, and safety."1

Several days later the editor pens some very enlightening comments on Mobile theatrical conditions:

"...Mobile is the best theatrical city in America of its size -- this fact is perfectly notorious, and yet its citizens have more humbugs thrust down their throats -- bear more and suffer more than any people in America....The meagerness of the stock company has been, during the whole winter, a subject of complaint, and now two of its best members are permitted...to leave us, on account of what the Tribune calls a 'misunderstanding.'

"We heard, not forty days ago, a gentleman declare that Mobile required as good a stock company as New York. Why? Because the Southern people are a travelling people, and keep perfectly posted up. Mobile is a small city and has but one theatrical audience, an audience that almost constantly visits and supports the Theatre. They read, see, criticize. In New York, composed as it is of an immense floating population, the mass of audience visits the Theatre only for amusement, caring nothing about the relative merits of actors. It is hardly worth while to risk being made cinders of in a rickety and pent up house, to see a riddled stock company murder Shakespeare and the rest...."2

The Mobile Daily Register of May 8, 1856, suggests that since three-fifths of Mobile theatrical audiences

1. Ibid., February 23, 1856.
2. Ibid., February 27, 1856.
are from out of town, and since good dramatic entertainment is a splendid inducement for visitors, Mobile should have a good establishment.

When the citizens of the town arranged a large complimentary benefit for Miss St. Clair, the press charged that "the management has compelled the friends to buy the house at an exhorbitant price, thus throwing the weight of the benefit upon their shoulders."¹

The subject of much of this abuse, poor Field, whose health had been bad last year, and whose health was probably even worse this year (he made only two appearances on the stage), died as soon as the season was concluded.²

And now to the season itself. Field opened the theatre on November 17th with the following stock members: W. L. Ayling, E. E. (or E. B.) Williams, Davis, Havelock, Braithwate, D. R. Allen, Duncan, Morrison, Morton, Mrs. W. H. Smith, Mrs. Ayling, Mrs. Braithwate, Mrs. Durivage, Mrs. Lonsdale, Mrs. Caulfield, Mrs. Field, Mrs. Addison, and Miss Sallie St. Clair. The orchestra was under the direction of Henry Meyer.

The first night's bill featured Tom Taylor's "Still Waters Run Deep," with J. S. Browne, who had been

¹. Ibid., March 31, 1856.
². Mobile Daily Register, May 8, 1856.
engaged for a limited period. This bill, with a change of farce, was repeated for three nights. Browne, whom the press conceded to be a good actor but inclined to "old fogyism" appeared in his favorite pieces (see last season) until he left on December 4th.

Mrs. George F. Farren, whom the outspoken editor identified with the "blood and thunder" school of acting, began an engagement on November 24th. She gave "Lucrezia Borgia" (twice), "Stranger," Tom Taylor's "Peg Woffington" or "Masks and Faces" (four times), "Wrecker's Daughter," "Griselda" (three times), and "Adelgitha." On her benefit program she appeared in "Mary Tudor" and in "The Captive and the Maniac," or "Scenes in a Madhouse." 4


The tragedian, Charles W. Coullock, who had not been seen in Mobile since he played opposite Charlotte

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2. Ibid., November 22, 1855.
3. Ibid., November 27, 1855.
4. Ibid., November 24 through December 8, 1855.
5. Ibid., December 10 through December 15, 1855.
Cushman in 1850, arrived on December 17th. He gave Luke Fielding in "Willow Copse" (twice), Richelieu, Richard III, Hamlet, Macbeth, Louis XI, and Giles in "Miller's Maid." 1

The Evening News accused Gouldock of making a farce "and a devilish broad farce" of "Richard III." It also blasted his "English style of accenting the last word of a sentence -- unimportant though it may be." He was advised that Shakespeare was beyond his reach and that he should play Knowles and melodrama. 2

Kate and Susan Denin, a young American sister team, opened the day after Christmas in "Romeo and Juliet" and "Nature and Philosophy." Kate played Juliet and Colin to Susan's Romeo and Eliza. In other offerings they shared the female leads, or one acted the male lead while her sister acted the female lead. Their engagement attracted good houses. 3

In describing Susan Denin's musical voice, the press attributed the secret of its melody to "the prolongations of the letter 'e' and the round sound given to the letter 'o'." 4

1. Ibid., December 17 through December 26, 1855.
2. Ibid., December 20, 1855.
3. Ibid., December 26, 1855.
4. Ibid., December 26 through January 5, 1856.
5. Ibid., January 5, 1856.
The play "Jack Cade" was the first offering of J. A. J. Neafie, who visited the theatre this year for the first time in several seasons. Other pieces in his repertoire were "The Robbers," "Corsican Brothers," "Macbeth," "Civilization," and "Don Caesar de Bazan."¹

Neafie was succeeded by Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, who drew large houses during their long engagement. In addition to their pieces that Mobilians had previously witnessed, they gave "Bashful Irishman," "Mephistopholes," "O'Flanagan and the Fairies," and "Fairy Circle."²

The Evening News minced no words in its evident dislike of the Williamses. We read that the editor was horrified and amazed to see "several hundred cultivated and intelligent people seeming highly edified and amused at the ridiculous nonsense of the catch-penny plays put upon the boards by the Williamses and the coarse, stale, clownish jokes...."³

Hackett returned for a six-night engagement and was succeeded by John Collins, a comedian lucky enough to elicit high praise from the Evening News. Collins performed the usual Irish roles.⁴

1. Ibid., January 7 through January 14, 1856.
2. Ibid., January 15 through February 1, 1856.
3. Ibid., January 18, 1856.
4. Ibid., February 4 through February 9, 1856.
5. Ibid., February 13 through February 16, 1856.

