OPENING OF THE LYCEUM THEATRE.

MR IRVING AND MISS TERRY IN "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING."

THE opening last night of the Lyceum Theatre may fairly claim to rank as an event of some consequence in the annals of the Edinburgh stage. Noteworthy as a second attempt to domicile the drama in the west end of the city, the new enterprise was inaugurated with an *éclat* which, if one believed in omens, might well be accepted as a guarantee for future success. To the zest of novelty, associated with the well-appointed and comfortably-furnished house, there was added the interest of a specially important engagement, in which the actor who has made "Lyceum" a name to conjure with in matters theatrical, appears with recent laurels fresh upon him, and on the eve of submitting to a Transatlantic verdict the reputation so fully endorsed by all classes of his countrymen. One way and another, the occasion had evidently been looked forward to with keen anticipation. In spite of high prices, the demand for places fully equalled the capacity of an auditorium seated for over 2500 persons; and alike in the composition of the assemblage and in the goodwill which it manifested towards their spirited venture, the management seemed to have every reason for congratulation.

Thanks to the well-directed efforts at once of contractors and of theatre staff, everything was found in a state of readiness not always met with on an opening night. It was pleasant to pass through the spacious vestibule, with its mosaic floor and warm-coloured walls, to the still more richly decorated foyer, where colossal busts of Mr Irving and Miss Terry (executed by Mr D. W. Stevenson, A.R.S.A.) might be regarded, for the time at least, as representing the *genii loci*; and thence to the house itself, in which architect and decorator had conspired to secure a more than ordinarily attractive ensemble. From the opening of the doors at seven o'clock, all parts of the theatre filled rapidly, and before the rising of the curtain, not only was all the sitting space taken up, but the standing room available in pit and amphitheatre had found many contented occupants. Mr and Mrs Wyndham, formerly of the Theatre-Royal, occupied seats in a private box, where they received the congratulations of their numerous friends. For a while the audience found themselves *vis-à-vis* of the iron screen, which will no doubt help to give a sense of security to those frequenting the house; but after an interval, during which the exuberant spirits of the gallery had found vent in choral singing, the screen was raised to disclose a handsome maroon curtain. At the same time the orchestra took their places; and forthwith to a selection of Scottish airs the curtain was withdrawn, and revealed the effective drop scene, consisting of a group from Alma Tadema's picture of Sappho and Alcæus, reproduced in monochrome, and enclosed within a painted drapery of blue, touched with yellow. The general aspect of the chastely decorated interior was now remarkably fine; but on this there was for the time being no leisure to dwell, for the drop scene presently opened, and Mr Howard, stepping forward amid the cheers of the assemblage, proceeded to deliver the following address:—

The spell is wrought—my chafing is all spent—
"Now is 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 in your smiles and laughter, as of yore,
I read 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.)
'Twas Shakespeare, 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
Is sorcery—a hostage 'tis to fame—
And in its own deep melody is charm
To keep traditions in our heart more warm.
It was a wise philosophy that knew
The groves of *Lyceum* old; but in the new,
From out whose shrine we steal Promethean fire
The ancient Thespis with new life t' inspire,
A wizard hand has writ in letters golden—
Mankind to our loved art is more beholden
Than to philosophy!—Irving, 'tis thine
To shed new magic over Shakespeare's line,
And with the wit that genius can devise
Conjure up worlds 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 th' ungrateful light,
By these 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 glories, and to cast
A brighter sunshine o'er our Scottish stage
That boasts its thousand heroes; every age
Is thronged with mem'ries, braver grown with years,
While rivalry with generous fire appears
To feed the sacred flame. Proud of our prize,
Won in the fight before your very eyes,
A brighter garland still we'd fain disclose:—
Our own endeavours are the green, the rose
Is Wyndham—(cheers)—while forget-me-nots entwine
For old acquaintance' sake; with trophies fine
As these, I see a vista spreading bright
Down through the Future's forest, and the light
Is ever in your smiles. Irving we've here,
Loved of two worlds, with Ellen Terry, dear
To every pulsing heart—(cheers)—Toole soon will wield—(cheers)—
His mirthful wand, to which all sorrows yield,
While Clark, as *Wellington de Boots* will come,
To prove himself the Toole of Yankeedom,
And merrier than of old; Ristori, too,
Will on these boards make us for ever rue
Macbeth's foul deed; anon Miss Wallis sweet
And gracious in her presence we shall greet—(cheers)
While Wilson Barrett bears a New-Year's gift,
A new-born play, that will his name uplift
To honours fresh; again in Protean guise
Old Pantomime will dance before your eyes,
Taking his cue amid his merry fits
From woman's lips and woman's happier wits—
At Mrs Howard's nod chanting with glee
Red Riding Hood's immortal history. (Cheers.)

