OPENING OF THE ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE.

Under the most happy auspices as regards the brilliance and enthusiasm of the audience, and the celebrity of the principal actors of the evening, Messrs Howard & Wyndham last night opened their new theatre in Edinburgh for the performance of "Much Ado about Nothing" by the distinguished company of the London Lyceum Theatre. Not only was the large building completely filled, but the street in front was occupied throughout the opening of the doors till after the very late conclusion of the performance by a considerable crowd who seemed to take as much interest in contemplating the frontage, which was illuminated by the electric light. Owing, as was afterwards explained by Mr Irving in a speech delivered in the hour in the day of an important official, the performance was somewhat late of commencing, and the interval between the acts were prolonged to a somewhat trying extent. The hitches in the stage management of the performance, however, were few and serious or more than are frequently to be witnessed at ordinary first night performances; and when, at half-past eleven, when the curtain had fallen amid loud cheers, there was thrust upon the audience the luxury of a delivery of the national anthem by the orchestra and a mixed body of performers on the stage, it was submitted to with decorum even by the gallery, which had at times been rather noisy during the evening. The universal opinion in regard to the building appeared to be that Mr Phipps had constructed a commodious and perfect auditorium house, the only noticeable grounds for criticism being such as can in time be removed, and may as well, therefore, be mentioned at once —that is, a want of harmony in the colour scheme, and a hardness in the painting of the sacdrop scene after Alma Tadema. These drawback centres were viewed insistently, and when Mr Howard came forward to deliver the opening address, in which he was shortly joined by Mr Wyndham, the plaudits of the audience were cordial in the extreme. The following is the managers' address, which has been composed by a gentleman of Edinburgh :—

The spell is wrought—no chasing is all spent—
Now to the winter of my discontent
Made glorious summer—by the sunshine here.
Of faces well-remembered, now more dear. (Cheers.)
Welcome, kind friends; my heart is brimming o'er,
For to your smiles and laughter, as of yore,
I lend the words that grace the good old song—(cheers)—
"True, true is the liking that likes for long!"
There's something good in everything that's old,
And old acquaintance never can grow cold. (Cheers.)
Says Shakspeare, in his keen and witty way,
Who asked "What's in a name?"—To say him nay
Were rude; but in a loved and honoured name
There's—a hostage 'tis to fame—
And in its own dearly melody is charm
To keep traditions in our heart more warm.
Thus I would now magic over Shakspeare's line,
And with the wit that genius can devise
Draw upwards before a world's proud eyes. (Cheers.)
"What's in a name?" The Lyceum lives for aye,
For 'neath its shade art grew to deathless day,
Tended, when fading from the ungrateful light,
Between bright souls we gladly greet to-night. (Cheers.)
This is the prologue to the chapter new
Of our own fortunes; and the aim is true,
To flood with rosier colours all our past,
To picture out fresh joys to come more fast,
A brighter sunshine o'er our footfalls stage
That haunts its thousand hours—a warmer page
Is thronged with memories, braver grown with years,
Nor tarnished by the rust of selfish fears.
Then, with generous fire approve
To feed the sacred flame. Proud of our prize,
Won in the fight before your very eyes,
A braver garland still we'd fain discover—
Our own endeavours are the green, the rose
Of Wyndham—Howard—while fragrance-giving eglantine
For old acquaintance' sake; with trophies fine
Of them, I see a vista spreading bright
Down through the Future's forest, and the light
Of love to your success. Bring we here
Loved of two worlds, with Ellen Terry, dear
Of every painting heart—(cheers)—Rode soon will wield
His mirthful wand, to which all sorrows yield. (cheers)—
While Clark, as *Wellington de Boots* will come,
To prove himself the Poole of Vaudevilleon,
And merrier than of olde Ristori, too,
Will on these boards make us for ever rue
Macbeth's foul deed; anon Miss Wallis's sweet
And gracious in her presence we shall greet—(cheers)
While Terriss will be seen in New-Year's gift,
A new-born play, that will his name uplift
To honours fresh; again in Pantomime
Old Pantomime will dance before your eyes,
Young life me mind his merry fits
From woman's lips and woman's happier wits—
All Mrs Howard's good chastising wit (yes
Red Riding Hood's immortal history. (Cheers.)
At this point Mr Wyndham stepped on. Advancing, he addressed Mr Howard—
As Pistoff says—" Fine words, brave words," my friend!
And to their fulness can I nothing lend
(To audience)—Staring in this—I am my father'son. (Cheers.)
If rugged Time from out your hearts has won
The treasures of the Past, for me 'tis full
Of dreams and memories sweet; yours was the school
Where first I strutted on the rostic scene—
Your boards, we say, was that they have been
And are not!—"Auld lang syne" is here to-night;
The sunshine of the olden days is bright
Upon our hearts as when my father played—(cheers)
I fondly hope we have not failed to-day—
They'll prove to us a never-failing guide
Until your next—(cheers)

Mr Howard then continued—

Our hearts are wide,
And, like our pockets, capable of your praise—laughter and cheers)—
Which to entice this merry plan we've wove.
Merry is yours, ye critics, when your wrath
Flashes its lightning on the hapless wight;
Be to us tutors kind, ere when severe,
And may your judgments quicken, never rest!
Thus with your cheers and laughter we'll begin,
In loving answer to our limping rhymes,
We crave for your indulgence, not for your cares,
Forbear when we have trespassed; we'll endure
Our very ills and faults in your applause.
In perfect music with your own; everything
Smiles on us now, and we can only pray
Success all the fortunes in Dame Fortune's face,
That *Lyceum* may be ever worthy of your love,
For what is best—of wit, success and fame!—(Cheers.)

