

you've got mighty curious notions about them and about yourself. You've always lived here in the woods, and you don't know what you're worth."

He lifted the empty apple-basket out of the way and sat down by her.

"Now, Barbara, you say you know how I feel toward you. You are the girl of all girls in the world for me. And now you won't spurn me, will you?" he said entreatingly.

Barbara's lips quivered and she seemed about to lose control of herself. However, after a little period of silence and struggle, she suppressed her feelings sufficiently to speak:

"I could n't *spurn* you," she said. Then, after another pause: "Maybe you don't care any more for me than I do for you. But I'm in such trouble — that I can't tell what to say. Won't you wait and give me a little time? Things may be better after a while."

"How long shall I stay away? A week?" Mason's voice had a note of protest in it.

"Don't be hurt," she said, lifting her eyes timidly to his. "But I'm in such a hard place. Let me have two weeks or so to think about it, and see how things are going to turn." It was not that Barbara saw any chance for a change of circumstances, but that she could not resolve to decide the question either way,

and wished to escape from her present perplexity by postponement.

"Just as you say," said Mason, regretfully; "but I tell you, Barbara, it's two weeks of dead lost time."

Then he got up and held out his hand to her.

"Good-bye, Barbara."

"Good-bye, Mr. Mason."

"Oh, call me Hiram! It's more friendly, and you call all the other young men by their first names."

"But you're the master."

"I'm not the master of you, that's clear. Besides, you've left school." He was holding her hand in gentle protest all this time.

"Well, good-bye — Hiram!" said Barbara, with a visible effort which ended in a little laugh.

Mason let go of her hand and turned abruptly and walked out of the door, and then swiftly down the meadow path. Barbara stood and looked after him as long as she could see his form; then she slowly shut and latched the kitchen door and came and covered with ashes the remaining embers of the fire, and took the candle from the mantel-piece and went through the now vacant sitting-room to her chamber above.

(To be continued.)

Edward Eggleston.



JOHN GILBERT.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. W. ALEXANDER.



IF all the men who have achieved fame upon the American stage during the last half century, a period which includes almost all that is important in the theatrical history of the country, no one probably ever gained a higher place in public esteem than that now occupied by the finished artist and fine old actor John Gilbert.

There have been players of greater genius and wider renown, whose names are known

the world over, and whose brilliant careers mark the limits of dramatic eras, but none of them, it is safe to say, ever secured a firmer hold upon the popular heart, in the twofold capacity of actor and man, than the veteran who is the subject of this sketch. The position of Mr. Gilbert upon the stage of to-day is extraordinary in more ways than one. Although he can scarcely be said to be the most prominent figure in the American theatrical world, yet he is certainly the one man whose retirement from it would leave a void which nobody



JOHN GILBERT AS "SIR PETER TEAZLE."



JOHN GILBERT AS "SIR PETER TEAZLE."

now in sight could hope to fill. With him will vanish, for a time at least, if not forever, old comedy characters that have been beloved by play-goers for generations and have been regarded almost in the light of actual personages instead of mere creatures of the imagination. The remark that such or such a character will disappear with this or that actor is common enough, and is apt to be unfounded, but in the case of Mr. Gilbert it is, unhappily, only too true. It is by no means necessarily an irreparable loss to the stage when an eccentric conception, made vital by the peculiar powers of some particular actor, dies with its originator. *Paul Pry*, *Lord Dundreary*, *Solon Shingle*, and a host of others, admirable as they are in their respective classes, may all go to the limbo of forgotten plays and the condition of the theater will not be affected permanently; but it is altogether a more serious matter when the survival of a classic type seems to be dependent upon a single life. When Mr. Gilbert

abandons the foot-lights — may the day be far distant! — he will take with him nearly all the famous old men of old English comedy, to say nothing of the comedy which is rapidly growing middle-aged. Who but he can give us *Sir Anthony* or *Sir Peter*, *Old Dornton* or *Mr. Hardcastle*, *Lord Duberly* or *Sir Francis Gripe*? It is surely a great good fortune for us all that has preserved his health and vigor for three-quarters of a century, and which leaves him in the full possession of physical and mental powers in his seventy-eighth year.

Many of the younger admirers of Mr. Gilbert doubtless think that he has never or rarely played in anything but comedy, whereas the truth is that his earliest efforts were in tragedy. The perfection of his present method, which appears to the careless observer so simple and natural a thing, is the result of long years of arduous labor and a strangely varied experience. He was born on the 27th of February, 1810, in Boston, next door to the house

in which Charlotte Cushman first saw the light. From his earliest youth, it is said, he was attracted to a theatrical life, and as a boy in the Boston High School was noted among his fellows for his skill and force in declamation. His aspirations were high, and his first recitations were selected from "The Iron Chest" and "Venice Preserved." This was before he was fourteen years old, at which age he was put behind the counter in his un-

the privilege of one rehearsal only. His performance proved so successful that he was allowed to try again, and this time he essayed the part of *Sir Edward Mortimer*, to the manifest approval of his audience. His triumph enabled him to overcome the opposition of his relatives, and he was allowed to leave the shop and enter definitely upon the career of an actor. His third part was *Shylock*, and there his ambition met with a severe shock.