At this point Mr Wyndham stepped on, and met with a hearty greeting. Advancing, he addressed Mr Howard—

As Falstaff says—"Fine words, brave words," my friend!
And to their fairness can I nothing lend
(*To audience*)—Saving in this—I am my father's son.
(Cheers.)
If rugged Time from out your hearts has won
The treasures of the Past, for me 'tis full
Of dreams and mem'ries sweet; yours was the school
Where first I strutted on the mimic scene—
Alas, poor boards, we say 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' sooth these happy times can never fade—
They'll prove to us a never-failing guide
Unto your affections!

Mr Howard then continued—

Our hearts are wide,
And, like our pockets, gaping for your love—(laughter and cheers)—
Which to entice this merry-plan we've wove.
Mercy is yours, ye critics, when your wrath
Flashes its lightning o'er our smiling path;
Be to us tutors kind, e'en when severe,
And may your lightnings quicken, never sear!
Thus with your cheers ringing a happy chime,
In loving answer to our limping rhyme,
We crave the boon that friends must ever crave,
Forbear when we have trespassed; we'll enslave
Our very will that all our thoughts may sing
In perfect music with your own; everything
Smiles on us now, and of your own sweet grace
Smooth all the furrows in Dame Fortune's face,
That *Lyceum* still may prove another name,
For what is best—of wit, success, and fame!
(Cheers.)

Mrs Howard was here led forward, and was welcomed with cheers and a shower of bouquets. Mr Dangerfield was likewise introduced, to receive his meed of applause as painter of the act drop.

This closed the preliminary proceedings, and after a brief pause the curtain rose for the opening scene of "Much Ado about Nothing," the play Mr Irving proposes to present during the first five nights of his engagement. Of this production, first seen in London nearly twelve months ago, and here reproduced with the same setting, and as nearly as possible the same personnel, it seems not too much to say that never before did Shakespeare's delightful comedy receive an interpretation so adequate in essentials and in every detail so artistically complete. It is not merely that the leading characters are rendered with an efficiency rarely equalled and probably never excelled; for no less noteworthy is that attention to minor parts, which has all along formed a feature of Mr Irving's management, and, with the taste he has brought to bear on stage arrangements, has in no small measure contributed to his success. In Benedick, the distinguished actor has found a *role* which fits him well, as giving less occasion than some that he has tried, for the unwelcome obtrusion of certain peculiarities of gesture and utterance. He has entered into the character con amore, and plays it with a zest that bespeaks at once thorough understanding and genuine sympathy. At times, last night, one was tempted to think that Mr Irving's mode of declamation lacked the easy fluency appropriate to Benedick's bantering talk. But, in the main, his rendering, even in this respect, left little to be desired; while, alike in dialogue and soliloquy, he so informed his words with racy meaning that any little drawbacks of the kind hinted at were readily forgotten. So was it also in regard to action. While it was impossible not to feel that a more graceful style of movement would have better befitted the courtly gallant, yet, so successful was the actor in giving reality to his creation, and fixing attention on its essential characteristics, that little attention was left to spare for little oddities of gait or bearing. Whether in speech or in expressive by-play, the veritable Benedick—shrewd and witty, and much too good a fellow to prove at bottom the woman-hater he affected to be—was made to live before us; and if the character may sometimes have been made to look more elegant, it never was presented with truer appreciation of its humour or more incisive expression of its significant traits. If Mr Irving is well suited in Benedick, even happier, if possible, is Miss Terry in having assigned her the character of Beatrice. While every requirement of the part seems well within this charming actress's compass, it is, at the same time, of a nature to give scope for the freshness and spontaneity in which lies so much of her charm. Though evidently suffering from cold, she last night struck, in the very first scene, the delightful keynote that was maintained right on to the close. Anything truer in intonation or more gracefully felicitous in gesture and action than her delivery of Beatrice's lively badinage it were hard to conceive; and this phase of her personation may be said to have reached its climax of delicate piquancy in the scene where, having come to call Benedick, she trips off with a coquettish grace well calculated to complete her yet undreamt-of conquest. Equally exquisite in the expression of womanly tenderness was her rendering of the soliloquy, in which Beatrice resolves that her lover shall not go unrequited; while the colloquy with Benedick, where the latter is challenged to avenge the injured Hero, was sustained with a spirit and a picturesque freedom of action that combined with Mr Irving's fine acting to form the crowning triumph of the joint performance. The *role* of Hero was admirably sustained by Miss Millward, whose personation, everywhere attractive, showed in the trying chapel scene the power of expressing emotion with quiet intensity. The Don Pedro of Mr W. Terriss was a well-considered performance, full of appropriate animation; while of Claudio satisfactory account was given by Mr N. Forbes. Mr Wenman as Leonato, and Mr Howe as Antonio, looked and spoke their parts to admiration; unless, perhaps, one were to take exception to the somewhat ponderous delivery into which the former tended to fall in his longer speeches. A similar reservation requires to be made in regard to Mr Mead's personation of the Friar. A thoroughly intelligent and self-contained representation of Don John was given by Mr Haviland; and the subordinate villians, Borachio and Conrade, found capital exponents in Messrs Tyars and Lyndal. Mr S. Johnson, as Dogberry, spoke with an alacrity of utterance hardly to be expected of so stupid a personage. The Verges of Mr J. Carter was more self-consistent; and Mr Archer, whose voice at once bewrayed him to old friends in the gallery, threw plenty of gusto into his personation of Seacole. The parts of Margaret and Ursula were sustained by Misses Harwood and Payne in a way to give them due value in the performance. The scenery, in the simpler, no less than in the more elaborate sets was thoroughly artistic in colour and design. So were the dresses and other appointments, which in several scenes—and notably that of the chapel—contributed their full share to a fine spectacular effect. For a first performance on a new stage the play was carried through with commendable smoothness, the only thing the audience had to complain of being occasional delays.