On the night of Davenport's last appearance, W. M. Thackeray delivered a lecture at Temperance Hall on "The Court and Times of George III." On March 3rd he spoke on George IV.²

The first visit in seven years of James E. Murdoch to the theatre provided the Evening News another opportunity for a roaring blast against the stock company. It announced that Murdoch was a superior actor but that he would receive no support from the stock members, with the single exception of Miss St. Clair.³

Murdoch enacted Evelyn ("Money"), Hamlet, Young Mirable ("Wine Works Wonders"), Petruchio, Stranger, and Dick Dashall ("My Aunt"). During his second week he played the title role in the historical tragedy

¹. Ibid., February 18 through March 1, 1856.
². Ibid., March 1, 1856.
³. Ibid., March 3, 1856.
written for him, "De Soto," every night. On his bene-
fit program he appeared as Vapid ("Dramatist"), and as
De Soto in the first, second, and last acts of that
piece.

Collins returned for a reengagement after Murdoch's
departure. In the middle of his visit Mrs. W. H.
Smith was accorded a benefit. On this occasion Noah
M. Ludlow made his first appearance in several years
as Scamper in "Promissory Note." 2

After the farewell benefit of Collins, a compli-
mentary benefit by certain citizens of the town was
given Miss Sallie St. Clair. This young lady had first
appeared as a dancer on the Mobile boards, but this
season she relinquished dancing altogether and set
about developing her dramatic powers. She seems to
have met with success, for the merciless Evening News
was high in her praise, contending that she had a
great deal more natural gift and power than Julia
Dean (Hayne). 3

Miss St. Clair's benefit was an enormous success.
The Evening News declared that she attracted the larg-
est house ever assembled at the theatre. 4 She was

1. Ibid., March 3 through March 15, 1856.
2. Ibid., March 24, 1856.
3. Ibid., March 28, 1856.
4. Ibid., April 1, 1856.
showered with bouquets, and one enthusiastic gentleman threw his hat on the stage. In obedience to a vociferous call, Miss St. Clair appeared "with a hat full of bouquets and made a modest and telling speech."¹

April 1st saw the engagement of the Espinosa family, consisting of Madame J. Espinosa, Mons. A. Gredelue Espinosa, Mons. Leon Espinosa, Madame Monplaisir, and a "grand corps de ballet." The bills were composed of a farce by the stock members and Greek, Spanish, oriental, or comic ballets by the dancers.²

After the dancers' departure, a series of actors' benefits was given. The last night of the season, April 12, was a benefit to George Reid, the theatre door-keeper.

Field evidently left for St. Louis, where he died shortly thereafter.

On the 19th of April, with Field as lessee, and W. H. Crisp as manager, the theatre was reopened. Crisp, manager of the Gaiety Theatre, New Orleans, brought over the whole roster of the Gaiety, with Matilda Heron as star.

Miss Heron opened in her sensational role of Margaret in "Camille." Prominent supporting roles were

¹. Ibid., April 1, 1856.
². Ibid., April 1 through April 5, 1856.
sustained by Fred N. Thayer, J. S. Browne, J. S. Charles, Mrs. E. Place, and Miss Blake.¹

The Evening News completely succumbed to the charms of the dazzling Matilda. The editor predicted immortality for her and pronounced her interpretation of Camille "without any hesitation, the most skillfully artistic, and powerful delineation upon the American stage."² A few days later he called her "the American Rachel, the dazzling female luminary of the English drama."³

We learn, however, that not everyone shared the opinion of the News. Many citizens complained of the evil tendencies in the play.⁴ Correspondents had a merry time defending and deploring the morality of the play.

"Camille" was given for five successive nights. On her first benefit Miss Heron played Bianca in "Fazio." This performance attracted an enormous audience in spite of the fact that Saturday was a proverbially unfashionable theatre night.⁵

Mr. and Mrs. Crisp joined the acting corps the second week to lend support to Miss Heron. The latter appeared as Peg Woffington twice, as Julia ("Hunchback") and as Bianca.

1. Ibid., April 19, 1856.
2. Ibid., April 22, 1856.
3. Ibid., April 24, 1856.
4. Ibid., April 23, 1856.
5. Ibid., April 26, 1856.
On the last night of the Gaiety company, Matilda once more played Camille. The next day the troupe left for New Orleans to reopen the Gaiety. We read that "their departure was a public event. The wharf and fronting street were thronged with anxious and excited persons...."  

So great had been the popularity of Crisp's company that he, encouraged by some influential Mobile citizens, decided to consider plans for building a new theatre in Mobile. Only a few days after his return to New Orleans Crisp wrote the editor of the Daily Register that he planned to visit Mobile immediately "with the ground and elevation plans of the new theatre, taking from $5,000 to $10,000 of stock myself....I have the Gaiety Theatre on lease -- I want a Gaiety in glorious Mobile."  

When Crisp was in Mobile to discuss plans for the building on May 17th, it was said that one-third of the stock had already been subscribed. On May 23rd Crisp returned to make further plans. It was announced that the theatre was to be eighty by one hundred fifty feet and was to have free ventilation all around, thus

1. Mobile Daily Register, May 3, 1856.
2. Ibid., May 6, 1856.
3. Ibid., May 14, 1856.
4. Ibid., May 17, 1856.
5. Ibid., May 23, 1856.
making it tenable a month or two longer than the sea-
sons had lasted heretofore.

On June 16th the artist and machinist arrived from
New Orleans to begin work on the new theatre. But in
the middle of August Crisp announced that although work
on the theatre had been suspended, the project had not
been abandoned. He said that construction would be re-
newed and completed during the coming season. Crisp,
however, never carried out his plans.

Although Mobile was not to have a new theatre, the
old establishment was to have a new management and a
thorough overhauling. Early in May, while Crisp was
formulating his preliminary plans, S. B. Duffield, who
had been a member of Field's Mobile company in 1852,
had leased the Royal Street theatre for a period of five
years. He had the backing of Benedict De Bar of the St.
Charles theatre, New Orleans, and of George Shaw.

