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An Annotated Critical Edition of "The Show Folks!" by Pierce Egan

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Introduction

Pierce Egan's poem "The Show Folks!" seems like a bizarre outsider when considered with the body of his work. The child of Irish immigrants, Egan became popular for his sports writing about boxing, of which he published five volumes, not for his poetry. In addition to his prolific sports writing, Egan was also wildly famous for the creation of the *Life in London* serialization, a monthly publication which followed the misadventures of three young men—Tom, Jerry, and Bob Logic—as they explored the poorer districts of London. In both his sports writing and his fiction, Egan was known for his use of slang and the realistic depictions of the people and activities common in London's low life.

In 1831, ten years after Egan published the first volume of *Life in London*, he published his odd little poem, "The Show Folks!" At first glance, Egan's "The Show Folks!" seems like the wild card in Egan's writing repertoire. First, it's a poem, one of the only poems Egan published; and second, it's subject matter on acting seems atypical in comparison to the rest of Egan's work. But "The Show Folks!" continues on a legacy of slang, low-life, and the pursuit of riches and fame that permeates the rest of Egan's writing. In fact, "Show Folks!" has a lot in common with Egan's satirical novel *Life of an Actor*, which was published only six years earlier in 1825. In addition to the similar subject matter, the prologue to *Life of an Actor* is a poem consisting of 24 rhymed couplets (see Appendix 3a). So "Show Folks!" is not the only example of Egan's poetry.

In 168 lines, "Show Folks!" tells the story of Billy Guy, a boy "resolved to strut, / To shine a Hero on the stage" (12). The poem consists of 42 quatrains which follow the a-b-a-b rhyming pattern. Over the course of the poem, readers follow Guy as he studies at a preparatory school for actors, performs as a trick rider in the circus, participates in many burlesque theater adaptations, and even appears at popular fairs. But instead of achieving his dream of becoming a famous actor, Guy emerges as a theater manager instead. While Billy Guy never ends up in

center stage, he does become involved in many activities which Egan characterizes as outliers to “Drama legitimate” (“Show Folks!” 22), such as burlesque theater productions and circuses. But it is Guy’s involvement with these outlying activities that allows him to become a manager of his own theater house. Like Guy, Egan was also involved in many peripheral activities that all encircled but never quite intersected with “Drama Legitimate.” Hence, Guy’s progression from a theater-outsider to an influential player of theatrical productions can represent Egan’s own desire to move away from theater’s marginal activities and into the high-end theater circles. However, Egan never quite gains the theatrical fame he wants. Because of this, readers can view Guy’s success as a defense of the low-life arts and Egan’s own position as a popular culture figure.

On the Fringe: Egan and Burlesque Theater

The relationship between high and low drama in the Victorian Era was complicated. The two main theater houses, Covent Gardens and Drury Lane, often produced serious drama. But due to strange licensing laws, if any smaller theater company wanted to do a production of Shakespeare or Sophocles, they had to adapt it (Bratton). According to Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, “The Victorian era saw an explosion of . . . burlesques: irreverent, pun-ridden parodies that spoofed sanctimonious productions” (401). In other words, the burlesque theater was characterized by its imitations and rip offs of both traditional theater and popular fiction. Egan himself was among those writers who both parodied and was made a parody.

From the many Shakespearean allusions to Guy’s actual imitative performances, burlesque imitations permeate “Show Folks!” Egan references both *King Richard III* as well as *Hamlet* multiple times (see Note 3, 6, and 18), and the illustrations make reference to *Othello* (see Appendix 3b). When describing the history of theater, Egan writes, “when Roscius first essay’d in Rome / . . . / Each Actor on his ass!” (10). This line alludes to Hamlet’s speech in Act

Two, Scene Two when Hamlet performs his own theatrical production for his uncle and mother. Pollack-Pelzner argues that Hamlet's play-within-the-play becomes an example of burlesque theater, "a space of rival actors, competing lines, and punctured pieties" (408). Therefore, when Egan references this scene in Hamlet, he draws upon the traditions of burlesque while also creating a burlesque of his own.

In addition to Egan's own imitative performances, he characterizes Billy Guy as a burlesque actor. He writes, "Made Rolla blush—Hamlet on stilts, / Did Guy to be 'the rage!'" (21). Both Rolla and Hamlet are traditional tragic characters (see Note 17). Through his irreverent performance that makes the tragic heroine Rolla "blush" and the tragic hero Hamlet walk on "stilts," Guy parodies these traditional tragedies, a staple of burlesque theater. Egan also explains that Billy Guy could "act Dusty Bob—dress up a Pope, / And imitate Ducrow" (18). Here, Egan uses the words "imitate" and "dress up" to characterize the type of acting that Guy performs. These are not overly intellectual performances or serious dramatic interpretations; instead, Guy's performances are "imitations" of characters. Additionally, in this one line Egan also combines three distinct characters—a garbage man, an important religious figure, and a trick rider. Pollack-Pelzner writes that burlesque "indicated a ridiculous parody, often by rendering high drama in the low style" (402). Guy's imitative performances and Egan's combination of the low-life (garbage man) with the high-life (Pope) characterize both Guy and Egan as players within the burlesque theater tradition.

But Egan's relationship with the burlesque theater goes deeper than the imitation of other writers. In this line, "Dusty Bob" is Egan's own character whom he mentions in his *Life in London* series (see Appendix 1b). Because of the popularity of Egan's serialization, both famous and obscure playwrights created theatrical rifts of it. Charles Hindly explains that "Pierce Egan

at length became tired of the successes of the playwrights using his book, and resolved to try his own hand at the dramatic version” (85). However, the manager of Covent Garden rejected Egan’s first version, writing that Egan’s novel “has now become so hacknied [sic] by its production at the Minor Theaters, that I should despair of proving successful with us, particularly as, according your sketch, I perceive it must take nearly the same feature” (qtd. in Ried 85). Even though Egan was *Life in London*’s original creator, audiences expected to see the parody version on stage, not the original. And so, to participate in the fame surrounding *Life in London*, Egan had to parody his own work. He wrote his adaption as a comic opera, which Sadler’s Wells Theater staged in 1822 (see Appendix 1a).

Despite the critical acclaim Egan’s burlesque of *Life in London* received, England never took Egan seriously. For the next ten years after this theatrical production, he would continue to struggle to be taken as a writer of “legitimate drama.” Part of the problem was that Egan could never escape his reputation as a writer of the “low slang of Irish ruffianism” (Miles, qtd in Braisford) and as “a portrayer of low life” (Ried 161). Egan was too well defined by his relation to burlesque theater and would never escape. Because of this, readers can easily see how Guy’s struggle for fame through the backwater channels of burlesque theater mirror Egan’s own struggle for recognition and respect among the theater elites.

Harlequin and Clown: The Circus and Fairs’ Effects on Theater

In addition to burlesque theater, circuses and fairs were another popular form of entertainment during the Victorian period. Egan, as a writer of low-life pursuits, would have been very familiar with both. In “Show Folks!” Egan provides readers with a description of one of the more popular fairs, St. Bartholomew or Bartlemy Fair. He writes, “The Lion’s roar—the Monkey’s grin; / the Juggler with his balls; / Dwarfs and giants—thick and thin; and savoury

Sausage Stalls” (19).

The sausages must have been a staple of Bartlemy Fair because the poem “Bartholomew Fair,” published in 1837 by “One Under a Hood,” also mentions them: “The sausages and the oyster stalls / The muse would freely spare; / Yet state we must that Bartlemy / Yields every kind of fare!” (23). The pun here on the last word “fare” demonstrates how fairs were a place where one could find anything—from pies and sausages, to wild animals, prostitutes, alcohol, and of course the theater.

