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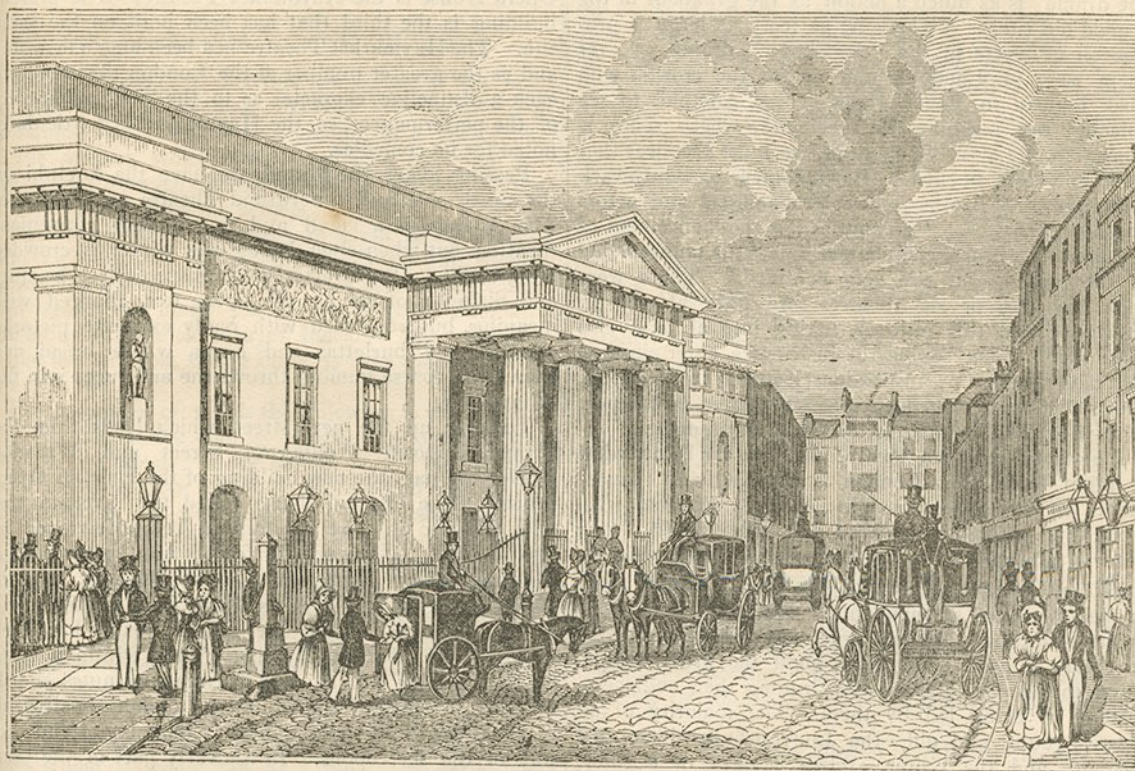
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A LOOKING-GLASS FOR LONDON.—No. XXVII.

AMUSEMENTS—THE THEATRES.



[Covent Garden Theatre.]

In a map prefixed to Maitland's London, representing the metropolis as it appeared "about the year 1560," there is no trace of a theatre, though we know that about twenty years afterwards there were three or four. But if there be no theatre, the map is not without evidence of what were public amusements. In those days, when strolling players were content to perform in the courtyard of an inn, their spectators looking down upon them from the old wooden balconies, rougher amusements had secured for themselves permanent habitations. Among the references in the map, is one to the cockpit; and conspicuous on the Surrey side of the Thames, behind the strip of houses known then as the notorious Bankside, are two round buildings, open at the top, and adorned with flags, under which are written "bull-baiting," and "bear-baiting."

There appears to have been a theatre in London in the year 1576—it was probably the first regular theatre of the metropolis. In that year also was the Blackfriars built, so famous from Shakspeare's connexion with it; and in the year following the Curtain in Shore-ditch, in which Ben Jonson performed. These were speedily followed by others, which, as they were mostly small wooden structures, were easily thrown up, and as easily consumed by the slightest touch of fire. A view of the Globe Theatre at Bankside is given in No. 56 of the 'Penny Magazine.'