On May 20th Duffield advertised that he wished to
remodel and decorate the old theatre. In order to se-
cure money for this purpose he opened a subscription
list at $100 per person, entitling him to free admission
for three years. It is not known how successful this
money-raising project was.

1. Ibid., June 17, 1856.
2. Ibid., August 13, 1856.
3. Ibid., May 23, 1856.
4. Ibid., May 20, 1856.
9. Season of 1856-1857

When the theatre was opened by Duffield on October 27 the aspect was a cheerful one. The theatre had been thoroughly repaired, repainted, and refitted. An elaborate curtain, emblazoned with the city seal replaced the old green maize curtains. The dome had been made handsome with the addition of five or six muses in appropriate spaces. New figures emblematic of music, fine arts, and drama, were niched in the walls. The dress circle had been remodeled to seat 150 more people than it had before and to permit the ladies to show their dresses to greater advantage. The old dress circle seats had been moved to the second tier, and the gradation had been changed so as to improve visibility.¹

On the outside of the building, the open seams which were about to cause the theatre to collapse had been filled, and the walls had been strengthened. A new coat of white paint had been applied to the exterior.²

A good stock company had been engaged, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. George Pauncefort (as leading man and lady), A. W. Fenno, J. E. Fuller, McWilliams, James S.

¹. Mobile Daily Advertiser, October 29, 1856.
². Ibid., October 26, 1856.
Browne, Morrell, Campbell, Wesley (or Westley), Cater- 
son, Thompson, Ward, Danvers, Donegan, McMahon, Strondback, Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth, Mrs. Morton, Mrs. Logan, 
Mrs. McIntosh, Mrs. Labadie, Miss Woodward, Miss Fanny 
Hudson, Miss Kate Anderson, Miss Emma Lewis, Miss Carlotti Pozzoni (vocalist), Mrs. Mann (nee Eliza Placide) 
and her daughter Alice. Huntley was stage manager and 
Calder was treasurer.

Before the stock company arrived, the troupe of 
Christy Minstrels under the direction of Raynor and 
Pierce, opened the theatre on October 27th, 1856. Their 
programs consisted of Ethiopian farces, burlesques, 
songs, and dances. One of their best bills was a cir-
cus burlesque which was repeated several times. 1

The official season was scheduled to open on Novem-
ber 8th, but low water on the Mississippi detained part 
of the company. They arrived in New Orleans on November 
10 and reached Mobile by mailboat in time to open the 
theatre on the 12th with "Serious Family" and "My Young 
Wife and Old Umbrella." 2

Admission prices were announced to be seventy-five 
cents for dress circle and parquette, fifty cents for

1. Ibid., October 26 through November 1, 1856.
2. Ibid., November 12, 1856.
second tier, twenty-five cents for gallery, and $6.00 for private boxes.1

The Paunceforts made their first appearance on November 14th in "Honeymoon." Several nights later Mrs. Pauncefort delivered selections from Hiawatha in "full costume."2 She and her husband became great favorites with the Mobilians and were thought by many to be the best stock members who had been here for a long time.3

The ranting, vigorous Mrs. Farron was the first visitor of the season. In addition to her usual roles, she played "Camille" three times, "Mary Tudor," and "St. Mary's Eve" to good houses.4

Frederick B. Conway opened a successful engagement in the new play, "Love and Loyalty," and followed this with "Othello," "Willow Cops," "Factory Girl," "Esmeralda," "Lost Ship," "Marble Heart," "Hamlet," "Belphegor," and "The Robbers."5 His wife, the former Miss Crocker, was scheduled to appear with him, but she was ill during the greater part of the engagement.

The comedian, Maggie Mitchell, who specialized in scamps and jig dances, played for several nights in a

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1. Ibid., November 12, 1856.
2. Ibid., November 18, 1856.
3. Ibid., January 5, 1857; February 21, 1857.
4. Ibid., November 25 through December 9, 1856.
5. Ibid., December 8 through December 20, 1856.
series of mediocre pieces. On one of her last nights, a man of the town, Patrick Conlin, tried to create a disturbance in the theatre, but he was marched to the lock-up and fined £25. The Advertiser blames the "close house and a stomach full of whiskey or other spiritous liquors" for "having made a fool of him." 2

John Collins came in early January for a ten-night engagement with his usual Irish pieces. 3 He was followed by Hackett in a repetition of his plays of former years. 4

The night after Hackett's benefit, the Paunceforts enacted "Romeo and Juliet" for the benefit of "putting an iron rail around the public square." 5

Agnes Robertson and Dion Boucicault began an engagement the next night with "Violet," or "Career of an Actress." After giving "Bob Nettles" and "Young Actress," the opening piece was repeated. Later during the engagement they played "London Assurance," "The Phantom" (four times), "The Chameleon," Boucicault's new play "Pauline," "The Devil's In It," and "Scenes from Blue Bell." 6

1. Ibid., December 21, 1856, through January 3, 1857.
2. Ibid., December 31, 1856.
3. Ibid., January 6 through 17, 1857.
4. Ibid., January 18 through 23, 1857.
5. Ibid., January 24, 1857.
6. Ibid., January 25 through February 7, 1857.