During the Victorian Era, fairs were very popular for their theatrical productions. But the fairs’ often scandalous reputations tainted the actors who performed there. Not so, however, at St. Bartholomew’s. According to Charles G. Harper, the St. Bartholomew Fair was renowned for its theater. Harper writes, “the ‘stars’ of Drury Lane Theatre did not consider it beneath their dignity to act in booths at ‘Bartley’s’” (“Famous Fairs”) This might be due to the fact that Richardson’s Theater, where the “greatest tragedian” Edmond Kean got his big break, first appeared at Bartholomew Fair (see Note 7 and 8). Because of St. Bartlemy’s reputation for theater, it would have been natural for a young boy like Guy seeking to become an actor to try his luck at the fairs and the traveling theater troops.

And the fair is where Guy first gains his reputation as an actor. Egan writes, “From Fair to Fair he ran his race, / Acquiring greater fame, / With serious or comic face, / Till he procured—a Name” (18). From this passage, it seems as if Billy Guy has reached fame; he has, after all, “procured—a Name” for himself. In the prologue to *Life of an Actor* (see Appendix 3a), Egan also emphasizes the important relationship between names and fame. He writes, “Now for our Artist I put in a claim— / Young, inexperienced, and without a name” (2). For Egan’s young actors, a name is synonymous with fame and success. However, after Egan writes that Billy Guy

has “procured—a Name,” he seemingly undermines this fame by writing, “In Harlequin or funny Clown, / At home—was Billy Guy . . . to sport a toe, dance the tight rope, or summerset to throw” (18). So while Guy performs at Bartlemy Fair, the center for high-end theatrical performances, he does not achieve success as a serious actor, like Edmond Kean did, but rather as simply a circus performer.

Legitimate Drama: The Story of Success

The complex and interwoven relationship between the theater and circus that Egan presents in “Show Folks!” allows readers to question the definition of theater and what makes it successful. Through Egan’s burlesque techniques of combining soliloquies with sing-a-longs, “Show Folks!” pushes against the idea that only “Drama Legitimate” could bring actors success and demonstrates how Guy is able to procure a name through his work as a parody actor and a circus performer.

During the Victorian Era, circus performances became a popular aspect of theatrical productions, even among the high-brow theater houses such as Covent Gardens and Drury Lane. Jacky Bratton points out that while these theater houses “did put on serious drama,” they also put on “anything that would please a large crowd, including lion taming in a cage and battles on horseback.” Trick riding, or any act involving horses, was also extremely popular during this time, and Billy Guy’s shout of “A horse! A horse!” (13) echoes the crowd’s excitement at the sight of any equestrian act (see Appendix 2).

In the final footnote to his poem, Egan explains that while the “legitimate” drama produced at Drury Lane or Covent Gardens often created debt for the theater house, “a successful pantomime has not only fetched up the loss, but turned the balance in favour of the season” (32). Egan continues, “Thus it appears, depending more on the *attitudes* of Harlequin, the *lively steps*

of Columbine, the *comical phiz* of the Clown, and the *aid* of the scene painter, than the resources of the Legitimate Drama, to produce the desired effect of Shakespeare's words—'All's Well that Ends Well'" (32, emphasis in original). In Egan's mind, the "desired effect" voiced in Shakespeare's famous line is financial gain, and this financial gain depended on the burlesques, the parodies, and the circus performances.

The story line of "Show Folks!" argues that even though Guy gains popularity only "in Harlequin or funny Clown," he still becomes successful. Egan writes, "Billy, at length, "turn'd up" the Fairs, / A Manager—d'ye see? / A man of Pomp, with all the airs/ Tack'd to Prosperity" (21). Through Guy's imitative performances, he was able to achieve financial success and become the manager of his own theater house. In fact, in Egan's footnote he explains, "a manager has a right to play any part he likes in his own theatre. Who doubts it?" (30). Therefore, by becoming a manager, Guy gains financial success as well as theatrical renown.

For Egan, "Legitimate Drama" is just as much a farce as the burlesque theater, and success depends on more than just a name among the theatrical elites. Although Egan himself could never break into theater proper, his poem "Show Folks!" allows readers to see his "low slang of Irish ruffianism" and his depictions of London's low-life as a type of success. At the end of "Show Folks!" dedication, Egan quotes yet another line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "that the stage may always 'hold the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature; vice, her own image; and the very age and body of the time its form and pressure'" (8). As long as a theatrical production teaches its viewers something about themselves, whether through acrobatics or tragedies, then in the mind of Egan, it was a success.

THE
SHOW FOLKS.



THE STAGE-STRUCK HERO.

Lo! I have a weapon:
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh!

THE
SHOW FOLKS!

“Walk up! Walk up!
The players! the players! the players are here!”

By PIERCE EGAN,
AUTHOR OF “LIFE IN LONDON;” “WALKS THROUGH BATH;”
“TRIP TO ASCOT RACES,” ETC.

Embellished with Fine Characteristic Designs on Wood,

BY THE LATE
MR. THEODORE LANE,
AND ENGRAVED BY MR. JOHN THOMPSON.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OR
THE LIFE OF MR. THEODORE LANE.

DEDICATED TO THE
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY,
SIR MARTIN ARCHER SHEE, KNT.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR M. ARNOLD, TAVISTOCK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN; AND
SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL STATIONERS' COURT.

1831.

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TO THE
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY,
SIR. MARTIN ARCHER SHEE, KNT.

SIR,

WITHOUT attempting any "*Broad Grins*" upon the subject, or even calling in the aid of the "*Wags of Windsor*," yet laughing at the frowns of the great "*Blue Beard*," on theatrical affairs, I have, "*John Bull*" like, although perfectly unknown to you, Sir, dedicated MY "*Random Records*" respecting a young artist of great promise, who, had his life been spared, would, in all probability, have become an ornament to that profession, of which, in the distinguished character of the PRESIDENT of the ROYAL ACADEMY, you have been selected as the HEAD.

Besides, Sir, the unity of three subjects, with which you are so intimately connected—PAINTING, POETRY, and the STAGE. With the first, perhaps, I had better “change the scene,” and *brush* off, preferring a good *exit*, rather than stammering out a *dull* part. With the second, if I can do no more, than express my admiration of it—

Possess'd beyond the Muse's painting!

and *act-ing* upon the third subject, under the shelter, “that one man in his time, *plays* many parts,” I may be allowed to take a peep at the SHOW FOLKS!

Yet anxious to avoid any thing like *daubing* connected with this Dedication—also to escape the remarks of being too *highly-coloured*—out of drawing—and deficient in *light* and *shade*—I shall refer to an event wherein I feel myself more competent to descant upon, in order to escape the dangers of being at sea without a rudder!

Then, Sir, as the independent author of ALASCO, for whose noble stand and remonstrance to the Lord Chamberlain, “whether the British theatre shall, in future, afford an intellectual enjoyment worthy of a free people,” and for which spirited conduct, all dramatic writers must feel indebted to your exertions—I have done myself the honour of submitting the following sketch of the late Mr. THEODORE LANE, in order to rescue his name and talents from total oblivion.

Permit me to say, Sir, it must have been a most grateful source of reflection to the author of “Alasco,” that, “however, the tenets of his tragic discourse were not held to be orthodox by the grand inquisitor of the Lord Chamberlain’s office!” and, officially, stigmatised as they were, upon that occasion; yet such sort of *implied* censure, then represented as dangerous sentiments to the welfare of the state, must have lost its sting, on your being appointed Presi-

dent of the Royal Academy, by his late Majesty.

That the FINE ARTS may flourish to the end of time; that poetry and music may continue to increase in reputation, and give delight; and that the stage may always “hold the mirror up to nature, to show VIRTUE her own feature; *vice*, her own image; and the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure,” is the most sincere wish,

SIR,

Of your most obedient,

And very humble servant,

PIERCE EGAN.

LONDON, *Dec.* 1, 1830.



THE BENT OF GENIUS.

THE
SHOW FOLKS.

The Painter dead, yet still he charms the eye,
While England lives, his fame can never die ;
But he who struts his hour upon the stage,
Can scarce extend his FAME to HALF AN AGE ;
Nor pen, nor pencil, can the Artist save,
The ART and ARTIST *share* one common Grave !

I.

GREAT THESPIS¹, Father of the Art,
Renown'd in days of yore,
Whose "*strut and fret*" were in a cart,
Yet ne'er was deem'd a *bore*.