JOHN GILBERT AS "JESSE RURAL."

cle's dry-goods store and doomed to ply the yard-stick and scissors. He was too young for open rebellion, but he had the courage, resolution, and industry which are more potent than genius itself. Always steadfast to the purpose of his life, he never for an instant ceased the study of elocution, and at last, when he was eighteen years old, he managed to obtain permission from the directors of the old Tremont Theater to make a public appearance there as *Jaffier*. This important step was taken without the knowledge either of his mother or his uncle, neither of whom had much reverence for the stage. He was announced simply as a young gentleman of Boston, and had

Boylike, he thought that the favorable reception accorded to him as a novice meant permanent fame for him, and he was greatly taken aback when he found that he had to begin again, like everybody else, at the bottom of the ladder. After playing two and three line parts for a time, he was glad to get an opportunity to go to New Orleans under the management of James H. Caldwell, although his salary was of the smallest. He made his first appearance there as *Sir Frederick Vernon* in "Rob Roy," and is reported to have failed completely on account of a bad attack of stage fright, pardonable enough in a lad of his inexperience. Immediately afterward he



JOHN GILBERT AS "SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE."

redeemed himself by the admirable manner in which he acted an old man, a very strong part, in a piece called "The May Queen"; and it was on this occasion that the natural bent of his talent was first displayed. Thereafter he appeared constantly in the characters of old men and made rapid advances in professional reputation. For five years he traveled in the South and South-west, undergoing discomforts and making shifts of which even the modern barn-stormer has but the faintest conception, but constantly adding to his experience and self-confidence, until he finally made his way back again to Boston and procured an engagement at the Tremont Theater. Here he played for another five years in a great variety of characters, many of which were old men — in tragedy, old and new comedy, melodrama, romantic-drama, and farce. He was associated in those days with a host of dead-and-gone celebrities,—Booth, Forrest, Hamblin, J. W. Wallack, Tyrone Power, Charlotte Cushman, Cooper, Ellen Tree (Mrs. Charles Kean), Mr. and Mrs. Keely, etc.,—and doubtless learned something from each of them. The modern actor would call work of this kind

drudgery, but to the true student of dramatic art it is more precious than all the rules of all the professors. At the end of his five years' term in Boston, Mr. Gilbert's position in his profession was assured, and he came to New York, where he at once procured an engagement in the Old Bowery Theater, then at the height of its fame. He played *Sir Edward Mortimer* and a number of other important characters with much success, and then returned for a brief season to Boston, acting in the Tremont and the National theaters. Being desirous of studying the methods of comedians trained amidst the old traditions, he made a trip to England, and was engaged by Mr. Walton, the manager of the Princess's Theater, and made his first appearance there in the character of *Sir Richard Bramble* in "The Poor Gentleman." His success was so emphatic that he was reëngaged for the whole of the ensuing season, and played the old men's parts in a number of standard English comedies, and also supported Macready and Charlotte Cushman. Whenever he had a chance he went to the Haymarket Theater, the home of legitimate comedy, where Mathews, Buckstone, Compton, Mrs. Nesbitt, and other famous actors could be seen, and he also paid a visit to Paris to

study the best methods of the French school.

On his return to New York he joined the company of the Park Theater, then under the direction of Hamblin, and remained there until the house was burned in 1848. Then he went to Philadelphia, where he acted for five years, and next to Boston, to the new Boston Theater, managed by Thomas Barry, where he remained until 1857. During the ensuing five years he was once more in Philadelphia, but in 1862 he returned to New York for good, joining the company of Mr. Wallack, of which he was one of the chief ornaments to the very last. It is not possible within the limits of this sketch to attempt even the briefest summary of the work which he has accomplished in the last twenty-five years, but a hasty reference to some of his most important impersonations will give a good idea of its variety and scope. The fame of his *Sir Anthony Absolute* entitles it to be placed at the head of the list. It is difficult to believe that the choleric old Englishman ever had a better representative. To-day there is no actor who could presume to challenge comparison with him in it. Mr. William Warren, of Boston, has retired