Immediately after this siege of classic plays, the Keller troupes, who presented "tableaux vivants" and the dancer, M'lle. Vivant, were engaged and played to good houses. 2

The 9th of March was a memorable occasion, for it marked the first appearance on the Mobile stage of youthful Edwin Booth, who was shortly to become the most outstanding tragic actor in America. His first role was Richard III, played to Mrs. Pauncefort's Queen. The next night he acted King Lear. His first two houses were small because of inclement weather. On March 11th he played Iago; then Sir Giles Overreach, Sir Edward Mortimer, and Mr. Jones in the comedy, "Little Toddlekins." On his last night he repeated his Richard role. 3

The Daily Advertiser praised Booth's clear enunciation and excellent reading and declared that "Booth

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1. Ibid., February 8 through February 21, 1857.
2. Ibid., February 24 through March 7, 1857.
3. Ibid., March 8 through March 14, 1857.
has made beyond a doubt the most favorable impression upon the minds of those who have seen him of any actor here this season."¹

Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence arrived the day after Booth's departure to play a round of "Irish boy" and "Yankee gal" pieces. We are familiar with most of their plays. New this season were "Irish Emigrant," "Mischievous Annie," "Working the Oracle," "Yankee Housekeeper," "Toodles," and "Thrice Married." The Florences were well patronized.²

Booth returned on the first day of April in "King Lear." The next night when he acted Claude Melnotte in "Lady of Lyons," he received a great ovation, and the press predicted a brilliant future for him.³ Then he played Richelieu, and at a complimentary testimonial arranged for him, he played Hamlet.⁴

After a series of actors' benefits, the season was closed with a complimentary benefit to G. McWilliams on April 19th.

The stock members left, and the theatre remained darkened for several nights until the Marsh children, a troupe of juvenile comedians, arrived for their engagement

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¹ Ibid., March 16, 1857.
² Ibid., March 15 through March 29, 1857.
³ Ibid., April 3, 1857.
⁴ Ibid., April 2 through April 4, 1857.
on April 27th. The theatre was still under the manage-
ment of Duffield, with R. G. Marsh, director of the
children's group, acting as stage manager.

Thirty-three children under twelve years of age
composed this group, and no adults acted with them.
Mary, Louise, and George Washington Marsh usually took
the leads. Their repertoire included "Black Eyed
"Nan, the Good for Nothing," "The Golden Farmer," "My
Neighbor's Wife," "Serious Family," "Perfection," "The
Miser and His Daughter," "Beauty and the Beast," "Irish
Broom Maker," "Naiad Queen," "Loan of a Lover," "Invin-
cibles," and "Rough Diamond." The audience liked them,
and they played to good houses.¹

On May 17th the Original Campbell Minstrels under
Rumsey and Newcomb, a troupe consisting of twelve per-
formers, began a short series of musical programs. They
played banjo and violin solos, executed dances, bur-
lesques, negro "eccentricities," etc.

On May 27th the Campbells yielded one night to
Signora Vestvali's grand opera company. They gave parts
of "Semiremide," "Lucrezia Borgia," and "Romeo and
Juliet."²

¹ Ibid., April 26 through May 12, 1857.
² Ibid., May 27, 1857.
On May 29th Rumsey and Newcomb gave Duffield a complimentary benefit, and on May 30th Signora Vestvali gave a second and final concert to an overflowing house.¹

Duffield left on June 1st for Montgomery to complete arrangements for a theatre there. The Mobile Daily Advertiser pronounced the season just closed the "largest and most successful ever known in Mobile. We had every variety of entertainment known on the dramatic boards."²

10. Season of 1857-1858

In the early fall the theatre building was again overhauled. A new stage was erected, the proscenium was raised, new gas fixtures were installed, and two or three new scenes were painted.

James S. Calder, theatre treasurer, announced the stock company members to be: Mr. and Mrs. Peuncefort, Owen, Raymond, C. McWilliams, Ponisi, Marlowe, B. Wesley, Miss Ettie Henderson, Miss Delia Norvall, Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Archibald (or Archbold), and Mrs. Logan. H. Bland was stage manager and Walles was prompter.⁴ From advertisements we find the names of Mr. and Mrs. Stoddart, Miss Stafford, Mrs. McIntosh, Metkiff, and Thompson.

¹. Ibid., May 30, 1857.
². Ibid., May 31, 1857.
³. Ibid., October 14, 1857.
⁴. Ibid.
Little was said about the merit of the regular stock members although the press complained that in a representation of "Macbeth" the weakness of the company was shown when it was necessary to double roles. 1

Once more the theatre was opened before the arrival of the stock company -- this time by Mons. Piot, who was engaged for a series of "tableaux vivants." Poor Piot was permitted to give only one performance. His pictures did not meet with his audience's approval; in fact, the ladies left before the end of the first scene. When gentlemen alone composed the house, "hisses, groans, yells, and all manner of unpleasant sounds arose. One of the citizens arose, in answer to repeated calls and announced in behalf of Mr. Calder that 'this is the last night of this performance!'" 2

Duffield opened the dramatic season on November 26 with the engagement of the burlesque comedians Mr. and Mrs. John Wood. The first night's bill consisted of "Marquins and Cobbler," with the Woods; "Jenny Lind," with Mrs. Wood; and "Lola Montaz," with Mrs. Wood. They made further appearances in "Grist to the Mill," "Stage Struck Tailor," "Josephine," "Mr. and Mrs. White," "Merchant of Venice Preserved," "Factory Girl," and "Invisible Prince." 3

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1. Ibid., January 20, 1858.
2. Ibid., November 7, 1857.
3. Ibid., November 26 through December 2, 1857.
After several nights of stock performances, the perennial visitor, John Collins, arrived. To his familiar repertoire had been added only "The Irishman in Naples."¹

Collins was followed by the Martinetti and Blondin troupe of pantomimists and acrobats. This group had formerly been associated with the Ravels. Their bills were almost identical to those that the Ravels had given for many years. They performed to "full and fashionable" houses and were pronounced a superior group.²

Mobilians were probably glad to welcome Sol Smith, who appeared on December 29th for a brief visit. He gave "Hypocrite," "Lying Valet," "Town and Country," and "Family Jars."³

A break in the legitimate drama occurred when the management engaged Spalding and Roger's "Great Elephant Show" and the Steamboat Minstrels. For a week the elephants, Victoria and Albert, entertained large audiences with wonderful feats, and the minstrel completed the programs with songs and jests.⁴

In January Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence performed a successful engagement with the additions of "Frederick

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¹ Ibid., December 8 through December 12, 1857.
² Ibid., December 13 through December 25, 1857.
³ Ibid., December 29, 1857, through January 1, 1858.
⁴ Ibid., January 3 through January 8, 1858.
the Great," "Irish Mormon," and "Young Actress" to their repertoire.