II.

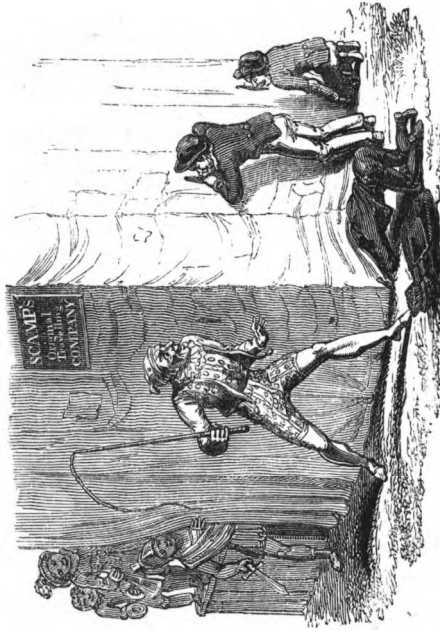
MELPOMENE, with tragic mind,
The PASSIONS to display;
THALIA, with smiles so kind,
“To drive dull care away!”

III.

When ROSCIUS first essay'd in Rome,
And through *his* acts did pass,
Heaven's proud Canopy—the Dome,
Each Actor on his ass²!

IV.

But modern times have changed the scene,
Most interesting features—
Actors and Actresses quite serene,
What delightful creatures!



What are you arter? You must pay for peeping, my boys. I shan't charge you much for whipcord! Ha! ha!

v.

And "come and go" without reproach,
View talents great and rare,
Instead of "ass," read splendid Coach,
Which make the Vulgar stare!

vi.

Still to the SHOW FOLKS much is due,
For Nature, Art, and Fool!
Study for Actors—sound and true:
Preparatory School³.

vii.

GUY BILLY was an only boy,
His daddy, a Stock-broker;
BILLY—Mamma's delight and joy,
Because he was a *joker*⁴!

VIII.

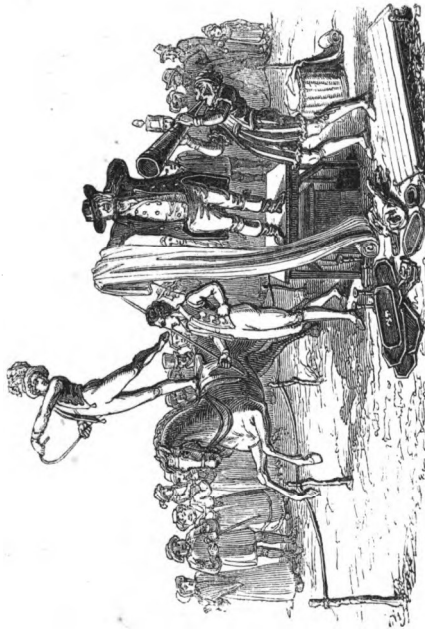
He quizz'd his Dad, and teased his Aunt,
 And laugh'd at his *dear* Mother ;
 Yet all was right—got every grant,
 'Tis true—he had no Brother.

IX.

The darling boy in life's great page,
 His hour resolved to strut,
 To shine a Hero on the stage
 In spite of *grin* or *butt* !

X.

To thwart his GENIUS⁵ might be wrong ;
 Much more, pervert his taste,
 Mamma encourag'd dance and song—
 Other pursuits were waste !



THE MOVING CIRCUS.
Now, Mr. Merryman, tell the Ladies and Gentlemen the merits of our Troop. Behold the first Horseman in the World.

XI.

Spouting at morning, noon, and night,
With tongue like a mill-clack,
A wretched bore—but his delight,
His truncheon—the boot-jack.

XII.

“A horse! a horse!” was all his cry,
With—“off, off with his head!”
In spite of Ma’s polite—“O fie!”
The inmates kept in dread.

XIII.

From Berwick Street—a great Hero!
Elated in the cause,
Proud as any noble Peer O!
O’erwhelm’d with the applause⁶.

XIV.

At length, determined for a start,
Says BILLY—" I *now*, know Folks,
I'm UP in almost every part,
'Twill *friz* with the SHOW FOLKS!"

XV.

Then off he went, quite full of glee,
Strutting towards the HARP,
In hopes some Manager to see;
Mixing with *Flat* and *Sharp*!

XVI.

Then off again, no fear or dread,
To the once famed O. P.
In better taste—chang'd to KEAN's Head—
And noted for a *spre*!

XVII.

His mind was fix'd—the STAGE his choice,
 He would all hazards run—
 His tragic start, and uncouth voice,
 Were to the Agents—*fun*⁸!

XVIII.

To those “Great Creatures,” in their way,
 GUY, boasted talents rare;
 Every *line*—BILL sought to play,
 Right—“at Bartlemy Fair!”

XIX.

To *Richardson's* you'd better go,
 Variety's *his* stage⁹;
 Lots of Practice—charming show!
 You're sure to be engaged.

XX.

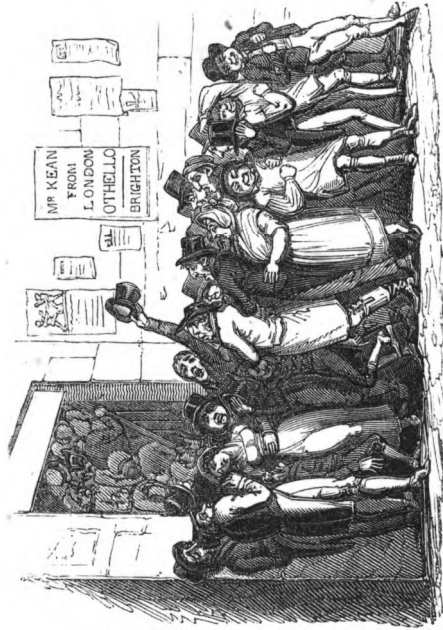
Then off he started for "the LANE¹⁰,"
 The Manager's retreat—
 Many "turn'd off"—put out of pain—
Finish of Judgment's Seat!

XXI.

"I caper, sing, or *act* a Ghost—
 Throw off a comic chant;
 Like PROTEUS, change at every post,
 To the ladies prove—ga-lant!"

XXII.

"Why, Muster, you're the sort of man,"
 Said *Richardson* so knowing—
 "As G—d's my Judge, stick to my plan,
 And soon—I'll set you going."



**GALLERY FOLKS.—Powerful attraction of talent. My eyes how you push!
Don't behave like Brutest! here's a female woman a fainting!**

XXIII.

Outside of show, on the parade,
 BIL GUY then took his stand,
 Hooting and bawling, like one in trade,
 To view the sight so grand.

XXIV.

“ Walk up! walk up! the Players here,
 Their Characters¹¹ inquire!
 Abilities known every where,
 You all must them admire!”

XXV.

For months he toil'd both day and night,
 Like Cheese or Butter-factor;
 He felt the *fag*¹²—lost the *delight*—
 And *pleasure* of an Actor!

B

XXVI.

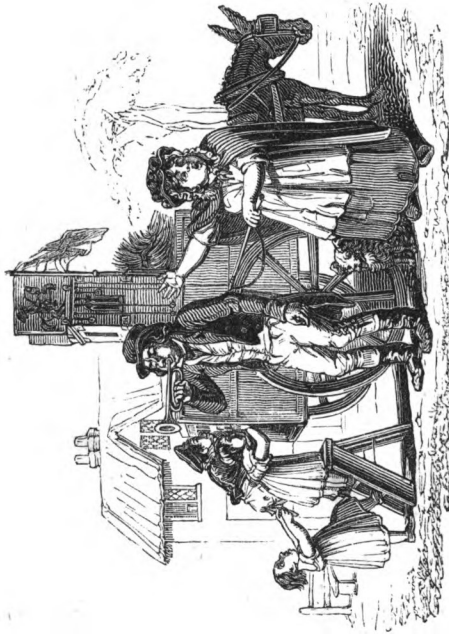
From Fair to Fair he ran his race,
Acquiring greater fame,
With serious or comic face,
Till he procured—a NAME.