While the theatre was undergoing various mutations—now seemingly established by Shakspeare and his colleagues, then driven into obscurity by the stern spirit

of religious zeal; again patronised, and made a nest of profligacy, and from that time gradually but slowly elevated—the great bulk of the people remained attached to their rough and out-of-door amusements. During the last century bear-baiting and bull-baiting continued to attract crowded audiences, and boasted of the patronage of "persons of quality;" the self-styled "noble art of self-defence," not with fists merely, but with sharp slashing swords, drew females to witness its brutal exhibitions; and even females publicly advertised boxing matches, with all the swagger of bullies. The people did go to the theatre; they filled the galleries, disturbed the performances, and dictated to the actors. If they chose to indulge in the horse-play of stopping the coaches and sedans conveying masqueraders to their amusements, and ordering them to let down their masks, that they might see who they were, nobody thought of resisting the joke—even rough-spun Johnson was glad to escape into antithesis, and to exclaim, that "their insolence in peace was their bravery in war."

The bear-gardens and cock-pits have disappeared, and in their stead are zoological gardens; the fairs of London have been blotted out, one by one, except Bartholomew Fair, which still annually, with its booths, puppets, crowds, and gilt gingerbread, keeps Smithfield cattle-market in countenance; but old age and decay are stamped on it. Crowds do not rush now, as they did a few years ago, to the "Fives Court," or to some field adjoining London, to see men shake hands, and then fall to pounding each other. Were Shakspeare

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now to walk into one of our gas-lit theatres, he might fancy that machinist, property-man, and painter were really inspired by "a muse of fire;" and if they had not risen, were at least rising "into the highest heaven of invention." Little occasion, he might think, is there, now-a-days, to compare the theatre to a "wooden O," or to apologise for the attempt to represent the contentions of two mighty kingdoms within its limited compass. True, he might ask, is the change an improvement, or only an alteration? Is not the eye too often filled at the expense of the understanding? But the change is a very great improvement. The "decline of the drama" is as much a fiction as the grandeur of the "good old times." There is, at least, as large a proportion of lovers of the "legitimate" drama as ever there were in London; and as for the crowds who flock nightly to Drury Lane or the Adelphi, to see splendid but meaningless spectacles, where sense is almost totally absorbed in sight, we must recollect that their ancestors flocked to Bartholomew or Southwark fairs, and filled booths erected by managers and actors of patent theatres. Malcolm, at the commencement of the present century, complained that "the amusements of the present day are very confined." There were then but five or six theatres—we have at present eighteen; and this number, taking into account also the numerous *new* sources of instructive entertainment that have sprung up—institutions, lectures, and libraries, shows that there is no decline of attachment on the part of the people of London to theatrical amusements.

One reason why the theatre is still so far below what it might be is, that London is supplied with amusements on the same principle that it is supplied with food; but without producing the same result. Our natural tastes and appetites lead us to choose what we think best, and we secure a supply by the demand; but in theatricals, as in many other matters, our taste requires education. All managers are naturally anxious to realise a profit; few dare, amid the great competition, to risk the experiment of leading their audiences, instead of being led by them. The majority of all classes, young and old—the London-born citizen, the resident, and the visitor,—relish a sight or a show, enjoy a night at the Opera or the play, and are found willing, according to their means, to pay a guinea a head for admission to a morning concert, or a sixpence in the evening to hear comic songs sung in the great room of a tavern. If the head of the family has outlived the theatrical enthusiasm of his earlier days, and, immersed in business, cares little for sights that, like a sky-rocket, dazzle the eye a moment, and then go out in darkness, still there are younger people to gratify. To dress for the boxes is itself a pleasure; to be able, after standing at the counter, or leaning over the desk all day, to cross one or two streets, and make one in a crowded pit, is an enjoyment which none but a London citizen can relish with so keen, and yet so cool and business-like, a zest. That there is a vast improvement in the habits of London play-goers, is evident from the fact, that the galleries no longer thunder their displeasure or applause in the same authoritative and tremendous manner as of old. Let us hope that the improvement will become every day more manifest, and that the great bulk of the people, despising cant phrases and unmeaning songs, will make even their amusements subservient to the nobler purpose of their instruction.

