

**TRICKS OF THE TIME; OR, "BILL STEALERS  
BEWARE." A COMEDY, IN FIVE ACTS;  
NAPOLEON'S FIRST LOVE, OR, THE BLUE BEAR  
OF NANGIS: AN HISTORICAL COMIC DRAMA,  
IN TWO ACTS; THE ADVOCATE OF DURANGO,  
OR THE AVENGING SPIRIT, A ROMANTIC  
DOMESTIC DRAMA, IN FOUR ACTS**

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Tricks of the Time; Or, "Bill Stealers Beware." A Comedy, in Five Acts; Napoleon's First Love, or, the Blue Bear of Nangis: an Historical Comic Drama, in Two Acts; The Advocate of Durango, or the Avenging Spirit, a Romantic Domestic Drama, in Four Acts by John Wynne

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**JOHN WYNNE**

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"THE LESS THEY DESERVE, THE MORE MERIT IS IN YOUR BOUNTY."

SHAKESPEARE.

Brighton, Jan. 25, 1855.

MY DEAR WALLACK,

I have ventured to dedicate these plays to you, not from any idea that they would prove at all worthy of the honour of having your name associated with them, but from the selfish wish that they should not be ushered into the hard world of criticism without the countenance of a tried friend.

The grateful recollection of many happy hours passed in your society, the valued counsel and assistance which you have often given me in my literary labours; but, above all, the kind encouragement with which you have resuscitated the despairing energies of an unsuccessful author, have "screwed my courage to the sticking place," and emboldened me to take this liberty with our friendship and your name!

You may naturally ask why none of these plays have been acted? Alas! thereby hangs a tale! In your mind, I know that the test of merit is *not* "failure and success!" but with the generality of mankind it is. All these plays have been rejected—I confess it—at the risk of losing many a reader. The Comedy was rejected as too wild,—the Drama as too tame,—the plot of one play was too intricate; in another, the dialogue was too simple. One manager declared the piece good, but not adapted to "his" theatre. Another also thought

very well of the play, but begged to know who was to act Napoleon? Some managers acted like gentlemen, and were polite even in their refusals: others, I regret to say, acted in quite a contrary manner, and seemed to regard the proffer of a play as an insult, and treated the profferer with silent contempt!

I am, as you are aware, a bit of a philosopher, and shall borrow D'Israeli's famous expression, when he was floored in his first speech in the House of Commons—"the time will come when you shall listen to me!" The sooner that time arrives the better for the managers, for I intend "*to write till it does.*"

If this penalty for their cruelty obtain me not a little consideration, they will prove themselves Jobs indeed! I am determined to succeed, and there shall be nothing but one perpetual managerial cry of

"Monsieur Touson come again!"

till I do. Oh, ye managers, be warned!

The part of "The Count" in "Napoleon (*not* the Third's) "First Love," was, I need hardly tell you, written for your uncle—that last of all the Romans—at least in this line of character; whose absence from England is only to be tolerated by his friends on account of that great improvement in his health, which (I thank God) a residence in America has secured to him! May he live a thousand years. If he will perform the "Count" in his own beautiful Transatlantic Theatre, I will cross the water to see him! Need I say more?

The part of "Leyva" was written for yourself, and you were once kind enough to say that you thought you could make something of it—come back to us, and try. The drama is not

in a very flourishing state here just now; all its true friends should rally round the tattered banners of "The Stage."

I do not know whether you are properly informed, on your side of the Atlantic Ocean, as to what has occurred here in the theatrical way since you left us; I hope, therefore, that you will not consider it impertinent in me if I conclude this letter with a short account of these interesting matters. At one theatre, the long-bottled Comedy of "Richelieu in Love" has been condemned by *The Times* as a "Theatrical Spec-tacle," so that we cannot say much for our comedies! At another, much scandal has been caused by an attempt to make a jest of the gallows; but as Calcraft could not act the part—owing to his time being so much occupied—it turned out a failure; though I believe the farci-tragical struggles of the *comical* convict were among the best strokes of dramatic art.

"Jack Sheppard" has had another long run—there not having been so many burglaries as usual, lately. I suppose the manager thought the heroes of the jenny were getting out of practice!

We have had a grand shipwreck done to admiration on the stage—the chain cables being, however, more natural, thanks to the Scene-painter, than "The Chain of Events."

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been performed everywhere, and affords another instance, if one were necessary, of the fact, that a good book generally makes a bad play!

In a play at the Princess's, we have been again set a-gaping by the appearance of that well-known animal—that green-eyed monster—the Vampire; who sucks a young virgin's life-blood out of her once every hundred years, just to keep himself warm and comfortable for the ensuing century. Let us hope that none of our friends' daughters may fall beneath



his relentless fangs at the next fatal and regularly returning cycle!

We have had plays, I had almost said "works," spun out to eight extensive acts, and we have seen a sort of pemicandrama in which the transactions of three hundred years were compressed into three short acts!

"Masks and Faces" has had a deserved success, and the world now knows "everything" about a person it never even heard of before—Peg Woffington.

Douglas Jerrold, as witty as ever, has become a favourite at Court, and lost his "acidity," but in his last play, "St. Cupid," he is declared by *The Times* to have forgotten—"the plot!"

Just now there is a grand skirmish going on about press-orders on the one hand, and box-keepers' extortions on the other. It is curious that so much fuss should be made about the theatres, just when they are at the lowest ebb of public favour; and this may remind you of the Great Pale-Ale controversy, the puff-pousoous, and the learned Liebig. I fear, however, that the theatres will be empty, if orders are entirely excluded.

Such, my dear Wallack, is the present lamentable state of things—I entreat you then to return to us—come and convince the public that the present taste is a false one—and that to gratify the eye without instructing the mind is a gross prostitution of the dramatic art. We have had senseless glare and glitter enough for one century; impossible and improbable horrors enough for two. Come, then, and "on a clear stage with no favour," convince the English public once again that they have minds to appreciate the beautiful plays of Shakspeare, Bulwer, and Knowles, and hands to

applaud those whose end, like yours, "is to hold the mirror  
 " up to Nature—to show Virtue her own feature—scorn her  
 " own image, and the very age and body of The Time, his  
 " form, and pressure."

With every good wish for your happiness and success,

I am,

Yours, faithfully,

JOHN WYNNE.

J. W. WALLACK, Esq.,  
 PHILADELPHIA,  
 UNITED STATES.

*P.S.*—I am engaged in a Drama, which will cut Sardanapalus out completely, as the Manager who has accepted the Play has agreed to give the Scene-painters, those modern Dramatists, a prodigious opportunity of distinguishing themselves by raising his Theatre *three more stories*, in order to give grand and culminating effect to a scene on *the top of the Tower of Babel!*

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