At the close of the comedy, a loud burst of applause testified to the hearty appreciation it had met with; and these expressions of approval were renewed when Mr Irving, leading Miss Terry by the hand, came forward to acknowledge the hearty homage which had been paid to their performance. The curtain then fell, but immediately afterwards was raised to discover the whole company ranged in a semi-circle on the stage, Mr Irving with Mrs Howard being on one side near the centre, and Mr Howard with Miss Terry on the other. The National Anthem was then sung, Miss Kate Sherry leading off with the first stanza as a solo, and the audience afterwards joining in chorus. Mr J. Robertson sang a second stanza, which also the audience heartily repeated. A loud cheer signalised its conclusion, and cheers were again raised as Mr Howard led in the architect of the theatre and other gentlemen who had had a hand in its successful opening. These, however, gave place to calls for "a speech from Irving;" and in deference to the wish so generally expressed, Mr Irving, who was again enthusiastically greeted, spoke as follows:—

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. The event of to-night irresistibly reminds me of an event which occurred some twenty-five years ago in Edinburgh, and in which I then took a part. That was the closing night of your old Theatre-Royal—a theatre so associated with the traditions of the Scottish stage. To-night the event is a more cheerful one, and I am sure you will all congratulate my friend Howard on the success of his venture. (Cheers.) Of course, ladies and gentlemen, we are very much indebted to you for your kind patience to-night. You 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. That accounts for your very kind consideration towards us. You will be sorry to hear that our dilemmas were a little increased at the last moment by the head of one of the departments—and I think it a duty to mention a fact like that—deserting us in our hour of need at four o'clock; therefore we lost a great deal of assistance on that account. With such a delightful theatre as that which Mr Phipps has constructed, with an audience such as an Edinburgh audience is, and with a city such as Edinburgh is, to dwell in, I am quite sure of the future of these two young managers. I rejoice to find that our old friend Robert Wyndham's son is one of them—(cheers)—I am glad to find that Mr Howard has such an earnest fellow-worker as a partner. I am quite sure that his boat must sail freely both with wind and stream. (Loud cheers.)

In response to loud calls for Howard and Wyndham, those gentlemen came before the curtain and bowed their acknowledgments, after which, about midnight, the brilliant audience dispersed.

In the course of the evening a special playbill, printed on fine paper, and adorned with medallions of Mr Irving and Miss Terry, was distributed in commemoration of the event.

SUPPER TO MR IRVING.