The next visitors were Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Wallack, who opened in "Macbeth." The Advertiser charged Wallack with overacting and mouthing his part. "Macbeth" was followed with "Ivan," "Othello," "Winter's Tale" (twice), a repetition of "Macbeth," "Iron Mask" (twice), "Richard III," "Romeo and Juliet," and "King of the Commons."

After an absence of several years, Henry Placide returned to the theatre for a ten-night engagement. He appeared in "London Assurance," "Double Bedded Room," "Uncle John," "Village Doctor," "West End," "Grandfather Whitehead" (three times), and "Nabob for an Hour," "The First Night," and "Napoleon's Old Guard" (each of these last three twice).


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1. Ibid., January 10 through January 16, 1858.
2. Ibid., January 20, 1858.
3. Ibid., January 17 through January 30, 1858.
4. Ibid., January 31 through February 10, 1858.
5. Ibid., February 11 through February 13, 1858.
The two gentlemen were succeeded by Miss Jean Davenport, here for the first time in five years. To crowded houses she played "Love," "Adrienne the Actress" (twice), "Lady of Lyons," "Medea," "Camille" (twice), "Masks and Faces" (twice), and "Charlotte Corday."  

On February 24th Miss Davenport performed for the benefit of the Mount Vernon Association which was attempting to raise funds for the purchase of George Washington's home. The same Madame Le Vert who had arranged a benefit for the Jefferson children fifteen years before, was serving as president of the Mount Vernon Association for the state.  

Charlotte Cushman began an engagement in "Stranger" on February 26th. She followed this with the roles of Romeo (The Daily Advertiser said she was "acknowledged to be the best Romeo on the stage"), Catherine ("Henry VIII"), Rosalind, Lady Gay Spanker, Tisbe ("Actress of Padua"), and Meg Merrilies ("Guy Mancinering"). She repeated the latter two plays twice.  

Miss Cushman was followed almost immediately by the comedian F. S. Chanfrau, who had not been in Mobile in

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1. Ibid., February 16 through February 26, 1858.  
2. Ibid., February 24, 1858.  
3. Ibid., March 3, 1858.  
4. Ibid., February 28 through March 13, 1858.
a number of years. His repertoire included "Stage Struck Barber," "Toodles," "Linda," "Cigar Girl," "Model of a Wife," "People's Lawyer," "Glance at New York," and "Paddy Mile's Boy." Chanfrau had very poor attendance; his slim houses were partly attributed to the Lenten season.  

Following a series of stock nights, Miss Avonia Jones, daughter of the prominent Mrs. Melinda Jones, opened her engagement in "Armand." Later in the week she played in "Eudne," "Love's Sacrifice," "Ingomar," "Bride of Lammermoor," and "Adrienne the Actress." The night after the close of Miss Jones' engagement she, her mother, and Charles Pope, of the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans, volunteered to give a performance for the benefit of J. S. Calder, theatre treasurer. 

Mr. and Mrs. Bland were accorded a benefit on April 8th, the last night of the stock season. 

The dramatic company took its departure and were succeeded by the Marsh children. In addition to the pieces of last season, the juvenile troupe gave "The Brigand," "Cinderella," "Lady of Lyons," "Sea of Ice," and "Forty Thieves" to full houses.  

1. Ibid., March 16 through March 20, 1858. 
2. Ibid., March 19, 1858. 
3. Ibid., March 28 through April 3, 1858. 
4. Ibid., April 4, 1858. 
5. Ibid., April 9 through April 17, 1858.
After the Marshes, Rumsey and Newcomb's Campbell's Minstrels held forth in fun and song for nine nights. Their programs were changed every day, and the troupe found much favor with their audiences.¹

On May 4th and 5th Signora Vestvali, assisted by Miss Jessie McLean, Signor Gariboldi, and Mr. Duffield, sang "gems from the Grand Italian Opera."²

The next attraction, Signor Blitz, a ventriloquist and magician, completely captivated the theatre-goers. He carried with him "learned canary birds, fifty in number."³ The Daily Advertiser declared him to have "no superior this side of the ocean."⁴

The final event of this long theatrical season was the presentation of the full French opera company on May 25th. Principal artists were M'lle. Bourgeois, Mons. Delgrave, M'lle. Paola, Mons. Debrinay, Mons. Vita, and M'lle. Bondro. There was a chorus of sixteen and an orchestra of eighteen persons. "La Favorite" was given the first night, Verdi's "Il Trovatore" the second, "The Queen of Cyprus" the third, and "Il Trovatore" again on the fourth and last night. Large enthusiastic audiences witnessed the operatic performances.⁵

¹. Ibid., April 27, 1858.
². Ibid., May 4, 1858.
³. Ibid., May 6, 1858.
⁴. Ibid., May 11, 1858.
⁵. Ibid., May 25, 1858.
⁶. Ibid., May 25 through May 31, 1858.
11. Season of 1858-1859

Duffield opened his third Mobile season on November 29th with "Evadne" and "Love Chase."

For information on the first month of the season, we have recourse only to scattered bits in the Mobile Weekly Advertiser and News and to one issue of the Daily Advertiser. From the latter source we learn that Mrs. Farren and her daughter, Fanny Fitz, played an engagement at the beginning of the season.

The Weekly Advertiser and News of December 11th contains praise of the merits of the comedian, Charles M. Walcot, who was playing at the theatre during that week.