upon his laurels. Mr. Chippendale, Mr. Phelps, and the original Warren are dead. All were celebrated in the character, but Mr. Gilbert is probably better than any of them. His figure, his face, and his voice fit the part exactly; the naturalness of his choleric outbursts is extraordinary; the dryness of his humor is perfect; and his whole carriage is an absolute reproduction of the old-time manner. The performance is — in one word — perfection. His *Sir Peter* is a companion-piece of almost equal merit, but is distinctly inferior. It is a little deficient in polish. The ideal *Sir Peter* ought to have an air a little more courtly than that which Mr. Gilbert imparts to him; but perhaps even this objection is open to the charge of hypercriticism. At all events, there is no other *Sir Peter* upon the English-speaking stage to compare with it, although the younger Farren in London and Mr. Charles Fisher here are both clever in the character. Their admitted excellence only emphasizes Mr. Gilbert's easy superiority. By way of contrast with the explosive *Sir Anthony*, take *Old Dornton* in the "Road to Ruin." No more perfect picture of probity, benevolence, and tenderness could be imagined. There is almost as much pathos in the old man's honest outbursts of indignation as in his moments of forgiveness and reconciliation. What a study of sturdy indignation and parental tenderness he furnished as *Job Thornberry* in "John Bull," and what a wealth of humor he infused into *Lord Duberly*! His *Lord Ogleby* is another instance of his wide versatility, as is his *Sir Francis Gripe* in "The Busy-body," which a year or two ago gave so much pleasure to lovers of genuine old comedy. Even more striking is the contrast between his *Master Walter* in "The Hunchback" and his *Mr. Hardcastle* in "She Stoops to Conquer," two characters with scarcely a point in common, yet played with almost equal truth and finish. The *Hardcastle* is the finer, of course, being a veritable masterpiece full of the rarest and homeliest humor; but what other actor capable of playing the one could play the other at all? *Dogberry*, *Adam*, *Sir George Thunder*, *Old Wilding*, *Sir William Fondlove*, *Justice Greedy*, *Paul Lafont*, in "Love's Sacrifice," and others innumerable, — what a splendid gallery of portraits they all make, and how long it is likely to be before any one man will be able to paint them again!

But even in these later days it is not only in old comedy that Mr. Gilbert has excelled;

his *Sir Harcourt Courty* is as finished a modern portrait as any of the old ones just enumerated. The external polish of this superannuated fop is a triumph of the most delicate and artistic acting, in which the broadest effects are secured by the most minute elaboration. Who would suppose that this exquisite was identical with the ruffianly *McKenna* in "Rose-dale," the fussy old *Brisemouch* in "A Scrap of Paper," or the jealous old husband in "The Guv'nor"? The personal characteristics of Mr. Gilbert — his stature, voice, and face — are so marked that, until the list of his impersonations is examined, he often fails to receive



JOHN GILBERT AS "HARDCASTLE."

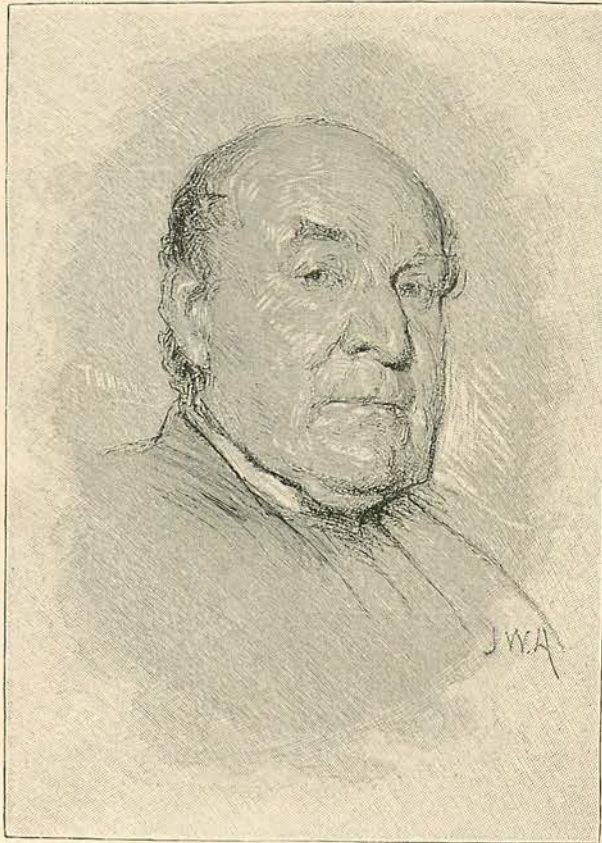
credit for the uncommon versatility which he exhibits.

The personages named do not constitute one-tenth, perhaps, of those which he has enacted in New York, but they are sufficient for the present purpose, which is simply to show the strong foundation upon which his reputation rests. He is in every sense an honor to his profession. The stage was never more urgently in need of such men as he, who furnish irrefutable demonstration that labor and experience are the only sure means by which artistic perfection can be attained. Genius in acting, as in everything else, will always

assert itself; but it cannot be developed to its full extent without complete knowledge of the mechanical processes needed to create the desired impression, and mechanical — or, if the word be displeasing, executive — excellence can be reached by practice, and by practice only. The only real school of acting is the stage, and in this, as in every other school, the student must begin at the bottom and work his way up. Mr. Gilbert is a past-master of his art, who uses, with unerring precision, all the resources acquired in half a century of intelligent observation and laborious application. His skill is so complete that everything he does has

the effect of intuition; but neither he nor any other expert in acting equal to him can impart the faculty which he possesses. He can tell how he does it, but that will not enable anybody else to do it off-hand in the same way. There was a glimmer of this truth in the mind of Mr. Squeers when he sent his students in practical philosophy to clean his windows. It will be a blessed day for the theater when the agile dolls who masquerade nowadays as comedians begin to comprehend that mimicry is not acting, and that, if it were, they would be inferior in this respect to many of the anthropoid apes.

*J. Ranken Towse.*



*John Gilbert*