XXVII.

In Harlequin or funny Clown,
At home—was BILLY GUY ;
Or “tragic bit” to gain renown,
Was sure to have a *shy*!

XXVIII.

To sport a toe, dance the tight rope,
Or summerset to throw—
Act *Dusty Bob*—dress up a POPE,
And imitate DUCROW ¹³.



The PEEP Show.

Too! too! too! Get down you ragged rascals, and make way for the little
dears vat means to pay for vat they sees. Joo, give 'em one more blast!
It will be sure to bring 'em!

XXIX.

O'er the kingdom, well known was GUY,
His laughing, merry mood,
Full of tricks, like famed PAUL PRY,
With, "I hope, I don't intrude!"

XXX.

A FAIR! the gayest scene in life,
Each person in a glow,
For novelty and fun quite rife,
The Boys at the PEEP SHOW!

XXXI.

The Lion's roar—the Monkey's grin;
The Juggler with his balls;
Dwarfs and giants—thick and thin;
And *savoury* Sausage Stalls!

XXXII.

With laughter, fun, and frolic gay,
Each Actor plays his part,
Puts forth his *tact*, and has his "*say*,"
To please and touch' the *heart*.

XXXIII.

DON JUAN here can take his "*drops*"
On the sly—at his post;
And Pantaloons, those merry chaps!
Hobnobbing with the GHOST¹⁴!

XXXIV.

The stately Peer¹⁶—the Critic's sneer,
'Midst the loud trumpets rend,
With *larned* Pigs—and *beastes* queer,
With laughing do *unbend*!



In an instant he plunged, disregarding his load,
Leaving Roscius unhorsed at the side of the Road,
No racer at *Epom* e'er gallop'd much faster,
For GOOSK he *abhorr'd*—quite as much as his master!

XXXV.

Change of scene's the Actor's fate,
He runs from Town to Town
As *Stroller*—no one in the state,
When a STAR¹⁶ is coming down!

XXXVI.

BILLY, at length, "turn'd up" the Fairs,
A MANAGER¹⁷—d'ye see?
A man of Pomp, with all the airs
Tack'd to Prosperity:

XXXVII.

Play'd all the Heroes—nice "tit bits,"
Great Actor on *his* stage;
Made Rolla *blush*—Hamlet on *stilts*,
Did GUY—to be "the rage!"

XXXVIII.

“ But Money makes the Mare to go !”
 So marks the olden tale ;
 Important 'tis—with Friend or Foe—
 If you can come to *Scale*¹⁸.

XXXIX.

At Show, or Fair—the Play-house bold,
 Drama legitimate ;
 “ The Mirror up to Nature ” hold !
 The rest is—idle prate¹⁹.

XL.

Now Authors, Poets, paid him court,
His NOD became the law !
 Public features to him report,
 To write a Piece to *draw*²⁰ !



SCENE PAINTING.—Retouching a Stage Devil.

XLI.

The Painters soon were set to work,
Ghosts! Demons²¹! in array;
Orders obey'd, like the Grand Turk,
To bring attractive play!

XLII.

“ Good Houses ” now to make him right,
The TREASURY to swell:
The Actors meed—the *Props* delight—
And “ ALL’S WELL, THAT ENDS WELL ”²²!”



A wet night!—The Theatre over—Five Shillings for a Coach to the City;—
and not a *drag* to be got either for Love or Money. A common situation.

NOTES.

1. THESPIS, a Greek poet, of Attica, said to be the inventor of Tragedy, 536 years before Christ. His representations were rude and imperfect. He went from town to town upon a cart, on which was erected a temporary stage, where two actors, whose faces were *daubed* with the lees of wine, entertained the audience with choral songs, &c. Tumblers and other performers may often be seen in the streets of the metropolis at the present period, exhibiting their feats, and dancing upon the slack wire, in carts.

2. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,
Then came each actor on his ass—*Hamlet*.

And some of the *great* performers of the present day, have considered it no degradation to *their* characters, to ride upon an *ass* when it suited their purpose: we remember to have seen LISTON, in his personification of Lord Grizzle, riding upon a *donkey* before the audience, in a theatre royal, thus addressing them:—

“ Behold a pair of us! before the curtain,
A prettier couple can't be found—that's certain;
Sweet BILLY SHAKSPEARE, lord of Nature's glass,
Has said, 'then came each actor on his ass!' ”

3. This sentence, perhaps, might call forth a *sneer* from the fastidious or *lucky* actor, like the late Mr. Holman, who came “ piping hot ” from the seminary in Soho Square to the boards of Covent Garden Theatre, and became a distinguished and a favourite performer, by his celebrated successful *debüt* in ROMEO. The above instance in the theatrical hemisphere, must be deemed

rather a singular one ; but, nevertheless, it is undoubtedly true. The *Show* actor is always on the alert, and enabled to gain *confidence* by his repetition of characters before the public ; and to banish from his person that worst of fears to a performer—"stage fright!" and also the most difficult part of his profession, learning to "stand still upon the stage," is by him reduced to a certainty, by his being completely "*tired out*," and scarcely able to move one leg after the other, before the fair is half over. By such means, the roughest diamond has obtained a small polish ; and in process of time, when opportunities have offered, by rubbing against men of superior talents, has acquired a brilliancy of style, never afterwards eclipsed. The names of several actors might be mentioned, if necessary, who have acquired GREATNESS in the eyes of the public, by the above practice and experience.

4. He was a merry fellow, and in the opinion of his mamma, quite a prodigy. She was certain he would become a great actor—a second Roscius.

5. It should seem also, that she *acted* upon the opinion of the late Lord Holland, respecting the education of his son, the celebrated politician and orator, the Hon. Charles James Fox—"never to contradict him in his pursuits."

6. Some twenty years ago or more, the above place was well known in the theatrical circles, as a kind of preparatory school for young actors : but too frequently the injudicious applause given by the friends of the aspirants for theatrical fame, induced them to enter into a profession, for which nature had not bestowed on them the slightest requisites :

The player's province they but vainly try,

Who want these powers, *deportment*, voice, and eye!

Yet, nevertheless, several pieces were well got up, and the performances of which would not have disgraced the walls of a theatre royal ; in fact, some of our most

popular actors of the present day, cannot deny, but they have acquired the first rudiments of the art of acting, on the boards of the above little house contiguous to Soho Square.

7. Russell Court, near Drury Lane. The above tavern afforded considerable amusement to its visitors. A few wags, fond of a bit of fun, frequented the coffee-room every evening, and, in concert together, represented themselves as managers from the country, in want of performers, and waiting in turn to engage young men for different "*lines of business*," to complete their companies. This had the desired effect; and numerous ludicrous scenes were the result, which defy any thing like communication; and enthusiastic, stage-struck, inexperienced youths afforded these *pretended* managers sport and roars of laughter, night after night. The plan generally adopted was, that one of the party kept on the look out to pick up a simple youth, and having got one in tow, he was formally introduced to the assumed proprietor of a country theatre. The latter person, with a face of gravity, then inquired whether he wished to engage for the *light* or *heavy* business of the stage, or if singing was his forte; or, perhaps, he could undertake the general line, and assist in melo-dramas, spectacles, &c. &c. The manager then, with a polite request, wished to have a "taste" of the young man's quality, before he finally settled his engagement, and fixed his salary. And several young aspiring heroes, anxious to obtain an engagement, have been prevailed upon to mount the table, and to give recitations from Romeo, Hamlet, Octavian, &c. amidst the shouts of *pretended* applause from country actors, wags of all sorts, and men of the world, who nightly resorted to the O. P. and P. S.*, to pick up anecdotes, and spend a

* This tavern was designated several ways, according as it suited the different *tastes* of its visitors. The players took it in

pleasant hour. When the managers thought they had had enough of this burlesque, "the *exit*—the *exit*," would be whispered one to another, and while the hero on the table was spouting out some impassioned speech from Shakspeare, his back would be readily assailed with the contents of their jugs; and upon the unfortunate wight hastily looking round for the authors of such an assault, his front, from another part of the company, would be attacked in the same manner. Redress was out of the question, and the more passion and rage exhibited by the youth, produced the more laughter; when he was informed it was the way to teach him how to make his "*exit* in a rage;" and that no person would deny him the title of being a *wet* actor.