IN commemoration of the opening of the theatre by Mr Irving, a large company of gentlemen had been invited by Messrs Howard and Wyndham to meet the eminent actor at the Windsor Hotel, at the close of the performance in the theatre. A portion of the company had assembled shortly after half-past eleven; but it was a quarter past twelve before the sound of cheering from without the hotel announced the arrival of the guest of the evening. The company shortly thereafter sat down to supper, with Mr Howard in the chair, and Mr Wyndham in the vice-chair. The seats right and left of the chairman were occupied respectively by Mr Irving and Lord Young. Among the other guests were Professor Blackie, Mr Robert Chambers, the Dean of Faculty, Q.C., Bailie Hall, Councillor Drybrough, Mr James Law, Messrs Charles Scott, Pearson, Lang, and Paterson, advocates; Dr Smith, Dr C. Thatcher, Dr Sidey, Mr George Hay, R.S.A.; Mr D. W. Stevenson, A.R.S.A.; Mr James Colston, Mr J. Wilson, Mr Lowson, Mr Cameron, S.S.C.; Mr M. Gunn, of the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin; Captain Bainbridge, Theatre-Royal, Manchester; Mr R. W. Young, Tyne Theatre, Newcastle; Mr H. J. Loveday, manager; and Mr Bram Stoker, M.A., private secretary to Mr Irving; Dr Pryde, Mr Henderson, chief constable; Mr Sam. H. Austin, acting manager of the Lyceum Theatre; Mr Wm. M'Gregor, Mr James Gowans; Mr A. D. M'Neill, Royal Princess' Theatre; Mr R. W. Lowe, Mr James Gray, Newcastle; Mr William Glover, Glasgow; Mr Austin Brereton, of the *Theatre*; Mr George Derlacher, honorary secretary Green-room Club, London; Mr Cecil Beryl, Princess' Theatre, Glasgow; and Mr Davidson, secretary, Theatre-Royal, Newcastle. After supper had been served, which was not till two o'clock this morning,

MR HOWARD proposed the toast of "Henry Irving." (Applause.) What, he asked, could he say, that would add interest or charm to the name of Henry Irving? (Applause.) He had attained to the full meridian of his fame, the proudest position that an actor could aspire to or hope to attain, admired and respected by his brothers and sisters, and idolised by the public at large. (Applause.) It was to him (Mr Howard) a source of extreme gratification and pleasure to see Mr Irving sitting at his right hand. They in Edinburgh must share some portion of the pride of his glory when they considered that his professional career was commenced in the old Theatre-Royal under the management of their friend Mr Wyndham. (Applause.) He had a further claim upon the gratitude of the Edinburgh public when they considered that without his assistance and kindly sympathy and encouragement and support the Lyceum Theatre that night would not be an accomplished fact. (Applause.) Let them drink to his success, which would be undoubted. Let them wish him God speed, and health to return with increased vigour and increased fame to his multitude of admirers, who would miss his absence and pray for his return. (Applause.) He asked them to pledge a bumper to Henry Irving, the foremost actor of the age, the kindly gentleman, the scholar, and the prince of good fellows. (Cheers.)

MR IRVING, who was received with applause, said their friend Howard had said so many wonderful things about him that he really did not know what to say in reply. In fact, the less he said of himself the better. If he only deserved one-quarter of what was said of him, he should be a remarkably excellent sort of person. 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, and he thought he knew also the hills of Corstorphine and the vales of Mid-Lothian. Edinburgh was especially dear now, for very many reasons, and he rejoiced that he had been present on this occasion that night 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. They all knew him very well. They all knew he was a very handsome man. (Laughter and applause.) They all knew he was a very good manager, and he knew that Howard was a manly, fine fellow. (Applause.) He was sure that success would follow him. He deserved success, and he was quite sure that success would be prologue to his desert. He hoped if the good fortune and success which his friend Howard wished for him were attained, 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 and retain their good wishes; and he hoped that any success that he might achieve himself would always enable him to assist the less fortunate of his brethren.

LORD YOUNG proposed "Success to the Lyceum Theatre," at whose birth they were present that night. (Cheers.) They heard that word success perpetually. He thought his friend Mr Howard used it in his speech the other night, quoting some lines from Addison's "Cato," where he says, "Success is more than mortals can command;" but he was not sure that the sentiment would not have been as good had it been put the other way. "Success is more than mortals may deserve; but we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll command it." (Laughter and cheers.) He was persuaded, with the support of his friend Mr Irving, Miss Ellen Terry, and a whole host of celebrites of the stage, that success would be deserved, and commanded too. (Loud applause.) When success was achieved, it certainly multiplied and increased amazingly, and he was sure Mr Irving and his company, and those who would follow him, would aid greatly, and he believed and hoped would certainly succeed in achieving success to this new institution. (Applause.)

MR HOWARD replied on behalf of himself and Mr Wyndham, and proposed "The health of the architect and builders of the Theatre."

The proceedings were still going on when we went to press.