With the coming of December 30th, we once more avail ourselves of the files of the Daily Advertiser. On that day James R. Anderson was winding up an engagement in "Lady of Lyons." The next night he took a farewell benefit in "Huron Chief" and "Honeymoon."

After Anderson's departure, there followed several stock nights with these stock members participating: Thompson, Ralston, J. G. Ashmer, Cavanaugh, Curran, Raymond, Wheaton, Hanley, Miss Alice Mann, Mrs. Eliza

1. Ibid., December 1, 1858.
2. Ibid., December 31, 1858.
Mann (sister of Jane, Thomas, and Henry Placide), Miss Berrell, Mrs. Hattie Bernard, Miss Lizzie Carter, Mrs. Lingard, and Mrs. Hughes. The name of Sol Smith, Jr., appears infrequently in the advertisements.

On January 4th W. E. Burton opened to a good house in "Dombey and Son." Later in the week, appearing twice on every program, he played "Serious Family" (twice), "Sweethearts and Wives," "Wanted: 1000 Millioners" (twice), "Breach of Promise" (twice), "Filibuster," "Blue Devils," "Married Life," "Paul Pry," "Todales," "John Jones," "Wandering Minstrel," "Old Dutch Governor," "The Mummy," and "David Copperfield" (these last six twice). His engagement appears to have been very successful. 1

Miss Avonia Jones, who had made her first Mobile appearance last year, returned again for a ten night visit. Her repertoire this season consisted of: "Armand," "Eveane," "Ingomar," "Romeo and Juliet" (to the Romeo of her mother), "Bride of Lammermoor," "Sybil," "Fazio," "Ion," "La Tisbe," and "Adrienne the Actress." 2

In the midst of Miss Jones' engagement a benefit was accorded the family of Charles J. B. Fisher, former

1. Ibid., January 5 through January 16, 1859.
2. Ibid., January 18 through January 29, 1859.
theatre treasurer, who had died recently. Miss Jones and George Jamieson volunteered their services. The benefit was a tremendous success. The Advertiser estimated that "some two hundred persons left for want of a place to stand... We have heard of three gentlemen who paid $100 for their tickets."\(^1\)

On February 2 Edwin Booth opened a very successful engagement as Hamlet. This role was followed by Richelieu, Iago (to Hanley's Othello), Charles de Moor ("The Robbers"), Richard III, Richelieu again, Pescara ("The Apostate"), Shylock, Petruchio, and Macbeth. Sixteen year old Alice Mann of the stock company played most of the feminine roles opposite Booth.\(^2\)

After Booth's engagement, a three weeks cessation was taken from the legitimate drama while a circus occupied the boards. A large ring was put on the stage, and extensive preparations were made for its reception. From February 15th through March 5th Spalding and Roger's "world renowned New Orleans circus, the largest and best equestrian establishment in the world consisting of French, English, American, and Spanish equestrians, gymnasts, clowns, acrobats, calisthenists, and trained horses,"\(^3\) gave performances in the theatre.

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1. Ibid., January 27, 1859.
2. Ibid., February 2 through February 11, 1859.
3. Ibid., February 15, 1859.
To add still another variety of entertainment, the management engaged the troupe of Gabriel and Francois Ravel. This season they were accompanied by Yroa Mathias, and together they introduced several new ballets and comic pantomimes.¹

About this time, W. F. Smith was engaged for the remainder of the season as first low comedian; and Ralton, the stock company's leading man, was released to accept an offer from Miss Avonia Jones to travel and play with her in a tour that was to include San Francisco, Honolulu, Hong Kong, Calcutta, Bombay, Australia, and England.² Miss Mann was accorded a benefit, which proved to be very successful. One lady in the audience "rose from her seat and gave her a pair of diamond earrings."³

The next visitor, Miss Jane Coombs, who, according to Odell, was a "pupil of Mrs. Maedar, and afterward a well-known but wandering star,"⁴ opened to a very slim house in "Romeo and Juliet." The Daily Advertiser attributed the small audience "to the foul weather and the miserable piece selected -- "Romeo and Juliet,"

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¹. Ibid., March 6 through March 23, 1859.
². Ibid., March 30, 1859.
³. Ibid., March 29, 1859.
which should now be excluded from Shakespeare's acting plays...."1 Other plays she appeared in were "Hunchback," "Stranger," "Love's Sacrifice," "Love Chase" (twice), and "Adrienne the Actress."2

We see that the Mount Vernon Association was still working for money; with the approval and commendation of Madame Le Vert, the magician, Wizard of the North, gave a series of three entertainments for the benefit of the association. The "Wizard" had undertaken to raise $10,000 for the cause.3

On April 24th a complimentary benefit was given for W. L. Dyson, the police officer at the theatre. Then the stock company departed, and a singer, Arthur Napoleon, gave two concerts at the theatre.4 Napoleon and Duffield gave a joint concert, followed by dancing, for the benefit of the Mobile Fire Department.5

After being closed for several weeks, the theatre reopened with the engagement of the Marsh children. Little Mary Marsh had died since last season, but George Washington Marsh and Jenny and Louise Arnot upheld the prestige of the company. Their repertoire this year included "Macbeth," "Merchant of Venice," "My Neighbor's

2. Ibid., March 27 through April 19, 1859.
3. Ibid., April 12, 1859.
4. Ibid., April 29, 1859.
5. Ibid., May 5, 1859.

The departure of the Marsh troupe closed the season.

12. Season of 1859-1860

When the winter season began on November 8th, 1859, the theatre had been scrubbed, swept, and painted. The seats had been recushioned and covered with fine damask curtain cloth, and the floors in the private boxes had been recarpeted. J. H. Ashmer, the scene painter, had retouched much of the old scenery.