8. It would form rather a laughable work, if the theatrical agents were to publish an account of the applications made by squinting heroes, to play the lovers—knock-knee'd dandies, to perform the walking gentlemen—and *lisp*ing heroines, to "strut and fret their hour upon the stage!"

9. The theatre of the above manager is so well constructed in all its parts, that it can be erected without the smallest difficulty in a few hours. The scenes also, although small, are of the best quality, and painted by the first artists; his stage properties are excellent, and his wardrobe is likewise of the most splendid description. The front of his theatre, alone, cost six hundred pounds. He spares no expense. In addition to which,

its original sense, to denominate the tavern a theatrical house;—and the O. P. and P. S., according to its technicality upon the stage, *Opposite Prompter*, and *Prompt Side*. The men of the world placed it in another point of view, "Come and see me to-night," said they to a friend, "at the O. P. and P. S. where you will be sure to meet with some *Old PALS*, and hear *Prime SINGING*." And the Bacchanalians hailed the O. P. and P. S., as the harbour containing fine *Old PORT* and *Prime SHERRY*."

Mr. Richardson can boast of having had the greatest tragedian in existence, at one time of his life, a member of his company ; besides several other first-rate actors now before the public.

10. Amongst the *swell* performers ; otherwise, the King's servants, when technically speaking of the theatres royal to their brothers of the sock and buskin, who proudly observe, "I am engaged at the Lane ; or, you will hear of me at the Garden." But the "Lane," alluded to in this instance, is Horsemonger Lane ; where a number of engagements are suffered to *expire* ; and the *exits* in general are of the most awful nature.

11. However singular it may seem, yet nevertheless, it is strictly true, that no persons in the world are so anxious to preserve their *characters* as performers ; and however contemptuous the Chapter of CORINTHIANS may look down upon the *nummers*, as they were termed at a show in the fair, yet there is not an actor amongst them but would sooner throw up his engagement, or have a word or two with his opponent, than part with *his* character.

12. Something after the manner of a long journey, which takes the courage and spirit out of a horse. Performing thirteen and fourteen times in rapid succession at a fair, in the course of a day, seldom fails to point out to some of those theatrical enthusiasts, that they have chosen a *sorry*, instead of a *merry*, or profitable profession. The immense drudgery and fatigue which provincial actors in general have to undergo, from severe study, and numerous rehearsals, independently of their nightly performances, have induced many thoughtless persons to return to their humble occupations, and become useful members of society.

13. Only to *imitate* this extraordinary highly talented performer, would require abilities of no common order.

He is considered, nay, admitted the first horseman in the world. In the French capital, Holland, Belgium, and through all the principal cities and towns on the continent, he was designated as the "ASTONISHING Englishman."

14. A very different sort of character from an *apparition*; nothing more nor less than flesh and blood—yet keeping up the *spirit* of the thing.

15. During the reign of George the Second—the King went more than once or twice to enjoy the humours of the scene. In Hogarth's picture of Southwark Fair—the likeness of George II. may be easily discovered.

16. An *eclipse*, perhaps, might have been a more appropriate phrase, as scarcely any other performer is noticed or thought of, during the acting of the "Great Creature!"

17. Managers, by comparison, can do every thing, and like Atlas, are enabled to carry the dramatic world on their shoulders. Of course—a manager has a right to play any part he likes in his own theatre. Who doubts it?

18. WEIGHT on the turf, on the boards of a theatre, or upon the Stock Exchange, is of the most important consequences to the individual who possesses it. A *weighty* purse contains many persuasive qualities, and generally carries conviction with it. *Golden* sentences are very powerful in argument. A *weighty* purse is a most desirable companion at all times.

19. Of late years a great deal of *fuss* and *cant* have been made respecting the LEGITIMATE DRAMA; but let the performer only hold the mirror up to Nature—show Virtue her own image—and the deformity of Vice—and the *legitimacy* of the argument will never be inquired

into by a liberal and enlightened public, as to the *situation* of the theatre.

20. This is the grand *art* of management—"to *draw* houses:" but so puzzling and difficult is this sort of thing to be accomplished, that even with the assistance of *horses* in several instances, managers have not been able to produce the desired effect.

21. Within the last few years DEMONS have been in great request upon the stage, and to give managers credit for their exertions—*Tartarus* has been ransacked from one end to the other by different authors, to produce a variety of *devil* heroes, of many hues and colours—by which means old Pluto and his concubine Proserpine have been left in the shade by the introduction of the terrific Zamiel, the wily Mephistophiles, Asmodeus, &c. and *charmed* bullets have been selected to make decided *hits* in our theatres. Indeed, one of the *Props* of a great house, was so fascinated with the *devil*-ish fiery talents of his *red* demon, that in the enthusiasm of the moment, he sent for the editor of a well known journal, and with all the gravity and stately conduct of a theatrical monarch, wished to give him a *devil*-ish good idea for his paper, namely—to present his readers, gratis, with a portrait in red, of his highly talented demon. With deference to Mr. Hood, no *pun* being intended, but similar to Peter Pindar's allusion to a great personage, that the DEVIL has been a *good* subject, both to the stage and "the press;" and Bob Cruikshank has had a *devil*-ish fine time of it, by giving new lights and shades to the *old* gentleman, in order to render his appearance more palatable to the public taste—thus giving a climax to the adage, that "MONEY is the DEVIL." The above Tartarian chief, it appears, was first discovered in a literary point of *view*, in a *Marsh* near Oxford Street, whose pursuits were soon afterwards promulgated by a well known *Kidd* in Bond Street—and during his

“walks,” selected a resting place near the *Pope's* alley ; but however popular the DEVIL may be at the present moment, he must take great care if he does not furnish more *novelty* to avoid the dangers of being *shelved*. In fact, the cloven-footed hero has now become such a “familiar spirit” with us, by the repeated representations of Dr. Faustus, the Devil's Elixir, the Bottle Imp, Der Freizchutz, and Pluto in London ; added to the numerous publications of the Devil's Walk, the Real Devil's Walk, the Devil's Drive, the Devil's Progress, &c. that it is *seriously* apprehended, if some NEW object of terror is not shortly produced, the *poor* DEVIL must be absolutely worn out, and voted “stale, flat, and unprofitable.” But a great authority in matters of this sort, and a well known caterer for the public for the last forty years, Muster RICHARDSON, he has given it as his most decided opinion, that to give any *treasury* a good *turn*, there is nothing like the UNITIES for producing *effect*, and *blunt* into the bargain—a *gong*—BLUE OR RED FIRE—and a BLEEDING GHOST!!!

22. Respecting the danger of speculating in theatrical property, it is said (but we do not vouch for the truth of the assertion) to have been no uncommon occurrence at Drury Lane Theatre, for the lessee to be out of pocket between four and five thousand pounds, from the commencement of the season until Christmas. But a successful pantomime has not only fetched up the loss, but turned the balance in favour of the season. Thus, it appears, depending more on the *attitudes* of Harlequin, the *lively steps* of Columbine, the *comical phiz* of the Clown, and the *aid* of the scene painter, than the resources of the LEGITIMATE DRAMA, to produce the desired effect of SHAKSPEARE's words—“All's Well that Ends Well.”