The Italian Opera was established in London about the commencement of last century. It had for a considerable time but a struggling kind of existence, but from the period of Handel's management became a permanent portion of London amusements. When the original house was erected by Sir John Vanbrugh, it stood almost in the fields. That house was destroyed

by fire in 1789, and the present building was soon after erected: but the exterior colonnade, &c., was not added till 1818—20. The Opera House, occupying the corner of the Haymarket and Pall Mall, was the most westerly theatre of London until the erection, about two years ago, of Mr. Braham's handsome theatre in King Street, between St. James's Square and St. James's Street. Almost every reader is aware that the Italian Opera House is the chief resort of the fashionable world of London; the admission to the gallery is five shillings, and half-a-guinea to the pit.

On the opposite side of the Haymarket from the Opera House is the Haymarket Theatre. The present building is the third that has been built on the same site. The Haymarket Theatre has been long a favorite; and as the greater number of the London theatres have each a distinctive character as to the kind and quality of the performances, so the Haymarket is particularly noted for its comedies.

Passing along the Strand, we have the Adelphi on the north side and the Strand Theatre on the south. The Adelphi is a small and not a very convenient theatre; but when open during the winter is crowded every night. Its characteristics are spectacles, the story and dialogue of which are never over-charged with meaning, but combined with really exquisite pictorial scenery, and burlettas and farces whose broad and sometimes coarse humour throws the audiences into fits of laughter.

Turning up the new street which leads from the Strand, opposite Wellington Street and Waterloo Bridge, we pass the new building of the English Opera House. The original house called the Lyceum met with the fate of most theatres, in being destroyed by fire, in 1829. Not very far from it are the two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden; and in Wych Street, which continues Drury Lane to the Strand, is the Olympic, which, for several years, has been managed by Madame Vestris. Thus within a space which might be walked over in twenty minutes or half an hour, are nine of the eighteen London theatres, all of them the largest or the most fashionably attended of any in the metropolis. In the early part of the year, when they are nearly all open at the same time, the crowd and bustle, the blaze of light from open shops, the rattling of carriages and cabriolets, make twelve o'clock at night in this quarter of London appear as animated as twelve or three o'clock in the "city" during the day.

In Shakspeare's time a cockpit in Drury Lane was turned into a theatre, and termed the Phoenix. Ever since, there has been a theatre hereabout; and though the present building does not occupy the site of the original one, still Drury Lane Theatre may be considered as the oldest of existing theatres in London. Covent Garden Theatre was not built till 1733. Both theatres have been repeatedly destroyed by fire: the last time within a year of each other—in 1808 and 1809. The present buildings are therefore of nearly the same age. They are large and magnificent structures. Built under the idea that their patents would secure them nearly a monopoly of metropolitan theatrical amusements, the houses can hold immense numbers; but their size, now that so many smaller, and therefore more comfortable, theatres have been built, is a decided drawback to their permanent success.

On the Surrey side of the Thames there are three theatres, one of them the well-known amphitheatre, or circus, called Astley's. Again, on the east side of London, in Middlesex, there are three; and on the north-west, two—one of them, Sadler's Wells, the oldest minor theatre of London. It originated in a music-room, connected with a mineral spring, at one time in great repute, and which was called the Islington Spa,

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or New Tunbridge Wells. The theatre of Sadler's Wells was formerly very celebrated and much frequented: being close to the reservoir of the New River Water Company, the audience were delighted with real aquatic exhibitions. The house has now fallen into comparative disrepute.

The reader will find a list of the London theatres in the 'British Almanac,' with particulars respecting their performances and times of opening and closing. The other amusements of London will be described in a subsequent paper.

ACCOUNT OF A YOUNG CUCKOO.

Of all the birds that visit this island, one of the most remarkable is the cuckoo. So very little is known of its habits, that the following account of a young bird of the species, which was reared in a cage for five weeks, may perhaps add somewhat to the information already possessed on the subject.

The young cuckoo is totally different in appearance from the full-grown bird; being chiefly of a dark greyish brown, the feathers barred with rust colour, and tipped with white: the under part of the body is white, with numerous transverse bars of black.* The plumage, unlike that of most young birds, is very thick, smooth, and close set.

