

**WIT AND HUMOR OF THE STAGE;  
A COLLECTION FROM VARIOUS  
SOURCES CLASIFIED UNDER  
APPROPRIATE SUBJECT  
HEADINGS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649227839

Wit and humor of the stage; a collection from various sources clasified under appropriate subject headings by Henry Frederic Reddall

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**HENRY FREDERIC REDDALL**

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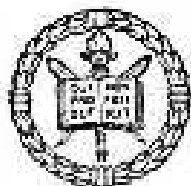


JOSEPH JEFFERSON

# Wit and Humor Of the Stage



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PHILADELPHIA  
GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO.  
PUBLISHERS

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GEORGE W. JACOBS & COMPANY  
*Published, July, 1909.*

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## *Prologue*

SINCE all the world's a stage, and men and women merely puppets thereon, playing their mimic parts,—*vide* a certain great dramatist named William Shakespeare,—it follows that there should be an audience and readers for a collection of humoresques culled from the sayings and doings of plays and players, for in no other age has the theatre filled so large a canvas in the eye of the public as now.

The actor, of either gender, apparently, cannot escape from the lime-light, whether on or off the stage. His—or her—sayings and doings, professional or private, are minutely chronicled and avidly read by the dear public, and every performer of any prominence really plays to a far wider audience than he reaches across the footlights.

By no means all the funny sayings, doings, and happenings in stage-land occur in the course of regular dramatic presentations, yet some of the most ludicrous and unforeseen *contritemps* pass unnoticed by the onlookers; many a side-splitting quip and jest, and a good deal of what

is technically known as "guying," never "gets across."

From the days of the strolling player to the present, the noble guild of mummers has perforce been possessed of an inexhaustibly happy unconcern and a very pretty wit; there is no wonder, then, that as a class actors and actresses, whether at work or at play, should furnish a goodly literature of retort, *bon mot*, or witty impromptu.

The profession, too, is full of kaleidoscopic changes, of rapid transitions from grave to gay, of startling and surprising mutations of fortune; hence it is no wonder that the actor comes to regard the greater drama which we call life as more or less of a jest and to take his cue accordingly.

In the following pages some attempt has been made to cull the best examples of stage wit and humor,—not, of course, by way of quotation from comedy or burlesque, but by collating the actual humorous sayings and doings of theatre folk, by narrating examples of ludicrous happenings here and there, practical jokes, witty stories, and personal anecdotes.

Effort has been made to avoid the trite, the hackneyed, and those veteran war-horses of stage humor that have done duty since the days