Notes

Note 1	Pg. 5	“To the President of the Royal Academy Sir Martin Archer Shee, Knt.”	Sir Martin Archer Shee was a prominent Irish portrait painter who was elected to be president of the Royal Academy in 1830. In addition to painting, Shee also dabbled in poetry, publishing <i>Rhymes on Art</i> part one and two in 1809. This poem, which outlines some of Shee’s opinion that England has left behind the classical tradition of art was well received. In 1814, he published another less successful collections of poems entitled <i>The Commemorations of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and other Poems</i> . In addition to his poetry and painting, Shee wrote a tragedy, <i>Alasco</i> , in 1824 and published two novels, <i>Oldcourt</i> and <i>Cecil Hyde</i> . Throughout this dedication, Egan makes reference, if sarcastically, to Shee’s many artistic abilities as painter, poet, and playwright.
Note 2	Pg. 5	“Broad Grins,” “Wags of Windsor,” “Blue Beard,” “John Bull,” and “Random Records.”	Egan makes refence to these plays/novels within the first paragraph of his dedication. Each of these literary texts was written by George Colman the Younger, who was a famous English playwright of comedies. He was made “examiner of plays” by Lord Chamberlain, a position he held till his death. In this position, he was known as a harsh censor of his contemporaries plays. Egan’s dedication alludes to the fact that Martin Archer Shee’s own play <i>Alasco</i> was censored by Colman. In the April 29, 1838 copy of the <i>London and Paris Observer</i> , it was reported of <i>Alasco</i> that “although the ferment of the times has greatly subsided, still, plays which are built upon conspiracies and attempts to revolutionize a state stand upon ticklish ground.” Apparently, Colman refused to license Shee’s play because it dealt with treasonous content. It continued to be unperformed up until the twentieth century.
Note 3	Pg. 10	“Melpomene,” “Thalia,” and “Roscius”	Melphomene, was initially the Greek Muse of the Chorus, but became the Greek Muse of Tragedy. Thalia is the Greek Muse of comedy and idyllic poetry. Roscius was a prominent Roman actor. When Roscius became famous around the first century BC, the sophisticated Greek method of acting was unpopular, and many actors instead favored rough, bawdy humor and slap-stick comedy. However, Roscius overturned this view, popularizing a more dramatic and refined method of acting. In the Renaissance and onward, Roscius came to represent the paradigm for excellence in dramatic performance. Egan

			points out in a footnote of his own a line from Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> : "when Roscius was an actor in Rome . . . then came each actor on his ass" (2.2.364-8).
Note 4	Pg. 12	"Other pursuits were waste!"	"Show Folks!" in many ways resembles Egan's satirical novel <i>Life of an Actor</i> . This is one particular moment in which the plots of both texts seems to overlap. His novel follows the life of a boy, Proteus, who also desires to become an actor. Of his education, Egan writes, "The word 'artist' Mrs. Proteus [his mother] thought a most pleasing appellation, and an excellent appendage to the name of a person; and she therefore declared, for her part, shew should vote for something connected with the Arts for her boy" (25).
Note 5	Pg. 13	"mill-clack," "truncheon," "boot-jack"	A "mill-clack" is a noisy or talkative person; "truncheon" refers to a staff carried as a symbol of office, command, or authority. Often the staff or club carried by a police constable which indicates his station; "boot-jack" is theater slang for an actor of utility parts.
Note 6	Pg. 13	"A horse! A horse!"	Probably a reference to Shakespeare's <i>King Richard III</i> . The line comes from Act 5, Scene 4: "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"
Note 7	Pg. 15	"at Bartlemy Fair!"	This slang term refers to the Bartholomew Fair, which was the only fair held within the walls of the City of London at its founding in 1102 by Rahere, the king's jester. This fair grew in popularity throughout the ages, and in the mid-1700s was widely known for its theatrical productions. According to Charles G. Harper, "Theatrical shows were then, and for a long time after, a feature; and the 'stars' of Drury Lane Theatre did not consider it beneath their dignity to act in boots and 'Bartlemy,' and licenses were granted for three and even four weeks."
Note 8	Pg. 15	"Richardson's"	Richardson's Theater or Richardson's Show was a travelling fairground/theater founded by John Richardson in 1798 which first appeared at the Bartholomew Fair. Richardson was an actor, but became a broker after realizing how little money he would make as an actor. Eventually, he saved enough money to create an acting troupe of his own. In Egan's own footnote, he writes that "Mr. Richardson can boast of having had the greatest tragedian in existence . . . a member of his company." This "greatest tragedian" refers to Edmund Kean, a popular Victorian actor who specialized in Shakespearian tragedies.
Note 9	Pg. 16	"The Lane"	Refers to the Royal Theater at Drury Lane which was located in Covent Garden, London, the pinnacle of theatrical performances and talent. The theater was first

			built in 1663 and was rebuilt three additional times, the last of which occurred in 1812. Egan, however, in his own footnote writes, “But the ‘Lane’ alluded to in this instance, is Horsemonger Lane; where a number of engagements are suffered to <i>expire</i> ; and the <i>exits</i> in general are of the most awful nature.” Horsemonger Lane was a prison in south London constructed in 1799. Here many public executions and hangings were hosted, one of which was attended by Charles Dickens and inspired his character Hortense in <i>Bleak House</i> .
Note 10	Pg. 16	“caper”	To dance or leap in a frolicsome manner, to skip for merriment; to prance as a horse.
Note 11	Pg. 16	“Proteus”	Proteus was an early Greek sea or river god, often depicted as a shape-shifter. His name now carries positives connotations associated with flexibility, versatility, and adaptability. Additionally, in Egan’s novel <i>Life of an Actor</i> , the main character’s name is Peregrine Proteus, which also alludes to the Greek philosopher who committed suicide at the Olympic games in 161 AD.
Note 12	Pg. 18	“shy”	A trial, an experiment; a ‘shot’ or a ‘go’
Note 13	Pg. 18	“Dusty Bob”	Dusty Bob refers to a dustman or a garbage collector. In Egan’s <i>Life in London</i> he mentions a character called “Dusty Bob” who is married to an African woman known as “African Sal.” Because of the fame of Egan’s novels, many theatrical adaptations were written and performed in the 1820s. In these productions, the characters of “Dusty Bob” and “African Sal” were expanded into slap-stick comedians. After many dramatic versions of Egan’s novel appeared on stage, Egan decided to reclaim his writings and create his own stage adaptation. It was performed at the Sadler’s Wells Theater on Monday, April 8, 1822. In his production, he also expanded the roles of “Dusty Bob” and “African Sal” because they were so beloved by the public.
Note 14	Pg. 19	“Paul Pry . . .intrude!”	Paul Pry is the title character of the comedy/farce written by prolific playwright John Poole which was first staged in 1825. The main character is a meddling and curious busy-body who interferes in the lives of everyone. “I hope I don’t intrude!” is one of the character’s stock phrases.
Note 15	Pg. 19	“Lion’s roar . . .Sausage Stalls!”	Circuses were a very popular form of entertainment during the Victorian era, so much so that by the mid-1800s, hundreds of circuses appeared all over England. Trick riding, i.e. standing or performing other physical feats while standing on the back of a moving horse, continued to be the main event, but other events such as jugglers, aerial acts, exotic animals, and “freaks” were

			also popular. Due to the popularity of the circus, it was very common for major theater or music halls to feature similar acts such as jugglers and trapeze artists, and even Drury Lane had a circus ring.
Note 16	Pg. 20	“draps” and “hobnobbing”	“Draps” is a slang term for the drop, a painted curtain let down between the acts of a play to shut off the stage from the view of the audience. “Hobnobbing” means to hold a familiar conversation with, or be on intimate terms.
Note 17	Pg. 20	“Made Rolla blush—Hamlet on stilts”	Rolla is a character in the German tragedy <i>Pizarro in Peru, or the Death of Rolla</i> written by August von Kotzebue. This play was performed in the Drury Lane Theater in the early 1800s. “Hamlet of stilts” most likely refers to the abundance of burlesque theater adaptations of Shakespeare which became popular around the mid-1800s. Daniel Pollack-Pelzner explained that while the high-brow interpretations of Shakespeare often focused on the internal struggles and the psychology of the characters, the low-brow parodies sought to turn these internal characters into shared audience experiences. Portraying Hamlet on stilts would have easily fit into this tradition of Burlesque Shakespeare adaptations.
Note 18	Pg. 22	“‘the mirror up to nature’ hold”	An allusion to Shakespeare’s <i>Hamlet</i> Act 3, Scene 2. In this scene, Hamlet is explaining the purpose of acting to the actors he has hired to perform a play for his uncle Claudius. He explains that good theater should “hold. . .the mirror up to nature.”
Note 19	Pg. 23	“meed”	To reward or recompense.
Note 20	Pg. 30	“Legitimate Drama”	Here in a footnote, Egan reference the theatrical debate that took place during the first part of the 1800s. Jacky Burton explains that while theaters did strive to put on “serious” performance, they were limited by copyright laws. Because of this, theater relied on pantomime, musically-accompanied action, animals and acrobatics, as well as dancing. This angered many theater-critics who believed that the height of English theater was Shakespearean dramas. To this debate, Egan replies, “but let the performer only hold the mirror up to Nature.”