On the conclusion of the address a fresh burst of loud applause was evoked by the appearance of Mrs Howard, to whom several bouquets were thrown. Mr Dangerfield afterwards appeared in answer to loud calls, and further applause followed Mr Howard on his withdrawal. After "God Save the Queen" had been sung at the close of the performance, Mr Phipps was led forward by Mr Howard, amid the cheers of the audience. Prolonged cheers for Mr Irving induced that gentleman to come forward, but the audience were about to disperse, and make the following short speech :

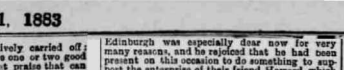
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I am sure you believe me when I say to you that I am very glad to be back with you once more. (Cheers.) I remember addressing you on an event which occurred some 21 years ago in Edinburgh, and in which I had a share. (Cheers.) I refer to the opening of your old Theatre-Royal—a theatre so associated with the traditions of the drama in the North, and always such a successful one, and I am sure you will all congratulate my friend Howard and Mr Wyndham on the success they, of course, ladies and gentlemen, we are very much indebted to you for your kind reception to-night. We have exhibited that, especially in the gallery, in a most remarkable manner—(laughter)—knowing, as I am sure you do, the difficulties we have had to contend with. (Laughter.) I am sure, after that consideration towards us. You will be sorry to hear that our discomforts a little increased at the last moment by the head of one of the departments—and I think it is a fair joke to make it—that—(laughter)—at the last hour of need at four o'clock; therefore we lost a great deal of assistance which we had counted upon. But, gentlemen, theatre as that which Mr Phipps has constructed—with an audience such as Edinburgh can muster in it, and with a play such as Edinburgh is, to dwell in, I am quite sure of the future of these two gentlemen. I rejoice to say that here our old friend Robert Wyndham's son is one of them—(cheers)—and I am glad to think that Mr Howard has earned fellow-worker as a partner. I am quite sure that his heart must still freely both with wind and stream. (Loud cheers.)

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING."