The specimen, of which the following is an account, was brought to the door by a labouring boy who had found it in a meadow at the end of July. It was then about three weeks or a month old, and had just begun to fly a little. It was unable to feed itself, but ate greedily out of the hand, and had an immense appetite, which it seemed impossible to satisfy. For some days it was fed entirely on raw meat, and soaked bread, and hempseed; but its relish for this diet soon diminished, and it was then supplied with insects of various kinds, which were evidently its natural food. In less than a week from the time it was caught, it learnt to pick for itself, as well as to fly readily. Of all insects it seemed to prefer gnats and grasshoppers, especially the latter, which it would kill at a blow, and eat at one mouthful, without rejecting any part. Next to these it liked moths, butterflies, and caterpillars, of every species indifferently. The cabbage-caterpillar, from the facility of procuring it, was its staple-food; of these it used to eat about 200 full-grown ones in a day. The caterpillar of the buff-tip moth (*Pygæra bucephala*), and the downy green caterpillar which feeds on the mignonette, were also given to it sometimes: the latter was perhaps its favourite food. Spiders and lady-birds it devoured greedily, and occasionally wasps and flies, though apparently without much relish. It ate large quantities of sand. From its manner of darting towards its food as it grew older, and tearing it from the hand with out-spread wings, there can be no doubt that in its natural state it finds its prey on the wing as well as when stationary.

It not only had perfect command of itself on the perch and on the wing (for it had a powerful and graceful flight), but also climbed with great facility and swiftness, running dexterously up the wires of its cage. It hopped too, but not well.

At first it had two cries; one a gentle chirp, uttered incessantly when hungry, at the same time that it vehemently shook one wing (never both), so as to impart a tremulous motion to the body: the other a continued low tremulous sound, uttered while taking its food. As it grew older, it gradually discontinued this

* See 'Faculties of Birds,' Library of Entertaining Knowledge, p. 357. The plate there given is very like it, except that the young cuckoo rarely sits with its neck so upright and stretched out.

latter cry, and the first became much more loud and hoarse.

Notwithstanding the supposed stupidity of the cuckoo, which is called in Scotland "gowk," or fool, this young bird showed much intelligence and observation, and was a most amusing pet. From the first it seemed to notice everything, and was as meddlesome and fond of picking as a pie. It delighted in biting the fingers of persons who came near it; in pulling pins out of a pincushion, and in hammering at any stuffed bird which was shown to it. No creature could be more fearless and familiar. For the first fortnight it was allowed to have the range of a room during the greater part of the day; and though it was perfectly able to fly, it would sit up for hours by the side of its owner, perched on the handle of a basket, and would allow itself to be stroked, caressed, taken up, and carried about on the finger. It was impossible to drive it; if a stick were presented to it, the cuckoo would fly at it with outspread wings and attack it vigorously.

After the first fortnight it was removed from the house, and placed in a large cage out of doors, with a pair of Barbary doves. From this time a singular change took place in the creature's disposition. All gentleness and quietness of demeanour vanished: it instantly became as fierce and irritable as any young bird of prey. It did not molest the doves, except that it kept them at a distance for some time, and would strike them with his wing, and peck them sharply, if they attempted to approach him, or examine his food. Latterly they became very good friends, and would even plume each other. But it was to the human race that it showed the most dislike. If any one came near the cage, the cuckoo would raise his wings, bristle up the feathers of its head, and glare ferociously; if a finger was shown to it, it would fly at it, scream, hiss, flap its wings, and bite very hard. At the same time the expression of its face visibly altered, and it looked ill-temper personified; in short it gave every indication of being by nature a ravenous, powerful, pugnacious bird.

For five weeks the cuckoo continued healthy and flourishing, and hopes were entertained that, with care, it might be reared through the winter. This interesting experiment has generally failed, and in this instance it was unsuccessful. The cage in which it was kept was always left out of doors all night during August without the bird's receiving any injury from the exposure, and the removing it under cover was delayed a little too long; the last night of August was very cold, and the cuckoo died next day in consequence. At the time of its death it measured eighteen inches in length, not having attained either its full size or full plumage; the latter it does not acquire till the third year.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEETH.

(From the 'Philosophy of Health,' by Dr. Southwood Smith.)

[Concluded from No. 364.]

PROVISION having been thus made for the organization of the tooth, for the support of its vitality, and for its connexion with the living system, over all that portion of it which is above the gum, and which constitutes the essential part of the instrument, there is poured a dense, hard, inorganic, insensible, all but indestructible, substance, termed enamel (fig. CLIX. 2); a substance inorganic, composed of earthy salts, principally phosphate of lime with a slight trace of animal matter; a substance of exceeding density, of a milky-white colour, semi-transparent, and consisting of minute fibrous crystals. The manner in which this inorganic matter is arranged about the body of the tooth is worthy of notice. The crystals are disposed in radii springing from the centre