APPENDIX I

Egan's Theater

A.

SADLER'S WELLS.

PIERCE EGAN,
The Author

of

TOM & JERRY;

or,

Life in London.

Most respectfully informs the Public, and his numerous Friends in the
Sporting World, that :

(Before "all the GOLD is taken off the GINGERBREAD," being contented
with a Small Slice of it,) his

BENEFIT
is fixed for
Wednesday

The 25th September, 1822.

When a Variety Entertainment, will be performed, in which

THE AUTHOR

Will make his First and only Appearance on this Stage, in a

PRINCIPAL CHARACTER.

LIFE IN A SPREE.

A Spree's the thing, with potent port made merry,
"Go it BOB LOGIC," "Keep it up," cries JERRY.

This is a reproduction of the playbill for Egan's adaption of his novel *Life in London*. It was found in the book *The True History of Tom and Jerry, Or, The Day and Night Scenes of Life in London, from the Start to the Finish!* by Charles Hindley, a famous Victorian novelist in his own right, which was accessed through Google Books. Many adaptations of Egan's novel were made and performed at lesser theaters beginning just after the first full volume of *Life in London* was published in 1821. Because of its success, Egan decided to produce an adaption of his own. His first version, written as a 'comic opera,' was rejected on the grounds that it deviated too much from popularized versions of the play. After much struggle, his play was picked up by the

Sadler's Well Theater in 1822, a theater which would go on to produce many more novel adaptations including Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. The full text of Egan's play was never published, but many of the songs did find their way to newspapers, many of which also appear in Hindley's *The True History*. Egan himself, at the age of fifty, appeared on stage in this production as Bob Logic. Although this stage adaptation received much critical acclaim, Egan would struggle for the next ten years to break into theater as a serious playwright. According to his biographer, J. C. Reid, "one factor in his lack of success was undoubtedly . . . being labelled as a 'slang writer' and a portrayer of low life" (161). Because of this, readers can easily see how his poem "Show Folks!" reflects Egan's own desire to be considered a great actor and playwright.

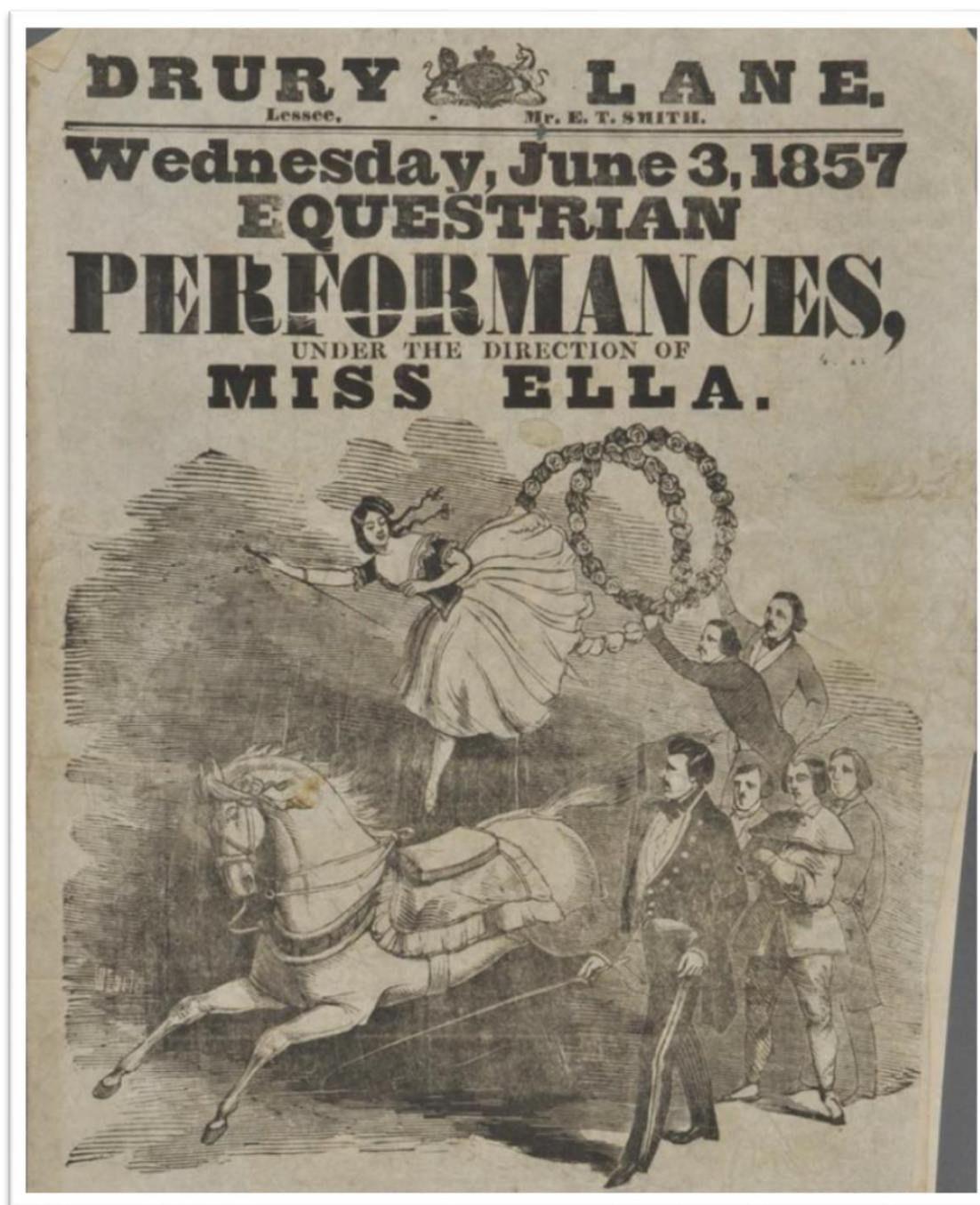
B.



W. T. Moncrieff, the English dramatist and playwright, in his adaptation of Egan's novel *Life in London* introduced the characters Little Jemmy, Dusty Bob, and African Sal whom Egan merely names in his novel. The characters of Dusty Bob and African Sal were made famous by actors Mr. Walbourn and Mr. Sanders, who performed African Sal both in blackface while cross dressing. Egan mentions the performance of Walbourn's Dusty Bob in his novel *Life as an*

Actor: “Mr. Walbourn’s personification of Dusty Bob has been unanimously decided by the public as one if not the greatest triumph of the histrionic art ever exhibited upon the stage” (14). Walbourn’s portrayal of Dusty Bob was so popular that when Walbourn retired from acting to take over the public house at Battle Bridge, the caricaturist George Cruikshank created an inn sign for Walbourn of him as Dusty Bob. These two characters were especially popular due to their comic *pas de deux* or dance for two people. This image shows the iconic dance which both Dusty Bob and African Sal perform. Such theatrical farces would have been a common feature of the theater of Egan’s time, and “Show Folks!” references many of them, including this performance of Dusty Bob. This print is available to view at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and was retrieved from the website *Memory Prints*. The original artists in unknown, but the image is based off of an illustration by George Cruikshank.