Buckley's "Great Burlesque Opera Troupe and Serenaders," accompanied by Miss Julia Gould, played for several nights before the beginning of the legitimate drama. Among the numbers by the minstrels were travesties of "Lucrezia Borgia" and "La Somnambula." Their visit attracted large, fashionable houses to the theatre.

With Duffield as manager and Henry B. Phillips as stage director, the stock company began performances on November 19th in "She Stoops to Conquer" and "Poor Pilli-coddy." Members of the regular company included: D. E.

1. Ibid., May 29 through June 5, 1859.
2. Ibid., November 8, 1859.
3. Ibid., November 8 through November 13, 1859.
Ralton (we wonder what happened to his trip with Avonia Jones), J. Kingsland, J. T. Raymond, J. G. Ashmer, J. B. Curran, T. F. Riggs, J. F. Miller, S. G. Meyers, G. W. Tarte, G. W. Campbell, H. A. Smith, R. Richards, Fred Von Olker, Allison, Miss Alice Grey, Mrs. Sylvester, Mrs. Lingard, Miss Eva Allinson (vocalist), Miss Berrel, Mrs. Von Olker, Mrs. Phillips, Miss Rose Long, and Mrs. Ashmer.

Last year's newcomer, Miss Jane Coombs, returned this season for a two week's engagement. We can almost guess what her roles will be: Parthenia in "Ingomar," Countess in "Love," Julia in "Hunchback," Mrs. Haller in "Stranger," the inevitable Pauline in "Lady of Lyons," etc. To Miss Coombs' Juliet, Miss Alice Grey of the stock company played Romeo.

Miss Coombs made her final appearance on December 5th, and Miss Joey Gougenheim, comedian, and burlesque actress, appeared on December 6th. Her first roles were Peg Woffington in the piece of that name and as Prime Rudolph in the burlesque of "Cinderella." Subsequent parts included Mrs. Oakley in "Jealous Wife," Constance in "Love Chase," Nell Gwynne in "Court and Stage," and Hester in "The Unequal Match." According

1. Ibid., November 20 through December 4, 1859.
2. Ibid., December 6 through December 17, 1859.
to the Daily Advertiser, Joey won "golden opinions by her beauty, vivacity, and dramatic talent." ¹

The next week Barry Sullivan began a successful engagement in "Hamlet." Other plays he acted were "Richelieu," "Macbeth," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Merchant of Venice," "Richard III," "Othello," "King Lear," and "Hamlet" again. ²

At Raymond's benefit on January 2nd, E. A. Sothern "of the Varieties Theatre, New Orleans, by permission of John E. Owens," appeared as Lord Dundreary in "Our American Cousin." The bill was concluded with a new farce written by a Mobilian called "Married to a Blue Stocking." ³ During the engagement of Collins, which followed immediately, this piece was repeated several times.

Collins' engagement was a short one, he being succeeded after five nights by James R. Anderson and Miss Agnes Ellsworth. These two appeared together in the usual standard plays: "Macbeth," "Ingomar," "Hamlet" (twice), "Richard III," "The Robbers" (twice), "Lady of Lyons," and Anderson's own "Cloud and Sunshine" (twice). On his benefit bill, Anderson played Falstaff in "Merry

¹. Ibid., December 17, 1859.
². Ibid., December 18 through December 30, 1859.
³. Ibid., January 1, 1860.
"Wives of Windsor" for the first time. This performance attracted the fullest house of the season; even all the standing room was taken.

On January 24th Edwin Booth began his engagement in "Hamlet" following this with "Romeo and Juliet" and "Othello." As if the attraction of Booth were not great enough, H. F. Jacobs, a banjoist, was engaged to play on his fourth program, for which Booth essayed Sir Giles Overreach. Subsequent plays included "Richard III" (twice), "Richelieu" (three times), "Lady of Lyons," "King Lear," "Othello" (this time as Iago), "Macbeth," "Hamlet" again, "Marble Heart" (twice), "Iron Chest," and "Don Caesar de Bazan." For the benefit of J. H. Calder, Booth appeared in "Apostate" and "Katherine and Petruchio." His engagement proved to be the most profitable one of the season to the management.

For the benefit of H. B. Phillips, the new drama, "Dot," or "Cricket on the Hearth" was given for the first time in Mobile. It met with success and was repeated for five nights and then given occasionally during the remainder of the season.

1. Ibid., January 8 through January 21, 1860.
2. Ibid., January 24 through February 12, 1860.
3. Ibid., February 14, 1860.
4. Ibid., February 15, 1860.
Mrs. Emma Waller, assisted by her husband, Wilmarth Waller, were the last stars to ever visit the old Royal Street Theatre. After appearing as Meg Merrilies in "Guy Mannering," Mrs. Waller played Iago to her husband's Othello. Together they acted "Duchess of Malfi" (three times), "Bertram," "Pizarro," "Patrician's Daughter," "School for Scandal," and "Perfection."  

On Monday, March 12th a complimentary benefit was given to Duffield by the company and citizens of the town. John E. Owens, comedian and manager of the Varieties, New Orleans, volunteered and played Joshua Butterly in "The Victims" and Solon Shingle in "People's Lawyer."

At about four o'clock on Tuesday morning the theatre was destroyed by the largest fire that Mobile had seen in many years. Property valued at more than $250,000 was eaten up by the flames.

The fire was first seen to be issuing from the kitchen in the rear of W. H. Dunn's barroom, opposite the theatre. After devouring the livery stable of the Slatter estate and a cotton warehouse, the fire was spread by a strong northerly breeze to the building occupied by Toulmin, Vorhees and Company, and thence to the theatre.  