Critically considered, last night's performance by the Lyceum company raised some questions in regard to the appreciation of the British drama which are not to be easily answered. It is probable that a cultured foreigner witnessing it would experience some surprise—which some native theatre-goers would perhaps share with him—at the character of the play in which Mr Irving and Miss Terry have scored two of their greatest pecuniary successes, and the pronouncement of which they attracted such an audience to crowded the new Edinburgh theatre last night. "Much Ado About Nothing," with its gross medieval motive and its flimsy construction, is surely not one of the least carefully considered of Shakespeare's comedies. Even if all were granted that is claimed for Beatrice as a comedy character, the faults of the play remain grievously conspicuous, and the story can hardly fail to jar on educated spectators at least as much as it compels their interest. Perhaps after all the truest proper test lovers of Shakespeare ,on thus seeing how potent is the attraction of his name, would be one of gratitude ; but it may be doubted whether those who go to see "Much Ado about Nothing," by way of enjoying Shakespeare are likely to have a due appreciation of the dramatist's real greatness. There must, it is clear, be something more than mere homage to Shakespeare in the rage for the latest Lyceum production. The explanation may seem, however, the critic is compelled to say that the attraction cannot well be the performance of Mr Irving. His Benedick may have much to do with it; but his Benedick, as played last night at least, can scarcely add to his reputation. Looking back on the pieces called forth by his first appearance in the part, one is forced to accept the statement in Mr Archer's newly-published criticism that Irving at rare intervals gives a performance in which he rises above his own faults, speaking clearly and naturally, and bearing himself with ease and grace. But last night he did none of these things. His stereotyped elocution may sometimes have been worse, but it can rarely have been so in level situations. Almost the only moments of real eloquence and a whole was that lately pointed out by Mr Arnold—its air of "distinction"—that is, the kind of impressiveness which always attaches to Irving's personality. The pieces in which he realised the situation as a good actor should, might be counted on the fingers of one hand. He was fairly natural in manner in the opening scene; his look and laugh when Beatrice leaves him after inviting him to dinner were felicitous; the challenge scene was effectively carried off; and in the last scene there were one or two good touches in that in the time when praise is said can be given. Many speeches were delivered in a grim fashion entirely unsuited to the character, and many more in an intonation and with an expression as faulty as the pronunciation, which is saying a good deal; while the actor's bearing was most of the time as much at variance with the details of the impersonation that it is not worth while to lay any special stress on a misinterpretation of the text into which it led him, such as in the boasting scene. When Don Pedro says that the listening Benedick "hath a contemptible spirit," meaning that he is ignorant of it, the audience who ought to know the Shakspearean vocabulary better, takes the word in the modern sense, and thinks the line a reflection on Mr Irving. The phrase which is not to be found in the text. That, as it happens, is but a trifling flaw relatively to the whole, but it is significant. What is thus disappointing as Benedick, Miss Ellen Terry more than realises all expectations as Beatrice; and this is certainly a main element in the explanation of the success of the production. Miss Terry is successful just where Mr Irving seems short. Nothing could be more charming than her ease of manner and perfection of *naiveté* in every sort of situation. Here is perhaps not strictly the Beatrice of Shakspeare's text, for she delivers as speaking more rapidly than Miss Terry, but it is a most delightful creation. If she does not utter every line with the proper intention there is certainly nothing but praise to be given to her playing in all other respects. In every scene, but especially in the garden scene, her by-play is admirably conceived ; and her expression of tender feeling in several places—as on hearing of Hero's innocence, and in the scene parting him—may almost be said to surpass anything she has hitherto done of the kind. Beside her love-making Mr Irving's comedy methods are perhaps at a special disadvantage. When, as is probable, the successful Lyceum manager one day finds it desirable to produce a genuine *genre* of drama for highly-upholstered and much-modified Shakespeare, Miss Terry's gifts as a comedienne will be found to adorn no less than now in plays in which her acting will have the advantage of a realistic environment. The playing of the remainder of the company but nothing to say, deserves save that, along with Mr Irving, those concerned in the boasting scenes did most manage them with the usual Lyceum thoroughness. The Leonato of Mr Weaman was an exceedingly good performance, and Mr Howe was no less excellent as Antonio ; while Mr Howard made an impressive friar. Mr Terriss's Don Pedro, again, was a brilliantly lifelike impersonation, and Mr Norman was also very good as Don John. Much of the part of Claudio, as did Mr Haviland with the tedious villany of Don John. A word of praise is due also to Mr Howard for her dress especially as regards her by-play and facial expression. The Dogberry and Verges might have been more tolerable. Mr Dangerfield, it is scarcely necessary to add that the stage mounting was surpassingly effective, the chapel scene in particular being exceedingly fine.

SUPPER TO MR IRVING.

About half past twelve o'clock this morning Messrs Howard and Wyndham entertained a party of about 80 gentlemen to supper in the Windsor Hotel. Mr Howard presided, and Mr Wyndham was croupier.—The chairman, in proposing the health of Henry Irving," said Mr Irving had attained to the proudest position that an actor could aspire to and hope to attain. It was to him a source of extreme gratification to see him sitting at his right hand that night. (Applause.) They in Edinburgh must share some portion of the pride of his glory when they reflected that Mr Irving's connection was commenced in the old Theatre-Royal, under the management of their friend Mr Wyndham. (Applause.) Mr Irving further deserved the gratitude of the Edinburgh public when they considered that without his assistance, and without his kindly sympathy, and without his encouragement and support, the Lyceum Theatre that night would not have been a complete fact. Let them drink to the success of a gentleman who undoubted—let them wish him God-speed—let them wish him health, to return with increased vigour and freshness to the arduous duties of his admirers, who would feel his absence, and pray that his return might be speedy. (Applause.) Mr Irving, in returning thanks, said he had to Henry Irving, the foremost actor of the age, the kindly gentleman, the scholar, and the prince of good fellows. (Loud applause.)—In replying Mr Irving said it was an especial pleasure for him to be there that night—a pleasure he could not sufficiently descant upon, for Edinburgh really was the scene of his apprenticeship, and under the management of his dear old friend Wyndham. (Applause.) There was hardly a corner of their city he did not know. Edinburgh was especially dear now for very many reasons, and he rejoiced that he had been present on this occasion to do something to support the enterprise of their friend Howard, which he was sure would be a successful one. (Hear, hear.) They did not want to be told what Howard was. He hoped if the good fortune and success which his friend Howard wished for him should succeed, it would never make him forget such friends as he saw at the table now; and if he should in the future be able to achieve success, which was never a certainty with any actor, his ambition would be to preserve their friendship of faculty, procured as it had been, and he hoped that any success that he might achieve himself would always enable him to share the keen fortunate of his brethren. Lord Young proposed success to the Lyceum. Mr Howard replied, and gave "The Architect, Builders, and Decorators." Mr Phipps, Mr McGregor, and Baille Hall having responded, Mr Irving proposed the health of Mr Wyndham. The health of Faculty proposed and heathed by Miss Terry, to which Mr Bram Stoker, private secretary to Mr Irving, replied. Songs and recitations were then rendered in Interval, and the proceedings terminated between four and five o'clock this morning.



TUDEN MINSTRELS AT THE ALBERT HALL