APPENDIX II

The Circus

This advertisement for an equestrian performance at the Drury Lane Theater was printed by R.S. Francis and was obtained from the database Victorian Popular Culture. It announces that in addition to the trick riding, there will also be clowns, a stilt performance, and a balloon act, which would probably have included a hot air balloon of some sort. The rider pictured here, known simply as Miss Ella, is likely to have been Ella Zoyara, a stage name for the young boy

Omar Kingsley, who was a very famous trick rider. This poster illustrates the cross-over that occurred between circus performances and theater when Egan composed "Show Folks!" Many respectable theaters, such as Drury Lane, would include circus-like performances, especially those with equestrian elements, in order to draw in more crowds. In fact, Egan's adaption of his novel *Life in London* included a racetrack scene in which the theater employed real horses. And in his poem "Show Folks!," Egan explains that Billy Guy first finds a job as a trick rider before breaking into more serious drama. Thus it would have been natural for those hoping to gain status as stage actors to first gain popularity through the 'lesser' theatrical productions such as equestrian acts, pantomimes, or other forms of burlesque theater.

APPENDIX III

Egan's Fiction

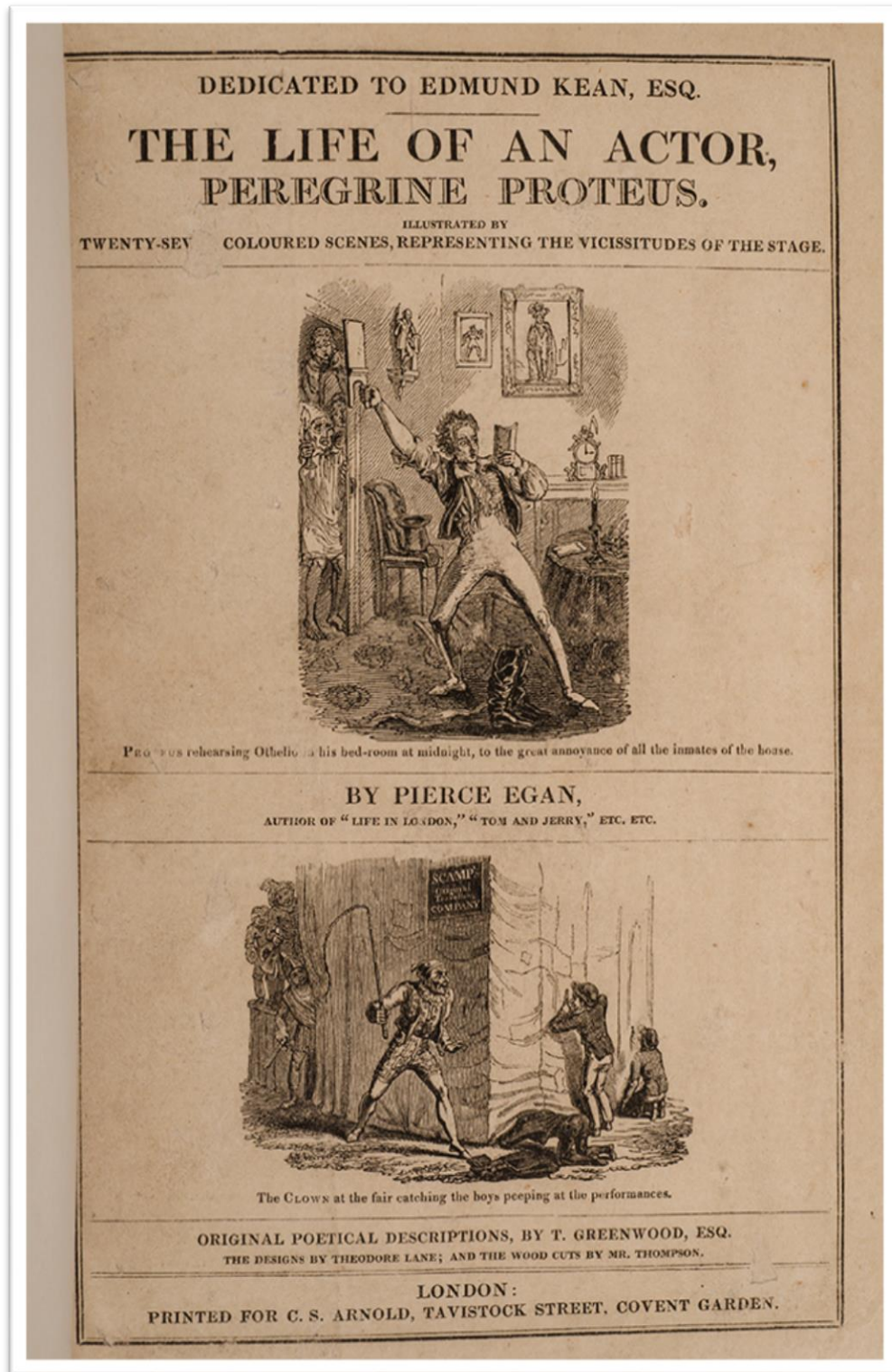
A.

CUSTOM demands a Prologue to a Play,
 And why not to a Book ; to pave the way ;
 A sort of preface in the jingling manner,
 By way of scroll, or Literary Banner ;
 To ask your suffrages (than weasel thinner)
 To praise his work, that Pierce may buy a dinner ;
 To build his fame he does not here dare look ;
 His object only was to " build " a Book :
 No easy task new matter to afford,
 When every path has been so oft explored.
 Mirrors and Magazines in dread array,
 Pamphlets and Poetry choke up the way ;
 Travels and Tracts, Scotch Novels and Reviews,
 Don Juan, Hayward, and the latest news ;
 All meet the eye in London far and wide,
 And every subject has been " cut and dried."
 In these strange times, this literary age,
 How shall he dare whole armies to engage ?
 No subject left untouch'd in hole or corner,
 From Chaucer's Life to that of good Jack Horner !
 All has been done, each theme has been attack'd,
 And Authors' Heads are like a city sack'd !

Adventures of all sorts around we see,
 From Newb'ry's Mouse—to Doctor Hawkesworth's Flea :
 From Betsey Thoughtless—to a Country Inn ;
 And down still lower—to an humble Pin.
 But, with your sanction, he aspires to hope
 For entertainment—there is yet much scope.
 Once you have seen him, starting from the Row,
 With " Life in London," all its scenes to show :
 Cherish'd by you, his offspring play'd its part,
 Which he acknowledges with grateful heart.
 Then " greet him fairly"—put him to the test—
 For generous friends he ever did his best.
 Now for our Artist I put in a claim—
 Young, inexperienced, and without a name
 Then for your favour let me humbly sue
 Encouragement to modest merit due :
 His maiden effort treat not with disdain,
 Nor let his first appeal be made in vain.
 " Here break we off"—and now commence our task :
 A kind reception the reward we ask.
 Take no exceptions at his offspring's birth,
 But nurse the bantling—if you find it worth.
 Over his faults with generous candour look,
 Except his errors, and accept HIS BOOK !

Egan begins his novel *Life of an Actor* with this prologue, taken from a 1892 printing of *Life of an Actor* by Pickering and Chatto. This novel follows a very similar plot to the poem "Show Folks!" in which a young boy desires to be an actor and then, through many misadventures, ends up being the manager of a theater house in London. The above except is another example of Egan's skill as a poet, since he was mostly popular for his satirical writings in *Life in London* and his reporting on sporting events, especially boxing. Like "Show Folks!," this piece also contains many references to theatrical productions popular during Egan's time, including his own novel's adaption ("With 'Life in London,' all its scenes to show").

B.



This is the front piece to an 1825 printing of Egan's *Life of an Actor*. What's interesting about Egan's *Life of an Actor* and "Show Folks!" is that they both contain the same illustrations.

In “Show Folks!” the illustrations are attributed to Theodor Lane. At the top, there is an illustration of Proteus reciting lines from Shakespeare’s *Othello*. In “Show Folks!” this same image appears opposite of the title page. The bottom image portrays a clown at a circus whipping three young boys for peeping at the performance without paying. In “Show Folks!” this image appears opposite stanza V, VI, and VII when Egan first introduces his main character, Billy Guy.

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