1. Ibid., February 23 through March 7, 1860.  
2. Ibid., March 14, 1860.
Duffield suffered a loss estimated at $2,000; the scenery, properties, wardrobe, mechanics were entirely destroyed. The building itself, owned by the Slatter estate, was partially covered by insurance. ¹

But fire never seemed to daunt Mobile managers. On March 17th we read that Duffield had leased the Amphitheatre, an establishment which had been catering mostly to circuses and variety entertainment. ² He evidently dispatched his dramatic troupe elsewhere, for at the Amphitheatre he engaged in rapid succession the Ravels, ³ the Parodi Grand Italian Opera Company, ⁴ and Wells and Long's Southern Minstrels and Burlesque Opera Troupe. ⁵

Little time was lost in making plans for a new theatre. On May 29th we read that "a greater portion of the necessary money has been subscribed, and drafts for the future edifice have been completed by James H. Hutchisson, under the supervision of Duffield." ⁶

From the Daily Advertiser we learn detailed plans of the building:

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1. Ibid., March 14, 1860.
2. Ibid., March 17, 1860.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., April 5, 1860.
5. Ibid., April 23, 1860.
6. Ibid., May 29, 1860.
"...It is planned to add another story, twenty feet high, on to the walls of the Ampitheatre, which, for strength and solidity, are not surpassed in this city, and to extend the interior in the rear for the purpose of constructing a capacious stage sufficient to meet all demands. The whole depth of the building will be divided into a parquette, first and second tiers, provided with four large entrances from openings on Royal Street. The first tier will communicate with a dressing room for ladies, and the club and other rooms of the establishment. The front elevation will be a plain but very handsome piece of architecture.

"On Conti Street, the basement, from Royal Street to the present entrance of the Mansion House, will be appropriated to shops, somewhat as at present, above will be a club room, and a ladies' refreshment room, to be entered from the dress circle... Room will be made for the stage by an addition in the rear of fifty by fifty-one feet in the clear, occupying the site of the present dining room of the Mansion House, and that portion of the Mansion House between the stage and Conti Street will be transformed into dressing rooms. The grade of the ground will furnish abundant room beneath the stage for all mechanical arrangements. The main entrance will be on Royal Street; that of the third tier on Conti. It will have a capacity to seat 1,683.

"Money necessary for the purchase of wardrobes, scenery, mechanism, etc., is yet lacking, but this will, we think, be made up among our merchants and hotel keepers...."

And so on this optimistic note -- the proposed erection of a new theatre -- we close our essay.

1. Ibid., May 29, 1860.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

We have attempted to chronicle in simple language, giving only the bare details in order to avoid lengthiness, the history of the theatre in Mobile between 1822 and 1860.

We should have liked to continue the study through the War between the States years, but the newspapers for this period are missing from the files of the Mobile Press Register. Miss Leila Aunspaugh, of the Mobile Public Library, Reference Department, believes these newspapers to be in Boston. It is hoped that they will be returned someday and that this work will be continued at least through the war period.

The files of the Mobile Press Register are almost complete from 1865 through 1940, and the University of Alabama library has copies of Mobile newspapers from 1869 through 1940. These papers probably hold a wealth of information on theatrical affairs; it is hoped that this also will soon be ferreted out and made available.

It is doubted that the theatre played as important a part in Mobile's social and cultural life in post-war as in pre-war years. However, from Craighead we
learn that with Tony Roig as lessee and Dr. Richard Lee Fearn as owner, the new theatre which was being planned in 1860, was opened, and that for sixty years "the theatrical history of Mobile centered around this 'Temple of Thespis.'"

We have seen theatres built and burned; billiard parlors, ballrooms, warehouses, and hospitals transformed into theatres. In spite of bad seasons, epidemics, fires, and deaths, the drama continued to flourish in Mobile during the period under consideration. Perhaps its thriving is attributable to the unquenchable thirst of cultivated Mobilians for the legitimate drama, and to the tirelessness and courage of the hardy pioneer managers who brought and maintained the drama in the West and South.

We have noted that audiences witnessed presentations by many of the brightest lights on the theatrical firmament. During the very early days of this history (during the 1820's and part of the 1830's), the "star system" was just becoming firmly established in this country, and very few stars played with the regular stock companies. The first important performer was Thomas A. Cooper, one of the first prominent stars in America.

During the 1830's stars became more numerous, and the names of Master Joseph Burke, James William Wallack, George "Yankee" Hill, Mr. and Mrs. George Barrett, Clara Fisher, James H. Hackett, Tyrone Power, "Jim Crow" Rice, James E. Murdoch, Charles Mason, Vincent de Camp, Henry J. Finn, the Barnes family, Mlle. Celeste, Augustus A. Addams, Ellen Tree, Edwin Forrest, and Junius Brutus Booth were added to the roster of famous personages who had graced the Mobile boards.

The 1840's brought the Chapman family, Joseph Jefferson III, Eliza Logan, Julia Dean, W. C. Macready, Henry Placide, Mrs. Anna Cora Mowatt, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Ellen Tree, Mr. and Mrs. James W. Wallack, Jr., F. S. Chanfrau, W. E. Burton, several opera companies, and saw the return of Hackett, Power, Wallack, Forrest, Booth, Murdoch, and Clara Fisher (Maeder).

The 1850's saw the presence in Mobile of the Heron family, Jean M. Davenport, Charlotte Cushman, Eliza Logan, Julia Bennett (Barrow), Lola Montes, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence, Madame Anna Thillon, the Bateman children, Agnes Robertson, Dion Boucicault, Hackett, Charles W. Couldock, Murdoch, Matilda Heron, Avonia Jones, Burton, the Marsh children, Edwin Booth, and several opera companies. The names of countless other actors and actresses could be given,
but the fame of many was only brief and passing, and they are not remembered today.

Surely with Tyrone Power, we can call Mobile "one of the most attractive spots...south of the Potomac," and, by burden of the record, we can properly pronounce this period of Mobile's theatrical history one of the most interesting in the annals of the American stage.
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